

RISE REPORTER

FALL/WINTER 2024 | VOL. 48, NO. 03



photo: Tilt

OUR AWARDS ISSUE

Rise'ing Stars | Champions of the Mission | Community Partners

PLUS: Our New President and CEO | Excellence in Leadership | Gala Recap



RISE REPORTER

FALL/WINTER 2024 | VOL. 48, NO. 3

WHO WE ARE

Rise unlocks potential and opens doors to success for people with disabilities or other challenges through creative solutions and customized support. We envision a progressive, supportive, and collaborative environment that fosters meaningful growth and provides opportunities to live a life filled with purpose.

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STAFF

Tim Dickie

President and CEO

Kristin Hangebrauck

Chair, Rise Board of Directors

Noel McCormick

Vice President of Advancement

Kelly Bartnick

Communications Manager; Editor

ON THE COVER

Nesin Holtzman tidies up lockers at The Centre in New Richmond, Wisc. The volunteer program there is just one of many community activities that keep our New Richmond life enrichment program busy.





Rise President and CEO Tim Dickie.

TIM DICKIE NAMED PRESIDENT AND CEO

The Rise Board of Directors selected Dickie for the role following an extensive national search.

Tim Dickie officially began a new role at Rise in mid-December. After more than a decade as our chief program officer, he was named President and CEO by the Rise Board of Directors earlier in the fall.

Tim's appointment followed an extensive national search which identified several qualified candidates and included input from Board members, people we support and their families, along with business partners and our team members.

"The interview process allowed our search committee to really get to know Tim," said Board President Kristin Hangebrauck. "His passion for the work Rise does, his commitment to a collaborative work environment, and his thoughtful approach to leading through significant change were big factors in our decision. We couldn't be happier to support him as he continues to build on the legacy Lynn has created."

Tim has worked in disability services for more than 35 years, including leadership positions at several large providers. Having served the last 12 years as our Chief Program Officer, he is well-prepared to lead our organization as President and CEO.

"I am deeply honored, grateful, and excited about the opportunity to lead Rise and our incredible team into the next chapter. Together, we will build on the strong foundation established by Lynn and continue advancing our mission with passion and purpose," he said.

In addition to his leadership roles, he is also a CARF surveyor and mentor working with other providers across the country. He serves on the MOHR Board of Directors and Chairs the Membership Committee. ▼



THANKSGIVING MEAL DONATIONS >>

Volunteers from Cummins and Ruan/Bobcat once again turned out with the turkey. The two groups' annual Thanksgiving Meal Donation Drive assembled 265 meal kits for our families. We are so grateful for their generosity.

A SCARY GOOD TIME >>

The halls of our Coon Rapids location were filled with ghosts, goblins, ghouls, and more on Halloween. The Coon Rapids team threw a party to celebrate the occasion. Staff and people served got in on the fun featuring games, prizes, food and more.



WARM CLOTHING >>

The gifts continued throughout the holidays. We thank Storm Creek clothing and sportswear for their large donation of sweaters, vests, pullovers, jackets, and more. The gear warmed our hearts and will keep many people warm throughout the winter.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS >>

Many of our programs held holiday get-togethers at the end of 2024. This photo is from our annual CBTE celebration held in Fridley. The event featured a catered meal, music and dancing, and other fun activities like this photo booth.





Growing With Rise Gala

***We raised more than
\$185,000!***

Thank you so much to everyone for attending our Growing with Rise Gala on November 7.

The \$185,000 raised benefits our programs and activities, including our Advancing Lives Fund. The support allows us to continue the work of our mission, and we are overwhelmed by the generosity of so many people.

Read more about all our honorees and sponsors on pages 4-9 of this issue.



photos: Alex Samek

Rise'ing Stars

Each year we celebrate people we support whose extraordinary attitude, achievements, and perseverance have taken them to new heights. These four Rise'ing Stars were honored at our Growing with Rise Gala, held in November. We hope you enjoy reading more about their personal and professional accomplishments.



Janet Krear

Technology has allowed Janet Krear to find her own voice after decades of listening to others make important decisions on her behalf.

