

# RISE REPORTER

JUNE 2021 | VOL. 45, NO. 2



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Movin' and Groovin' in Cottage Grove | Summer Picnic Returns | Technology Updates!  
Kitchen Career Reboot | MN Employment Center Connects | Journey with Cummins



# RISE REPORTER

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## 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.

## SUBMISSIONS

We love a good story. Share your photos and accomplishments with us! Your submission to [kbartnick@rise.org](mailto:kbartnick@rise.org) may appear in an upcoming Rise Reporter, be featured on Rise's social media sites or both! We can't wait to hear from you!

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## STAFF

### **Kathy Klang**

Chair, Rise Board of Directors

### **Lynn Noren**

President & CEO

### **Noel McCormick**

Vice President of Advancement

### **Kelly Bartnick**

Communications and Volunteer Manager; Editor

## ON THE COVER

Paul Weller has been making cabinets in Minnesota for nearly a decade. Read more about Paul's work and the services he depends on to reach his goals on page 8.





## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings and I hope you have had a fantastic spring.

We are moving more toward a new “normal” in our communities, work, and home lives each day and I am so hopeful about the future. As restrictions are lifted, we are also learning more about how our lives and our Rise services will change as we emerge from this year-long pandemic. While I write this, Rise is updating our policies and procedures based on new guidance from the Minnesota Department of Human Services leadership. We expect more frequent updates as restrictions are eased and will keep you updated through the process. The fastest way to learn about any changes now and in the future will be to check [rise.org](http://rise.org). All updates are included on a COVID-19 banner on our home page.

It has been such a joy to see a return to services as more and more people we serve and Rise team members have become vaccinated. I am so grateful to the staff who have continued providing services throughout the pandemic, and for persons served who have been able to receive support. The pandemic has been an experience we will all remember for a lifetime! Our reopening also means it's time to hire additional staff members to meet the demand for services, which has been challenging for Rise and for all businesses. We are working hard to fill these roles. If you know people interested in a joining a team of dedicated and wonderful workers who make a difference just by coming to work each day, please refer them to Rise.

While reopening for services following the pandemic is exciting, we also have much more to celebrate this year. Rise kicks off our 50th anniversary later this summer. It has been so fun to look back at our history as we prepare to commemorate this incredible accomplishment. I feel fortunate to have spent 42 years with this organization. Being connected to the people we serve, their families, our business partners and all Rise's wonderful supporters has been one of the greatest joys of my life. I have been constantly encouraged and amazed by the accomplishments of those we support.

As we embark on our Anniversary celebration, we will be sharing "50 stories," a series highlighting the successful journeys of people we serve and Rise team members throughout Minnesota and western Wisconsin. I want to give all our interns who helped with this project a special thanks. You will see their stellar work beginning in August.

I hope you enjoy learning about the wonderful accomplishments of the people we serve in this issue. We have also included our 2020 Annual Report. Even with the challenges of 2020, we are extremely proud of our accomplishments. You will also see a save-the-date for our Rise Gala in the fall and a reminder for this summer's picnic. I extend an invitation for both events to you all and would be so happy to have you join us in celebration of our 50th year!

**Lynn Noren**  
President & CEO

# SPEAKING A SIMILAR LANGUAGE

**Team member at Duluth's Minnesota Employment Center helps Bill Kelch and many others reach employment goals.**

**BY JILLIAN MCNETT**

LONG BEFORE A LUNCH or dinner rush hits the dining room at Moose Lake's Redneck Meats BBQ, Bill Kelch stands over a stack of pots and pans in the restaurant kitchen. He's quick to move through the dishes as the busy kitchen preps for a long day serving hungry customers. "I am very fast with loading and washing the dishes," Kelch said. "I get compliments on my speed. They tell me I am the best."

Kelch has worked at Redneck Meats BBQ for five months. His managers already consider him an important part of their team and praise his work. He is happy to feel welcomed because his experience with other employers has not always been favorable.

Four years ago, Kelch was working at a different employer when he took a leave of



*William "Bill" Kelch (pictured right) places clean glasses on a shelf at Redneck Meats BBQ in Moose Lake, Minn. (top photo)*

“ *When I started the job, Mary was there and helped show me everything and what to do.* ”

absence because of his health. He was not hired back when he recovered.

He had previously worked with another provider that was not fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). The counselor struggled to effectively communicate with him, which frustrated everyone. As time went on and still facing unemployment, Kelch became discouraged



IMAGES: MARY SOLTIS

and began to lose hope of ever finding work. His situation changed when he met Mary Soltis.

Soltis works as Rise's Duluth-based Occupational Communication Specialist for the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC), an employment services program for people with hearing disabilities. She is also Deaf, and like Bill Kelch, ASL is her



first language. That makes Mary exceptionally equipped to assist Kelch and others like him working to overcome workplace communication challenges.

Just like it can be difficult for bilingual people to understand an accent or a dialect in their second language, ASL interpreters who are hearing (i.e., not Deaf) can't always easily interpret an individual's particular "dialect" of ASL. This happened often to Bill and is why even with an ASL interpreter, he struggled to understand communications with his previous counselor.

