



Annual Report 2017



47
programs

25
locations

5,312
direct program
participants

more than
12,000
family members
supported

Foster Care, Residential & Shelter Programs

Family Stabilization Programs

Intellectual / Development Disabilities Services

Special Education & Community Schools

Early Childhood Centers

Juvenile Justice Programs

Community Health Initiatives

Administration





Paths to positive change since 1831

Mission

Driven by the belief that each of us can thrive when life has hope and opportunity, Rising Ground provides caring support and proven paths to positive change, helping children, adults, and families rise above adversity.

Vision

Rising Ground envisions a future for New York where every child has an equal opportunity to succeed; where vulnerable individuals and families have the resources and support they need; where people with disabilities can access opportunity and fully participate in their communities; and where all are supported as they navigate life's challenges and positively direct their lives.

Values

Rooted in an unshakeable belief in every individual's ability to change and grow, we value:

• ACCOUNTABILITY • CONNECTION • TENACITY • SERVICE
as we help children, adults, and families pursue their dreams and goals.



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- 24** Supporters
- 28** Volunteers

Rising Ground Leadership

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Children supported by Rising Ground gather with leadership on the steps of New York City Hall to celebrate the announcement of our new name.

Dear friends,

In the nearly two centuries since our founding as an orphanage in 1831, the story of Rising Ground has been one of change for the better.

As the world around us has changed, so too have our services and approaches to ensuring that we are best meeting the needs of our New York City area neighborhoods. We are committed to making positive change possible for the community as a whole and in the lives of the people we support. We help children, adults, and families acquire the resources, skills, opportunities, and hope they seek in order to overcome adversity and thrive.

The most noticeable update from the past year is our new name . . . But there is so much more to talk about.

We have many exciting updates, new programs, expansions, adaptations, and successes that inspired the name change. We are a growing organization addressing varied community needs. We continually look to be more effective in our work. Within this Annual Report, we share updates, as well as stories of a handful of the thousands of people that our work has helped.

The life-affirming work we do would not be possible without our many friends and supporters, who we also recognize now. The dedication of our more than 1,400 staff and our hundreds of volunteers, donors, and community partners is the cornerstone of our ability to help so many in need overcome adversity and positively direct their lives. Every dollar donated and each hour volunteered is crucial to our ability to help. To our donors, volunteers, staff and community partners, thank you for your invaluable contributions.

We could not do it without you.

Sincerely,




José Martin Jara
Board President




Alan Mucatel
Executive Director



Our New Name

For nearly two centuries, our organization has been about helping our neighbors.

The ways in which we help and the needs of the people we support have changed considerably over that time. From our founding as the Leake and Watts Orphan House in 1831, we have evolved to be a vital, positive part of the lives of literally thousands of New Yorkers facing a wide range of challenges.

We began examining how well we tell the story of our work and its impact as well as how to better represent the multi-faceted work we do. This process led to the launch of a new website, as well as a new look to all our materials. We then unveiled our new name — Rising Ground.

Through this journey, we looked carefully at the wide range of work we do and asked what it is that unites the very different aspects of this multi-service organization. The notion of “rising” emerged — a consistent theme across all our services and efforts of people moving forward and upward in their lives . . . toward goals they have set for themselves. It was clear that ours is a message of hope, opportunity and the possibility of positive change. Toward that end, through our work we provide a foundation — a solid “ground” - from which to grow and proceed through new skills, concrete assistance, a network of supports, and more.

Along with the new name, we have revised our mission statement, developed a new tagline, and outlined our vision, values, and expectations. Our new name and overall rebranding has made us that much more successful in telling our tale, attracting support for our efforts, and making our work more identifiable to community partners and, the people we support.

We remain committed to the work started in 1831 by John Watts, Jr., and John George Leake. We continue to honor their legacy not only through program names but by continuing their dream of helping New York’s children, adults, and families to rise above adversity, providing them with the foundations upon which to make positive change possible in their lives.





Top: Board Members José Martin Jara and Joyce Coppin-Mondesire at the Together We Rise Gala. Bottom: Board Members Susan Benedict and Matthew Del Percio join for a tour of our Bronx Family Mental Health Clinic.