Janet has incorporated assistive technology into her daily life. An iPad and app with pre-programmed words and phrases now allows Janet to speak her mind. Adapting to the technology, which also uses facial recognition speech, has been challenging for Janet and her support team, who regularly meet with a Rise employment exploration specialist to build new skills and refine the technology. Janet has gained greater autonomy because of her hard work, and for the first time, at age 50, she is exploring the idea of employment.

Jafar Lee

Jafar Lee has worked hard to prove that he can work independently. He recently found success as a dining room attendant at Crestview Assisted Living and Memory Care in Columbia Heights.

Jafar initially joined a Rise supported employment team at a local manufacturer. He knew he could do more and began exploring independent employment, eventually finding Crestview through a job tryout. Jafar feels good about his job. The dining room work allows his personality to shine, and because it is a competitive employment position, he is also happy with the higher wage. He believes in himself and with the support of his family and his employer, he will continue to find success.





Samantha J. Manthe

Sam Manthe's life is trending upward.

This year she crossed off several achievements, including finding a job she loves and moving to independent living, which has been a long-term goal. Sam prepared to find work and was offered a job at the first place she interviewed! Sam also bravely put a face to IPS employment support services for all Minnesotans while testifying before the Minnesota Workforce Development Finance and Policy Committee earlier this year. Thank you, Sam for making your voice heard, and congratulations on your success!

John Cornelius

John Cornelius has been passionate about horses since he began therapeutic riding lessons as a child. Working with them was his only goal when he connected with Rise.

Finding long-term steady work at area stables was challenging. At first, he worked at more than one location just to fill his days and found it difficult to keep track of specific needs for up to 30 different horses. John eventually found a non-profit horse rescue in New Richmond where he works five days each week. With support from his mother, he is also becoming more independent. John took on extra work hours and is now searching for housing where he can live independently. We admire John's patience, flexibility and persistence along with his strong commitment to being a better stable hand.





Community Partners



BIX Produce

Our relationship with BIX Produce began in 2021 when we worked with them to staff a supported employment team. It has continued to grow, and we now have three teams supporting 11 people. The jobs are unique and allow people to build new skills working directly with food packaging and assembly in a refrigerated environment. We also employ a janitorial team in BIX's offices. They are a wonderful employer with a positive and inclusive environment.



New Richmond Chamber of Commerce

Rise and the New Richmond Chamber have partnered on projects and events for more than seven years. Their ongoing commitment allows the people we support and our staff to feel welcomed in the greater New Richmond community, and their willingness to build bridges helps us create even more connections which will allow people to flourish.



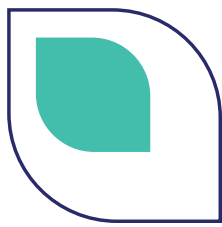
ThinkSelf

ThinkSelf is the official partner organization of Rise's Minnesota Employment Center (MEC). As a Deaf-led organization, our ThinkSelf partners provide the MEC team with valuable guidance, which ensures we are focusing our career exploration and employment efforts in the right areas. The ThinkSelf team is a pillar in the communities they serve, and we are so happy to be able to partner with them to provide comprehensive support.



Wyoming Machine

Our partnership with Wyoming Machine began three years ago with a supported employment cleaning crew. In addition to the cleaning team, three of the company's employees are now independent Rise hires. Lori and Traci Tapani treat crew members respectfully and, because of their open, positive, and supportive work environment, we have seen people grow and advance in their jobs. We are welcomed as part of their team!



Departing Board Members



Kathy Klang

Kathy is our sounding board when challenges arise. She joined the Board in 2015 and has served in many capacities, including as Chair for four years. Her strategic planning and financial expertise as a CPA and Partner with Cummings, Keegan, & Co. have been especially important as we transitioned programs and planned for a leadership change. Kathy is a model of professionalism, and we thank her for a decade of service.