With a shared first language and a shared culture, Mary has been able to 're-interpret' information for Bill in a way that matches his needs and so he understands. "I helped communicate information to him at his language level and style, which helped everything come together," Soltis said.

"I was looking for a long time and it was hard to be patient," Kelch said. "Mary said this may be due to COVID-19 which helped me understand. And when I started the job, Mary was there and helped show me everything and what to do."

Kelch works daily from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Redneck Meats BBQ. Because he had been out of the workforce for so long, Kelch and Soltis agreed this position would help him re-establish a work presence, focusing on adjusting to a work schedule,

building confidence himself and his abilities and work on communicating with managers and staff who are hearing.

Because MEC's supports don't end when someone finds a job, Mary Soltis continues working with Bill and others as they advance in their career, explore changing industries, and seek out additional training.

After having an affirming, accessible, and constructive experience at Redneck Meats, Bill now has the confidence and optimism needed to keep moving forward on his employment journey. He has set a goal to operate machinery, like a forklift, and may pursue a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) in the future. ▼

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*Bill's journey has been made possible by a grant from our Northeast Minnesota community partners: the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, the Northland Foundation, and the Ordean Foundation. We're so thankful when community institutions invest in employment for everyone!*

## LOOKING FOR A REWARDING CAREER?

## Work at Rise!

**NOW HIRING** these positions and more:

**Direct Support Professionals:**  
Support people with disabilities to work and learn in our community.

**Employment Consultants:**  
Teach people how to find and keep a great job.

**Transportation Drivers:**  
Provide people with safe, reliable rides to work and activities.

**\$1,000 Hiring  
Bonus**

**No Evenings  
or Weekends**

**Competitive  
Wages & Benefits**

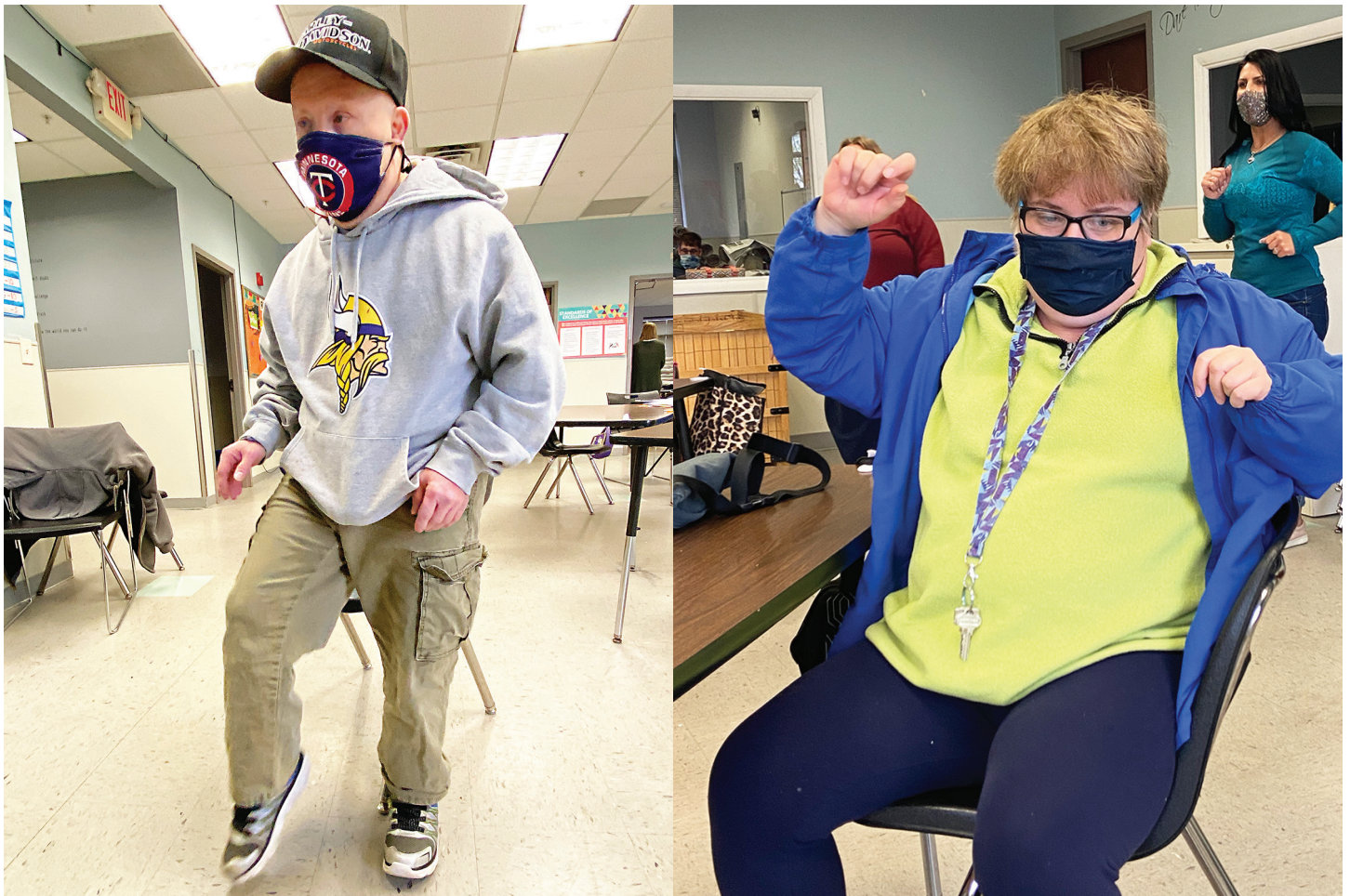
**Apply at [rise.org/jobs](https://rise.org/jobs) today!** no prior experience necessary