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Rising Ground Leadership

MSNBC's Stephanie Ruhle presents the Thelma Stackhouse Award to Board Member Emerita Francis R. Olivieri at the 2017 Together We Rise Gala.

Associate Board gives young professionals chance to contribute talents and time to help fellow New Yorkers

In 2017, the Rising Ground Associate Board launched with 10 founding members, and its circle rapidly expanded. The Associate Board quickly attracted and engaged individuals who had known of our work as well as members who were learning of us for the first time. Associate Board members volunteer at various Rising Ground programs, contribute to the Holiday Toy Drive, mobilize their networks to provide resources for the people we support, and organize fundraising events to support direct services.



Top: Shirley Hambelton, Kate Corgel, Calvin Nelson, Katy Martinez, and Roz Tsaneva volunteer at the Saundview Family Resource Center. Bottom: Alison Matheis and Emily Zarow deliver toys to the Children's Learning Center as part of the 2017 Toy Drive.

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Rebecca Velanis
Emily Zarow

Biondi High School Principal Marya Baker hands a diploma to Tamara Dawson as the Class of 2017 celebrates their achievements.

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In 2017,

98%

of the 600+ families in our family stabilization programs overcame challenges to stay together.

40%

of special education preschoolers graduated in need of less intensive or no special education services.

71

children in Foster Care were successfully reunited with their birth parents.

25%

more students graduated from Community Middle School 217 in the Bronx as a result of Rising Ground's work providing social work services and attendance support to students.

20

new loving families were created through adoption.

122

children from low-income families, including homeless families, were better prepared for Kindergarten by an average of 83% thanks to our pre-literacy supports.

Rising Ground continues to provide positive paths to change for New York City children, adults, and families.

Rising Ground Foster Care recognized as citywide permanency leader

In a citywide ranking of organizations providing **Foster Care** services, **Rising Ground ranked at the top** in reaching permanency outcomes for youth supported. Swift, successful family reunification and enduring connection to a caring adult are critical for a young person to ensure future stability and success. Rising Ground ranked top in New York City for establishing permanency for youth within the first 12 months of care. We also were top in placing youth in the homes of relatives or others with whom youth have pre-existing relationships through KinGAP and were consistently among the highest ranked in all other categories used by NYC Administration for Children's Services to determine success in establishing permanency. Additionally, we were one of eight NYC organizations selected to take part in the "Home Away From Home" initiative to enhance foster-parent recruitment.

New program helps non-custodial fathers create better bonds with children

Our **Fatherhood Initiative** gives non-custodial fathers the tools and capacity to support and build healthy, nurturing relationships with their children. We offer individualized supports – such as parenting workshops, employment assistance, educational workshops, group and one-to-one counseling by trained staff and peer mentors – to up to 180 fathers looking to increase and enhance their involvement in their children's lives.



New Juvenile Justice programs focus on family

Using a practice model, **Functional Family Therapy**, designed and proven to help youth reduce delinquent behavior and recidivism, we launched new **Alternative to Placement** and **Aftercare** programs for youth who are at risk of placement or are moving back into the community post-placement. Through weekly therapy sessions in the home, Functional Family Therapy brings youth and families together to find solutions, paths to change, and to address conflicts on their own. In addition, we opened a new **Limited Secure Placement** program for 20 boys. The first and only program of its kind in Brooklyn, this program provides vital therapeutic and educational support to teens post-adjudication as well as opportunities for families to visit and connect with youth.

Pre-literacy programming brought to more community child care providers

We doubled the number of in-home child care providers supported by our **Parent-Child Home Family Child Care Program** from 10 to 20. Parent-Child Home is a pre-literacy, skill-building, and school-readiness program that engages parents as their child's most important teacher. This adaptation, which we began in 2015, brings Early Learning Specialists to community providers of child care and helps them to incorporate books, educational toys, and other activities into their daily curriculum. The model has proven tremendously successful in enhancing the interaction between children and providers and supporting pre-literacy, cognitive, and social / emotional development.