Sheila Minske

Sheila's connection to Rise goes back nearly 15 years, but she officially joined our Board in 2015. Her passion for disability services comes from her father, who worked as a vocational support professional at Goodwill Industries. He taught her the valuable lesson that "there is dignity in work and building self-sufficiency." She is connected to our mission and believes Rise opens doors that allow people to live great lives. We are grateful for Sheila's support.



Andrea Murphy

Andrea has built a successful banking career and is currently Senior Vice President – Commercial Lending at Northeast Bank. We have relied on Andrea's leadership and financial knowledge throughout her eight years on the Board where she served in several capacities, including as Treasurer. Andrea believes Rise transforms lives. We are thankful for her contributions to our mission.



Rachael Smith

With a career as a special education paraprofessional at Anoka-Hennepin Schools, it's no surprise Rachel is a passionate supporter of people. She joined our Board in 2015 after her Special Olympics coach mentioned the volunteer opportunity and she currently serves as Secretary. Having grown up with a disability, her life experiences bring a unique and important perspective to strategy and policy discussions. Thank you, Rachel for your dedication.



Gala Thank You

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Fredrikson
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Ruan / Bobcat
Tollefson Family
Voya

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Cornelius Family
Cummins
Cummings, Keegan, & Co.
Ericka Waterman
Kelly Steffens

Kristin Hangebrauck
Lynn Noren
Palisade Asset Management
Riffland Solutions
ThinkSelf

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Nancy Lyons
Sarah Jean Knox, auctioneer
Alex Samek, photographer
Agile Video
Tracy Jochim, centerpieces
Alice Kane
Stacy Egeness
McDonald's Stillwater
Lisa Carlson
Harry Carlson
Nick Carlson
Cub Foods Fridley
Minneapolis Marriott Northwest
AVVR

RISE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kristin Hangebrauck, Chair
Cliff Rhoten, Vice Chair
Andrea Murphy, Treasurer
Rachael Smith, Secretary
Anne Holoch
Lauri Hopkins
Krishnakumar Subramonia Iyer
Kathy Klang
Susan Langfeldt
Jim Miley
Sheila Minske
Dan Newman
Scott Price
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Sponsors

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nvent

GOLD



SILVER

American Converters, Inc. | Bank of America | BIX Produce
Cass Precision Machining | Northeast Bank | Sheila Minske & Erin Peterson



photos: Alex Samek



WILKE HONORED AS OUTSTANDING DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL



Beth Wilke



Rise leadership and program managers join Brooklyn Tool staff to present Wilke's MOHR Award.

Beth Wilke, a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at Rise, has been named a 2024 Outstanding Direct Support Professional by the Minnesota Organization for Habilitation and Rehabilitation (MOHR). This award highlights Beth's exceptional dedication and impactful work supporting people with disabilities.

Beth began her career at our Spring Lake Park production facility, where she excelled at building meaningful connections with individuals in center-based settings. Her compassionate and person-centered approach prepared them for successful transitions to community employment. Today, Beth supports a team at

Brooklyn Tool, Inc. in Fridley, where she continues to make a remarkable difference.

According to MOHR's announcement, Beth was chosen for her ability to ensure her team is always well-prepared. Her unwavering commitment to building strong, individualized relationships and her reputation for going above and beyond to meet deadlines and support her team's success set her apart from other teams. At Rise, we know one of Beth's superpowers is her knack for ensuring the people she supports feel valued and empowered.

"This year's honorees go beyond the call of duty to support the people they serve," said MOHR

President Robin Harkonen. "We were deeply impressed with their accomplishments, which range from designing innovative programs to improving outcomes and expanding opportunities for people with disabilities."

MOHR's recognition of Beth was announced during National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week, held in September. This annual event honors DSPs across the nation for their vital role in providing essential services and making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Congratulations, Beth, on this well-deserved honor! Your dedication and hard work inspire us all. ▼



MAKING AN IMPACT

FROM SPRUCING UP OUR LOCATIONS TO YARD WORK, AND EVEN SOME PARTY PLANNING AND PREPARATION, WE WELCOMED DOZENS OF VOLUNTEER GROUPS THIS QUARTER FROM ACROSS THE TWIN CITIES METRO (IN PHOTOS BELOW):

1. Affinity Plus in Anoka. 2. Ruan/Doosan in Coon Rapids. 3. nVent at our Coon Rapids Halloween party.
4. Andersen Windows painting at Oakdale. 5. nVent painting in Coon Rapids. 6. Forest Lake Good Samaritans.
7. Brown & Brown at our Crystal Holiday Party. 8-9. So many volunteers at our Growing with Rise Gala. Thank you all!!