# WELLNESS IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

**Spirit Club brings healthy living activities to Rise in Cottage Grove each day, keeping people moving and grooving.**

**BY JILLIAN MCNETT**



IMAGES: RACHEL MEYER AND NICOLE CONTI

Steve Cox (pictured left) and Deanna Cloose (pictured right) take part in Spirit Club activities held weekdays at Rise in Cottage Grove, Minn.

PAY AN AFTERNOON visit to Rise Cottage Grove and find a room full of activity. People are tapping their feet to music, lunging legs, and circling arms with Rise team members. These fun health and wellness workouts are streamed online from Spirit Club, a community of certified fitness experts who create classes for people of all abilities.

Each Spirit Club session is led by three instructors. One demonstrates the most intense version of a workout. The second person performs a simpler style of movement and the third instructor carries out all movement while seated. Spirit Club's Zumba classes are a Rise fan favorite.

"I don't really like dancing

because I'm not very good at it, but I like moving my arms," said Steve Cox, who also goes by "Goose" and has come to Rise in Cottage Grove for 39 years. "The [Zumba] videos were hard at first, but they are getting easier," he said. Cox's one complaint? He'd like more Kenny Rogers music included with the classes.



## MORE THAN JUST FUN, SPIRIT CLUB'S IMPORTANT BENEFITS

Regular exercise has important to overall health and wellness benefits. For people living with disabilities, activity improves motor skills, increases stamina, and builds muscle strength—all benefits as people take part in community-based activities and accomplish goals of finding work.

Health and wellness classes have also kept people active during a difficult time. Many served at Cottage Grove want to return to community-based employment or find new work exploration programs. Because people with disabilities sometimes have health conditions that put them at higher risk for serious Covid infections, their wait to return to work is much longer than others.

Sarah Brown, known to her Rise friends as “Brownie,” told us she would rather be working toward goals during this time, but these Spirit Club skills will be useful as she and others go back to work after the pandemic.

Sam McQuade, who is new to Rise, said he’s excited to begin working soon and is participating in the programs to build strength and endurance which will contribute to his goals.

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*Washington County Health and wellness programs are partly funded from the Lakeview Health Foundation, the St. Croix Valley Foundation, the Fred C. and Katherine B. Andersen Foundation, and the Margaret Rivers Fund.*

Another person served, Diane Bruce, told us she especially enjoys the music, and loves when she dances with Cottage Grove supervisor Rachel Meyer.

## MENTAL WELLNESS THROUGH MEDITATION

Rise team members also hold regular meditation sessions to nurture people's mental health. Meditation benefits include decreased pain, fatigue, anxiety and depression. The mindfulness practiced during meditation can be useful while developing healthy coping strategies.

In spring and summer, Rise team members take wellness activities outside too. Walking club, which became popular last summer, returned in April. Employees are busy planning additional outdoor activities for everyone to enjoy time in the fresh air

exploring the community.

## HEALTHY RECIPE COOKING CLASSES ARE A BIG HIT

When people served aren't dancing in Zumba class, they're in the kitchen working on new healthy recipes. With guidance and instruction from staff, people supported at Rise learn to make new recipes made up of fruits and vegetables that promote a healthy lifestyle. While many persons served live with families or in group homes, learning cooking and nutrition skills contribute to their independent living skills and build confidence.

The most recent recipe? Apple turnovers! Brown and Bruce both enjoy the cooking classes. When asked if she liked the apple turnovers, Bruce responded with an absolute, “Yes!” ▼

*Scott Schult, Rise Team Member Monica O'Kane and Tom Scherr make apple turnovers.*



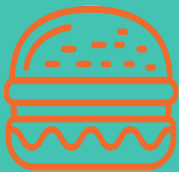
# YOU'RE INVITED



## Rise's 50th Anniversary Kickoff Picnic

Sunday, August 1, 2021 | 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Aquatore Park, 9191 Lincoln St. NE, Blaine, MN 55434



**BURGERS**

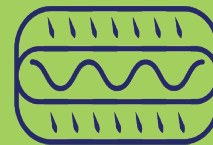
**GAMES!**

Music by:



**DJ JOHN THORP**

**BALLOONS!**



**BRATS**

**PRIZES!**

**Sign up now!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How many in your group? \_\_\_\_\_

**Three easy ways to reserve your spot:**

1. Cut along the line above and return your RSVP to a Rise team member, or
2. Scan and return above information to [submissions@rise.org](mailto:submissions@rise.org), or
3. Go online to [bit.ly/RisePicnic](https://bit.ly/RisePicnic) and fill out an electronic RSVP





# TECHNOLOGY THAT PAYS

## Sought-after Shavlik grant helps Rise modernize payroll systems to support our team members and the people we serve.

BY NICOLE CONTI

Rise reached a huge milestone April 14. After more than a year of planning, we completed a large technology update, modernizing payroll, hiring, benefits, timecard functions and more for all 350 Rise employees.

Our new Paylocity software represents a leap in the work we are doing behind the scenes to build better business practices. It replaces outdated and inefficient systems which took too much time to work with and maintain, allowing us more time to support our teams and the 3,500 people coming to Rise for services.

“In our business, everything we can do to increase efficiency gives all of our team members the opportunity to work more with those we serve,” said CEO Lynn Noren.



Paylocity will allow Rise to support our staff in new ways and launch new initiatives, including an employee recognition program. “It also gives us the flexibility to offer customized services and support and faster access to data to make faster staffing and pay decisions,” said Erin Braaten, Rise VP of Human Resources. “It’s a better onboarding experience for new team members, which we hope will lead to them staying with us longer.”

Rise needed modern software made for large for-profit compa-

nies because of our size and the broad and diverse scope of services we provide. The software came with a high price tag, which delayed the implementation for years. A 2020 technology grant from the Shavlik Family Foundation made the launch possible.

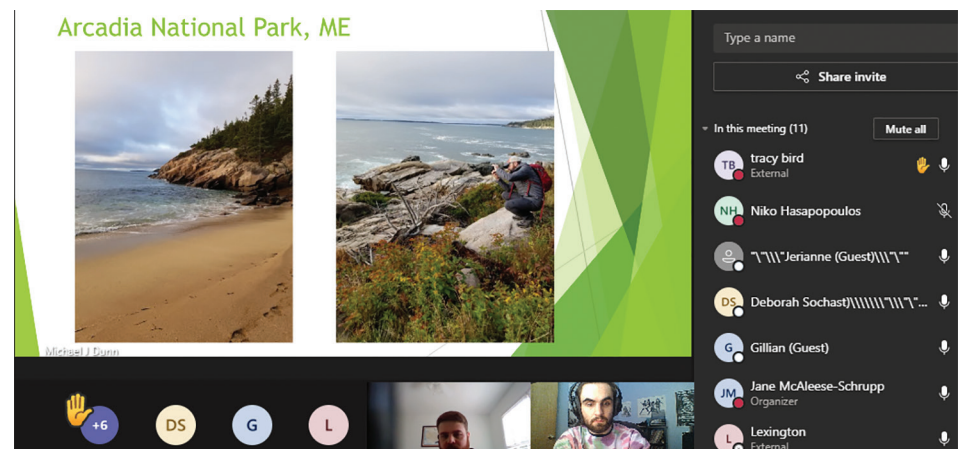
Rebecca and Mark Shavlik created their foundation after the sale of their security software company Shavlik Technologies in 2011. Their foundation is one of the few funders investing in technology at Minnesota nonprofits.

“A Shavlik grant is an enormous win for Rise,” said Grants Manager Nicole Conti. “These grants allow access to powerful tools that contribute to quality services. They are highly competitive, and we thank the Shavlik Family Foundation for this important funding.” ▼

# VIRTUAL VACATION TIME

## Rise takes a remote trip with Cummins volunteers.

CUMMINS TEAM members recently hosted a virtual trip and educational travel presentation. People learned about Canada and Maine during the session. We are grateful to Cummins for their Rise Partnership. ▼



COURTESY IMAGE



# THE CABINET MAKER

**Paul Weller finds work through ARMHS services. His craftsmanship is on display in kitchens across Minnesota and the United States.**

**BY TOM BRINKER**

PAUL WELLER WALKED into Galloping Cabinets in rural Mayer, Minn. to assemble cabinets, doors, and panels seven years ago. Weller’s work at the family-owned custom cabinetry company creates showpiece kitchens across Minnesota and around the country.

“I cut out materials, assemble, and sand a lot” Weller said. “The work is usually on my own, but I also help with training new staff.”

Weller, 57, was connected with Rise’s transitional housing program after facing homelessness. Soon he was introduced to Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) and Brenda Sorgdrager, a Rise ARMHS practitioner.

## ARMHS programs support struggling individuals

ARMHS services provide people living with mental health struggles with crucial resources as they



*Paul Weller frames a new cabinet at Galloping Cabinets in rural Mayer, Minn.*

navigate housing, employment, and more.