Rising Ground expands intellectual / developmental disability services

In an ongoing effort to support individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities to live richer, fuller lives in the community, we expanded our **Day Habilitation** and **Supportive Employment** programs and launched a "transition to adulthood" residential initiative for up to 24 young adults graduating from residential school settings. We will create permanent supportive housing for them and connect them to appropriate day services by creating the new residential units over a four-year period.



Passage of Hope expands to meet greater needs of unaccompanied minors

Building on several years of experience supporting unaccompanied migrant youth, our **Passage of Hope** program not only grew but added two new settings to meet the specific needs of young people, primarily from Central America, coming to the United States. While we expanded in capacity by 16 for a total ability to support 65 children and youth in our temporary Basic Shelter program, we now support up to 20 youth through Long-Term Foster Care placements and up to 8 in a therapeutic group home setting. Children who do not have a viable adult resource in the United States are eligible for foster care supports.



Helping Youth Find New Hope

FOSTER CARE & UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT YOUTH PROGRAMS

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FAMILY FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION

Our Family Foster Care program provides nurturing support and care for youth who have been temporarily removed from their parents when their safety and well-being were at risk. We work with youth to ensure their needs are met by providing therapeutic support, guidance, and resources to help them continue advancing in their lives during this trying time. Concurrently, we work with birth parents to help them address the concerns leading to foster care placement. We help families come back together and thrive. When that is not possible, we help create new, loving families through our Adoption program.

MOTHER & CHILD

Our Mother & Child program helps teen mothers in foster care create strong families and provide their children with love, guidance, and security. In a residential setting, we provide teen mothers with parenting and life skills so they can care for their children while continuing school and establishing roots for success for themselves and their children.

PASSAGE OF HOPE

Our Passage of Hope program provides shelter and care to unaccompanied minors, mostly from Central America. Youth receive clinical, therapeutic, educational, and case-management services while we work to link them with family members or other sponsors.

A family and a home provide the grounding from which children can grow, develop, and thrive. However, sometimes that centering core falls from them, shaking the foundation from which they can most successfully navigate the world around them. We provide a holistic approach to ensure children and youth can head in a positive direction despite such circumstances.

Different situations cause children and youth to be apart from their families. Youth can be removed from homes where abuse and/or neglect pose threats to their safety. Mental health issues can create family dynamics that are unsustainable. Between parents and their children, struggles over behavior or sexual or gender identity can create tensions so great that the family ceases to provide support. Children flee communities plagued by violence and political and economic instability, leaving their families to come to a new country in search of a better life.

Regardless of the reason, being away from everything a young person has known is traumatic. This trauma may lead to disruptions in educational and cognitive growth, the development or perpetuation of unhealthy behaviors, or an inability to positively engage in the community and develop healthy social connections. Because trauma is so frequently present in the lives of people we support and can have significant long-term impact on so many aspects of one's life, a trauma-informed and focused approach is core to all of our work. To be most effective in supporting individuals and families who have experienced significant trauma, we train staff to take the most nurturing, holistic, and informed approach to their engagement with the person supported. We employ therapies and modalities that are rooted in trauma-focused practices.



Overcoming Odds, Youth in Foster Care at Rising Ground Pursue College

Across the nation, only 10 percent of eligible foster-care youth go on to pursue higher education. At Rising Ground, 43 percent do. The difference in outcomes is not happenstance. For the past several years, our team has worked closely with the courts, schools, foster parents, and youth themselves to make sure that all youth are in the right school settings, receiving the appropriate supports, and aware of various educational and vocational experiences and opportunities. For teenagers, that means not only working with them to finish high school but devising future plans and taking steps to make certain these plans become reality. **“During the school year, I moved to a different foster home far from my high school. It was very difficult to get to school on time each day. Rising Ground put in place a car service, which was perfect, and assisted me with getting to school and helped me graduate on time,”** said Avery, one youth whose graduation we celebrated this spring. Now, we are helping him as he looks to attend college and pursue a career in nursing.”

“My foster mom gives me great guidance. The staff at Rising Ground are really helpful too. You know that they are really trying to help you for the future. Honestly, I am not sure where I’d be today without her and all the other support that I’ve gotten. I think I’d still be off track, not doing what I need to do.”