Celebrating our 2024

EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Rise Excellence in Leadership Awards recognize outstanding managers and leaders who positively contribute to Rise each year. We honored three individuals at our employee appreciation event held earlier in the fall. Congratulations!

Read more about each winner below. ▼



photo: Alex Samek

Bryant Corrigan **PROGRAM MANAGER**

Bryant is a program manager in Oakdale. This past year he's placed an importance on understanding the "why" of work so Oakdale direct support professionals (DSPs) understand how their work affects people they support. Bryant developed new approaches to give feedback and drive purpose throughout all Oakdale team members. He's also brought a strong vision to Oakdale as the program transitioned to a life enrichment focus. The team there is stronger because of Bryant.

Amanda Dircks **PROGRAM SUPERVISOR**

Amanda is always on the go through her role as a CBTE program supervisor where she supports SET sites at several longstanding business partners including Ruan, Medline, and Federal Premium Ammunition. Some of her partners have gone through extensive changes this past year, which required Amanda to step in and advocate for her teams. Amanda has an ability to “see people.” She brings an encouraging, but firm personality to her professional relationships while also knowing when to be patient and compassionate. Amanda takes time for the people she supports, which brings out the best in them.



Katie McNamara **PROGRAM SUPERVISOR**

Katie is New Richmond’s cheerleader, and it’s never difficult to feel valued when she is near. She works hard to develop community opportunities that allow people to succeed while encouraging them advocate for themselves at home, in their communities and at work. Katie is patient, optimistic, fair, and loyal—all attributes of a great leader who motivates people to bring their best selves to work each day. She leads with a steady hand, creating an environment of support and trust among teammates and people we serve. New Richmond’s Life Enrichment programs have flourished under Katie’s leadership.



Celebrating our 2024 **CHAMPIONS OF THE MISSION**

Rise team members are an extraordinary group of individuals who carry out and champion our important mission. Each month their peers nominate them for a Champion of the Month recognition. From that small group, a committee selects the employees to be honored as Champions of the Mission. Congratulations to our 2024 Champions of the Mission, who received their awards at our fall employee celebration event.

Congratulations to all our Champions of the Month. Nominations happen monthly August to July. Read more about each monthly champion on the pages following the Champion of the Mission recipients. ▼



Tim Fahey

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

Tim is a lead DSP in Crystal. He has supported people with disabilities his entire career, which has now spanned more than 40 years. Tim came to Rise about seven years ago and immediately became an essential part of our team. He has taken on many extra tasks due to staffing shortages this past year, including filling in to cover for a vacant LPN position, which was a HUGE help to the Crystal team. We are all so grateful for his knowledge and willingness to take on multiple roles with ease. Tim is valued by the people he supports and our team. He is helpful and respectful, and we are so happy to recognize him as a Champion of the Mission!

Lori Stellick-Wagner **CASE MANAGER**

Lori joined our team about four years ago. With a background in childcare and teaching, she brings equal parts of compassion and experience to her role as a CBTE Case Manager. Lori has a contagious enthusiasm for her work. She says it is because our teams make great things happen! Lori worked hard over the past year as we transitioned to MyEvolv and has done a phenomenal job of building her entire caseload into the system. She is quick to support others, and you'll often find her working alongside DSPs and checking in with people she supports. Lori is collaborative and kind, a true champion of our Rise Mission.