“For Paul, anxiety and depression might get in the way of day-to-day tasks like going to a nec-

essary appointment, which leads to setbacks. I help people, including Paul, manage the day-to-day so they can get to their goals,” Sorgdrager said.

IMAGES: Lexi Wardarski



“Both my job and Brenda have helped stabilize my life, keeping me working and taking care of what I need to,” Weller added. He says he appreciates his job and Sorgdrager's continued support.

“Brenda helps me out with just about everything, like budgeting, grocery shopping, and a lot of daily life things,” he said.

“Paul has never learned to read or write,” said Sorgdrager. “So, the fact that Paul has learned to budget and do his job well in his own way is mind blowing. It’s one of those steps in managing our own lives that we take for granted.”

Her support extends beyond learning and skill development. Sorgdrager and Rise have connected Weller to needed household appliances, new tires, a computer, and accessible technology to support his learning disability through community connections, programs, and grants.

“Without someone you know helping you out or someone who knows what to look for, you can get passed over for mental health services and many other areas,” Sorgdrager said. “The past year has given everybody a lot of anxiety and added barriers, which is what most people on my caseload have always worked through.”

### Dedication to the team

Weller describes himself as a conscientious, focused, and hard-working employee. Sorgdrager agrees. “He’s dedicated,

timely, and he has an ability to not take things so seriously. He takes on a lot internally, but you’d never know that. If you ever need someone on your team, he’d be the guy,” she said as they share a laugh.

Weller says his employer has become his friend, which is just one reason he’s stayed with Galloping Cabinets for so long. “He’s a pretty good boss! If I ever have issues, he always understands,” he said. “My favorite part of the job is working with my hands, starting with raw wood and making something with it.”

In his free time, he enjoys golfing, hunting deer, barbecuing, and handiwork. He would like to build a career in custom woodworking someday.

Sorgdrager believes Weller has the skills and passion to reach that

goal. “I’ll go to his house to meet with him and he’s usually building something. His daughter just got a job as a teacher and he built her a desk. Also, the owner of his apartment building hired him to do the flooring in a unit next door,” she said.

Weller recognizes the valuable role ARMHS services have played in his life. He wants others to know too, especially those whose mental health struggles create daily barriers. “I wish people knew more about mental health issues and what it takes for some of us to manage every day. Once you get a contact and a little help, things get easier and more manageable. I know there are all sorts of people out there who are not receiving the services they need. Getting connected to resources is the hard part. It’s important.” ▼



# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

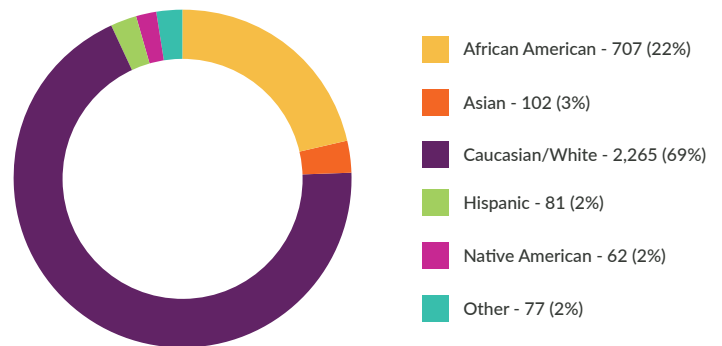
3,294

## PEOPLE SERVED BY RISE IN 2020

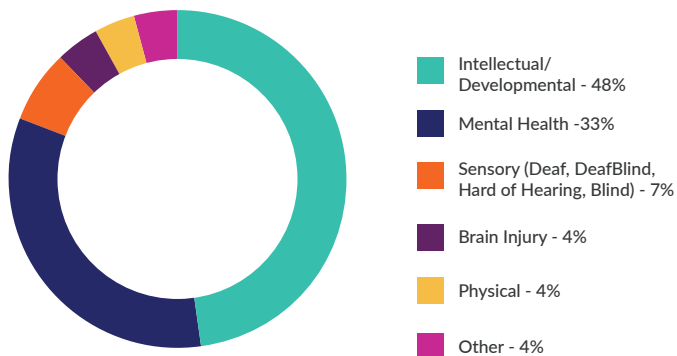
### AGE RANGE



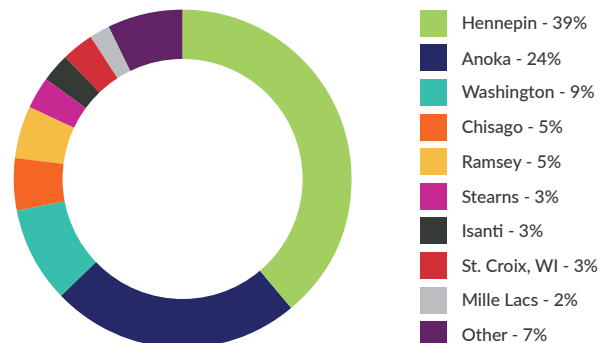
### RACE



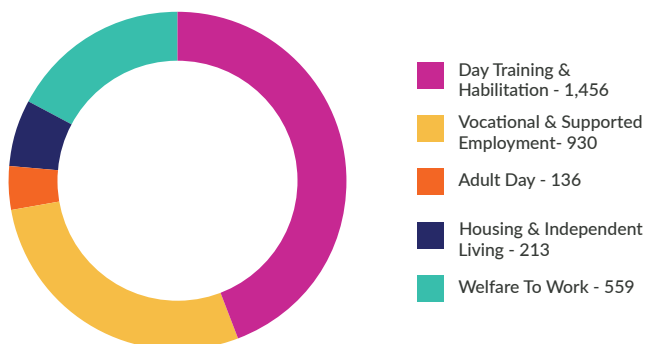
### DISABILITY TYPE



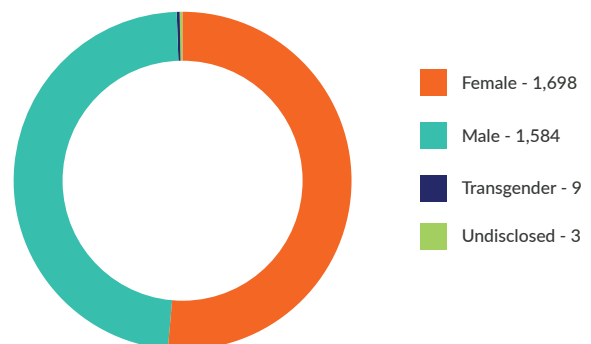
### COUNTY OF RESIDENCE



### SERVICE LINE



### GENDER





## EMPLOYMENT

The information below reflects employment outcomes for people served in our Day Training and Habilitation (DTH), Vocational Rehabilitation/Supported Employment (VRSE) and Welfare-to-Work (W2W) service lines.



## SATISFACTION

The information below is reflective of survey responses from 289 people served and 41 stakeholders.



“ It's hard for me to believe how helpful and accommodating Rise has been. I'm so grateful for this program, all Rise members involved have treated me with such kindness and support. ”

- From a person served

“ Due to Covid we had our program virtually so goals could not be worked on in the traditional way. However, Rise was and is very creative with their virtual program which has helped me emotionally during this pandemic. ”

- From a person served

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM

LYNN NOREN  
President and Chief Executive Officer

TIM DICKIE  
Chief Program Officer

TOM HAGLUND  
Chief Financial Officer

ERIN BRAATEN  
Vice President of Human Resources

NOEL MCCORMICK  
Vice President of Advancement

JUDY ANDERSEN  
Director of Adult Day Programs

JODI BLUME  
Senior Director of Community Integration  
and Life Enrichment Programs

MIKE HARPER  
Director of Programs and Services—Central Minnesota

KEITH HOVLAND  
Director of CBTE and Supported Employment Teams

DAN MEYERS  
Director of Vocational Evaluation and Transition

MICHELE MORRIS  
Director of Industrial Services

RYAN NELSON  
Director of Transportation

KRIS OBERG  
Director of Employment and Day Services—Washington  
County

ROBERT REEDY  
Senior Director of Vocational Services

BECKY ROTHER  
Director of Quality Assurance

JAMIE SMITH  
Director of Information Technology

NATALIE ZACHARIAS  
Director of Day and Supported Employment Services,  
Rise Coon Rapids

## 2020 RISE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR: Kathy Klang, Minneapolis

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SECRETARY: Rachael Smith, Champlin

Mark Bergmann, Minneapolis

Blake Elliott, Saint Paul

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Kristin Hangebrauck, Saint Louis Park

Anne Holoch, Corcoran

Lauri Hopkins, Lino Lakes

Susan Langfeldt, Deer Park, Wis.

Sheila Minske, Minneapolis

Kelly Steffens, Prior Lake

## INCOME STATEMENT

### INCOME

PROGRAM SERVICE FEES .....	\$8,341,000
PRODUCTION AND LABOR SALES TO PUBLIC .....	\$3,233,000
GRANTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS .....	\$4,910,000
TRANSPORTATION .....	\$2,773,000
DONATIONS / SPECIAL EVENTS / UNITED WAY.....	\$372,000
OTHER, INCLUDING COVID RELIEF FUNDING .....	\$2,554,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME .....</b>	<b>\$22,183,000</b>

### EXPENSES

DAY TRAINING & HABILITATION PROGRAMS.....	\$11,224,000
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS .....	\$3,419,000
PRODUCTION .....	\$915,000
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL.....	\$2,993,000
TRANSPORTATION .....	\$1,626,000
ADULT DAY PROGRAMS.....	\$767,000
WELFARE-TO-WORK PROGRAMS.....	\$451,000
HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMS....	\$321,000
FUNDRAISING .....	\$251,000
<b>TOTAL .....</b>	<b>\$21,967,000</b>

## BALANCE SHEET

### ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS.....	\$15,763,000
NET LAND, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT.....	\$8,590,000
OTHER ASSETS.....	\$781,000
<b>TOTAL ASSETS.....</b>	<b>\$25,134,000</b>

### LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES .....	\$2,701,000
LONG-TERM DEBT.....	\$1,204,000
OTHER LIABILITIES .....	\$576,000
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES.....</b>	<b>\$4,481,000</b>

### NET ASSETS

NET ASSETS, UNRESTRICTED .....	\$20,169,000
NET ASSETS, RESTRICTED.....	\$484,000
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS .....</b>	<b>\$20,653,000</b>

# AWARD-WINNING TEAM

Rise team member Kelly Robinson's community work highlighted by national nursing group, The DAISY Foundation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO RISE Nurse Care Coordinator Kelly Robinson who was recently presented with The DAISY Team Award by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

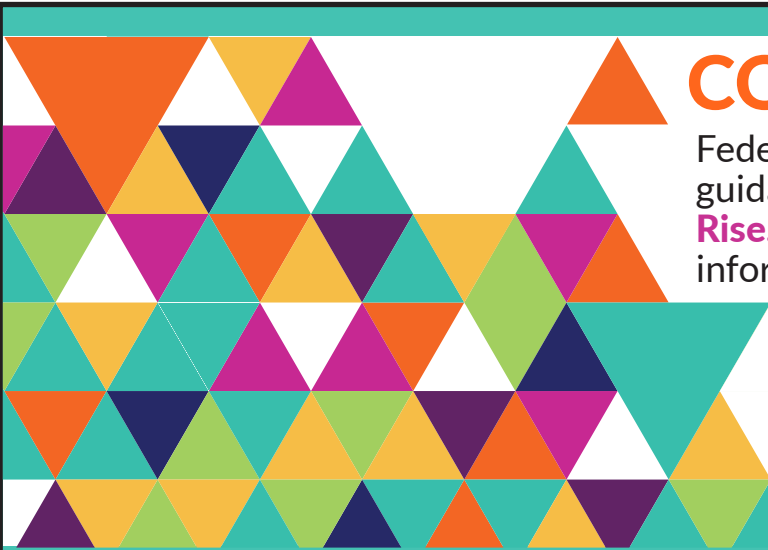
Robinson is the founder of the Minnesota chapter of Black Nurses Rock, a group that provided valuable medical expertise and assistance with COVID-19 testing, PPE and vaccines during the past year. The group was also instrumental in helping keep people safe during George Floyd's funeral last June.

The award, created by The DAISY Foundation, which celebrates extraordinary nursing, applauds Robinson and her colleagues' compassion and skills. ▼



COURTESY PHOTO

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz presented Rise Nurse Care Coordinator Kelly Robinson and the Minnesota chapter of Black Nurses Rock with a DAISY Team Award for advancing health equity earlier this month.



## COVID-19 questions?

Federal and state health and safety guidance has recently changed. Go to [Rise.org/covid-19](https://rise.org/covid-19) for the most up-to-date information, including:

- Program information and changes
- Health and safety guidelines
- The latest plan and policy news

*Check back regularly for updates!*

# CELEBRATE



## SAVE THE DATE!

*Thursday, November 4, 2021 • 5:00-8:30 P.M.*

● OUR 10TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA ●

Join us in person, or participate from home on your computer or device. More details to come!

**TICKETS GO ON SALE AUGUST 1**

Watch for registration information on our website:  
[www.rise.org](http://www.rise.org)





# VALUABLE EXPERIENCES

## Internships create learning opportunities for aspiring young professionals.

*Rise welcomed eight spring interns in January. College students from universities across Minnesota and Wisconsin went from virtual classrooms to remote offices for hands-on work experience in human resources, communications, event planning, grants and fundraising and video production. Learn more about our interns:*



COURTESY PHOTO

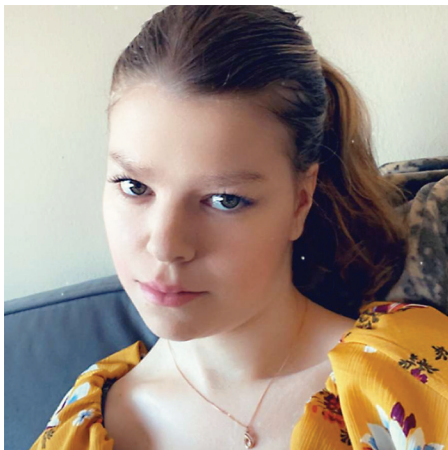
**PAIGE CIHUNKA »**  
WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

PAIGE CIHUNKA returned to Rise as a Human Resources Intern after a successful 2020 internship. She and the HR team worked hard to implement our new computer software, Paylocity, which helps us support our employees and the people we serve in many ways, such as payroll, hiring, benefits, timecard functions and more.

“Being part of the transition definitely was the most valuable part of my internship this spring. It is awesome to see it all come

together and support the HR team,” she said.