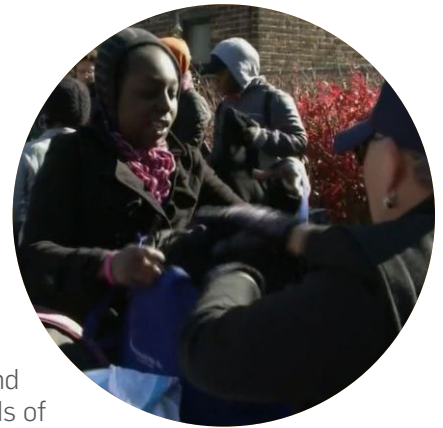
BRANDEN

Branden first came to Rising Ground's Family Foster Care program in 2014. Away from his family just as he was entering middle school, Branden recalls being scared. He spent more time with a group of friends who were not a good influence and started making bad decisions. With persistent guidance and encouragement from his foster mother, Valerie Lamb, and the staff at Rising Ground, Branden has gotten back on track. At 17, he is focused on finishing high school and plans to go onto college. An avid dancer and rapper, he hopes to pursue a career as an entertainer.



Family Resource Center expands community outreach to address needs

Since 2015, our Soundview Family Resource Center has been a wide-reaching resource for members of this high-needs community in the Bronx. In one central location, we provide parents, caregivers, and children with free activities and workshops, as well as guidance and assistance to make sure the basic needs of all family members are met. In 2017, we expanded our offerings to include several community-based activities. We hosted our first Wellness Carnival to help community members access health services. While children enjoyed snacks and activities, parents were presented with an array of educational, recreational, health, and wellness opportunities right in their own community. In November, we hosted our first Turkey and Coat Drive for hundreds of families. **“Financially, it’s kind of rough with so many kids,”** said Emmanuela Etienne, a mother of three. **“This is a good help. We are actually going to have a turkey because I was thinking about not buying a turkey. I know my kids are going to really appreciate and enjoy the holiday.”**



“Every Wednesday, our caseworker came to check up on us and see how we were doing. She asked about things we needed support with, and she would give me good advice. She was like a big sister. Today, my family is doing much better.”



WYNTER

Wynter first came to Rising Ground through our Preventive Services program as her family faced instability following a domestic dispute between her stepfather and her mother. In the program, a caseworker visited the family each week. Over time, the family addressed a number of issues that were causing instability. They strengthened their communication and coping skills as they sought a more solid footing for the future. Once at Rising Ground, Wynter also started taking part in our Mentoring Program. She has found new motivation and made great progress in school, particularly reading. “The mentors inspire me to be the best I can,” she said. “They are like another family to me. I am so grateful to have them in my life.”

Building on Strengths

FAMILY STABILIZATION PROGRAMS

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While all families face challenges, families with limited resources, in high-needs communities, and facing other forms of adversity have an even harder time. Often, conditions undermine efforts to provide the support and nurturing they desire for their children. We help families move beyond and avoid crises so they can become and stay stable, strong, and secure.

The challenges are varied. Some parents have come from unstable families themselves. Some have had little experience living in a nurturing home prior to being parents. Many of the families we support are grappling with mental health, health, addiction, and emotional and behavioral concerns that pose a threat to family stability.

Immigrant families often face language barriers or struggle to integrate into the community around them.

We provide personalized and comprehensive support to each family. Across the organization, we use Motivational Interviewing, a proven approach through which staff engage those supported in an ongoing dialogue to determine their goals and the challenges that are currently standing in the way. We then work together to identify paths past adversity so families can thrive.

In each of our family stabilization programs, we help each family member to identify their strengths and help them to positively contribute to the family interactions. We employ a number of evidence-based treatment models that have been researched and proven to be successful in helping families to identify the root causes of dysfunction. Through our interventions, we help families develop relevant skills — more frequent and supportive communication, self-regulation and de-escalation techniques, and a capacity to be self-reflective. In addition, we link families with concrete supports in the community to assist them after the immediate crises have abated and our engagement has concluded.