photo: Alex Samek

Ron Woolcott **TRANSPORTATION DRIVER**

Ron has been with Rise for more than 22 years. As a driver, Ron ensures that everyone we support can get where they need to be each day. Ron has been a bus driver, delivery person and also worked in retail, but he just loves driving throughout our community. He also excels at overcoming the daily challenges our transportation teams face. Ron is an excellent trainer, and you'll also find him helping plan transportation routes. He has such an eye for safety that if you're ever on a ride-along with Ron, you'll notice even the stuffed animals are buckled in! Ron is friendly, caring and fun. We are so grateful he is such a longstanding member of our team!



photo: Alex Samek

**Read more about our
Champions of the Month on pages 16-17.**

December 2023



Daniel Klonowski
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

Dan is the first staff on the floor each morning. He is always going above and beyond at his site. He comes prepared for any task and goes the extra mile to ensure people are successful.

December 2023



Jacki Fitzsimmons
**ACTIVITY
COORDINATOR**

What Colleagues Say:

Jacki has a big heart. She makes sure everyone's happiness comes first. She creates fun new experiences for people, and often helps activity coordinators plan projects, outings, and activities.

January 2024



Carol Stenstrom
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

Carol is caring and kind with a huge heart. Even on her busiest workdays, Carol takes time to offer support and instruction to people. She often makes suggestions that help people work faster, or easier.

February 2024



Jamie Farley
**ACTIVITY
COORDINATOR**

What Colleagues Say:

Jamie adds fun to the workplace in subtle ways. She doesn't tell anyone and waits for co-workers' reactions when they notice. She brings a smile to people and creates a fun program atmosphere.

March 2024



Dan Lindstrom
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

When he arrives at work each morning, Dan takes extra time to set up the space for other team members. He manages voicemails and passes the information off, allowing the team to have a smooth morning.

April 2024



Dale Gerhardt
**TRANSPORTATION
DRIVER**

What Colleagues Say:

"Dale has been a rock over the 10 years I've worked with him. He never expresses frustration or discontent, which makes him very approachable. People enjoy talking and working him."

April 2024



Debra Bryant
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

She embodies the qualities of an outstanding team member, going above and beyond to support the people in our programs in a kind, caring, and respectful way.

May 2024



Johnathan Berg
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

He is always accountable and adaptable. He steps in to assist his coworkers and people we support. Johnathan is always respectful, kind and courteous. He appreciates the differences in others.

May 2024



Carla Wilson
**EXEC. ASSISTANT &
PROJECT SPECIALIST**

What Colleagues Say:

Carla's problem-solving skills and positive attitude have made her an invaluable team member. She is positive and solution-focused. Carla coordinated so many elements of the Rise Admin Office move.

June 2024



Jannie Donoho
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

Jannie is one of our most dependable staff. Her willingness to speak up for change when necessary is well-recognized, and she approaches challenges with a "can-do" attitude.

July 2024



Wendy Gardner
**EMPLOYMENT
CONSULTANT**

What Colleagues Say:

"Wendy shows true grit. She finishes what she starts and pushes boundaries. Wendy has helped people grow and keep jobs. She inspires me daily to come to work."

July 2024



Ophelia Clarke-Klar
**DIRECT SUPPORT
PROFESSIONAL**

What Colleagues Say:

"She's a critical part of the Springbrook team, and we'd be lost without her. Her commitment shows when she volunteers for extra tasks and brings a sense of joy and stability to the people she serves."



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A FAREWELL NOTE

Lynn Noren retired from Rise on December 31, 2024 after dedicating more than 45 years—her entire career—to this organization. Lynn has worn countless hats over the decades and mastered nearly every role, including President and CEO. But more than her job titles, she’s been a mentor, a guiding light, and a true friend to so many.

Lynn often says she “grew up at Rise,” but we know it’s just as true that Rise grew because of her. Her passion, dedication, and unwavering belief in our mission have shaped who we are today.

So, now as we say goodbye, we also tell Lynn thank you – for the contributions and the countless lives she’s touched. We wish her a retirement filled with joy, adventure, and beautiful new memories.

Thank you, Lynn. You’ll always be a part of Rise.

Photo: Lynn Noren at our Growing with Rise Gala just before accepting the Tollefson Award, in honor of our founders.



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