Cihunka graduated from Winona State University in May with a degree in Human Resource Management and Business Administration. She has always wanted to work for an organization that helps people, and says she enjoyed working with Rise’s Human Resources team. ▼



COURTESY PHOTO

**SOPHIE STRZOK »**  
ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

SENIOR SOPHIE STRZOK spent the semester as Rise’s Government Affairs Intern. The Political Science major was attracted to Rise because of our ongoing legislative advocacy for people with disabilities and other barriers.

Strzok’s work at Rise focused on legislative updates, social media promotions and efforts encouraging people to attend Disability Day at the Capitol in February. She also worked hard to update and inform staff and the people we serve through regular advocacy web updates at rise.org.

Strzok said, “I have enjoyed being with people who are focused on helping people experiencing disabilities and have learned much about Minnesota’s legislative process. Working on bills and tracking them through the legislature was an internship highlight.”

Strzok says her passion for disability rights advocacy grew too. She plans to continue to focus on disability rights in her career in a consulting role or as a disability attorney. ▼

*Meet more interns on page 16.*

WITHOUT HIS RISE internship, Joe Lehman says he would not have learned about fundraising strategy, content creation, career planning or professional development. As a Development and Special Events Intern, Lehman helped raise our Rise profile through fundraising research projects and by supporting event planning.

Lehman was attracted to Rise’s mission when searching for

internships. “Rise’s ability to build meaningful relationships with people and create helpful services is admirable,” he said.

An Urban Studies major at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, he plans to find a position as a city planner after college. Lehman's career goals include community development and planning or local government administration. ▼



COURTESY PHOTO

« JOE LEHMAN  
U OF M - TWIN CITIES



COURTESY PHOTO

NATALIE KARL »  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHWESTERN - ST. PAUL

NATALIE KARL hopes to build a rewarding career helping people experiencing difficulties in their daily lives. That’s why the University of Northwestern – St. Paul senior was attracted to an internship with Rise.

While on our Advancement team, Natalie dug into Rise’s volunteer program, updating

records, and organizing data. She also wrote articles, coordinated mock interviews, and helped with volunteer orientation.

Karl graduated in May with a degree in Nonprofit Leadership and Intercultural Studies. She plans to work in volunteer relations. ▼

JILLIAN MCNETT was attracted to Rise because of our strong reputation among Twin Cities nonprofits. A Strategic Communications major, McNett worked as a Grant Writing Intern, supported grant projects, wrote articles, and put together supporting materials and presentations.

“I’ve gotten a look behind the curtain and learned how nonprof-

its work. My supervisor taught me about grants, how the industry functions, and gave me tips on my future job search,” McNett said.

McNett has enjoyed meeting new people outside of her Rise team and feels lucky to be part of an organization that values interns' work and input. She plans to find nonprofit work in the Twin Cities after graduating in the fall. ▼



COURTESY PHOTO

« JILLIAN MCNETT  
U OF M - TWIN CITIES



COURTESY PHOTO

**LEXI WARDARSKI »**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN -  
MADISON

LEXI WARDARSKI's digital skills have been useful as Rise prepares for our 50th Anniversary. She filmed and edited interviews with people Rise serves, staff, and others important to Rise's legacy. Interviews will be used throughout our anniversary year, including during the Celebrate Rise Gala November 4.

"I have enjoyed meeting staff and people Rise works with and was able to learn so much. Everyone has amazing stories to share," she said.

The UW Madison Communications student spent the semester off campus because of the pandemic. She says her internship provided valuable experience.

Wardarski graduates in December with a Communication Arts degree and certificates in Digital Studies and Cinema Production. She plans to work as an outdoor photographer, creating photos and videos for summer camps and camp marketing firms.



**SIERRA ST. JOHN »**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - WHITEWATER

SIERRA ST. JOHN knew a Nonprofit Administration Internship with Rise would be a great fit when she applied. The Spanish and Nonprofit Management major worked closely with our Quality Assurance team. St. John also organized surveys and updated staff training to help

keep us compliant with current standards.

She believes hands-on experience is important to her professional development as she begins her career and becomes a future non-profit leader. "Learning and applying skills are two very important steps in the pro-

cess," she said.

St. John finds value in learning Rise's person-centered perspective and hopes to continue her career at Rise. She is also interested in continued learning, which may include Global Policy studies.

*Photo not available.*

**« OLIVIA STATTERLEE**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - STOUT

OLIVIA STATTERLEE is finishing up her final semester at University of Wisconsin – Stout studying Human Development and Family Studies.

Statterlee chose Rise for the opportunity to learn more about human resources. Working closely from home with the HR team during Rise's Paylocity rollout, she

learned it is possible to work well together virtually.

Statterlee is grateful for the hands-on experience she received while implementing our new Paylocity human resources technology platform. She plans to serve in AmeriCorps in Duluth following graduation in May before pursuing her master's degree.



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TWIN CITIES, MN

We are so excited to see your smiling faces at our summer picnic August 1, 2021 at Aquatore Park in Blaine, Minn. This will be our first summer gathering together since 2018 (photos below). Save your spot and learn more **on page 6**.