PREVENTIVE SERVICES

Our Family Stabilization programs work with families in crisis, facing various challenges that have the potential to result in their children being placed in foster care. We build on each family member's strengths so that they may resolve conflicts, gain new skills, and adopt practices that ensure children and families are stable and secure.

FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

Our Fatherhood Initiative works with non-custodial fathers to help them develop parenting and life skills, creating a foundation for improved relationships with their children.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

In the heart of the high-needs Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx, our Family Resource Center provides a wide range of services and activities for parents and caregivers of young children.

Planting Seeds for Success

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESCHOOL

Our special education preschools provide children with developmental delays and disabilities with a tailored educational environment bolstered by intensive therapeutic supports including speech, physical, and occupational therapy, as well as clinical services so that they may learn and grow.

EARLY HEAD START & PARENT-CHILD HOME PROGRAM

Recognizing the vital role of parents and caregivers as children's first teachers, our Early Head Start and Parent-Child Home programs provide in-home and community-based support to give caregivers the resources, understanding, and skills to ensure school readiness and age-appropriate development. Our Early Head Start program works with pregnant parents until their children reach age 3. The Parent-Child Home Program provides support to families with children 18 months to 4 years old.

UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN & EARLY LEARN CHILD CARE

Our preschool programs instill in young students a love of learning and a solid foundation for their future success in school and beyond.

The earliest years are the most important in determining a child's future development. From birth, this is a rapid period of growth and development. It's a time of exploration and acquiring many new skills

Our Early Childhood programs range from our home-visiting programs that work with new parents from pregnancy through to the years of a child's life up to the entry into kindergarten. We work to equip parents with the skills, knowledge, and resources to help their children flourish. Our center-based preschool programs provide nurturing environments in which children can explore the world around them, interact with peers, and develop their language, cognitive, physical, and social skills.

Each of these programs work with children and families to overcome any obstacles that adversely impact a child's ability to learn and grow or otherwise form a solid foundation for their further positive development. We work with low-income families to ensure that they have the resources and experiences they need and are equipped with critical skills upon which to build. We are particularly focused on closing the "achievement gap" for children from disadvantaged families and communities.

We also work with children with developmental delays and disabilities, and their families. Through these interventions early in life, we partner with children and their parents, together seeking to ensure that as they move on toward adulthood, children can participate most fully in the world around them.



New initiatives encourage children to explore through animals, arts

In our first years, everything is a new discovery! Discovery is how children learn. In our preschools, we exposed children to as wide an array of positive new experiences as possible. Through our Kindermusik and Pathways to Rhythm partnerships, we have brought more music to the classroom with activities that are more than fun. These music-based activities provide unique sensory stimulation, and increase self-confidence, social skills, and communication. Our Bilingual Birdies partnership brings those same benefits in two languages, increasing youngsters' ability to communicate as well as increasing cognitive functioning resulting in improved problem-solving skills. For children with developmental delays and disabilities, such as autism, socializing with others can be particularly difficult. Studies have shown that children bond more easily with animals and, in turn, demonstrate more positive social behavior and development in the presence of animals. We partnered with Art Farm to bring animals to class and have seen very encouraging results.

“ Jenny has helped me so much with the development of my little girl and how to educate her. I am happy and grateful. I feel like a good mother - that I can help my children. This program is magnificent.”

BRIDIJA & SOPHIA

Bridija, a mother of four, has taken part in the Rising Ground Early Head Start program for more than a year, working closely with Jenny Nieves, the Family & Partnership Coordinator. Through Early Head Start, she participates in education-focused play, arts, and recreation with her youngest daughter, Sophia. Jenny has helped Bridija to zero in on Sophia's educational needs. Their work together has also helped her with her other children. Jenny connects Bridija with community resources and assists in other ways too, like communicating with her landlord.



Going the extra mile to make special memories for youth in need

The end of middle school is an exciting time for students and families, as they prepare for high school. Along with a feeling of accomplishment are celebrations that create lasting and positive memories. However, for youth from families with limited resources, events like a prom or a graduation can also cause added stress and uncertainty. To help alleviate the stress, we launched a special effort in 2017 to make sure students at the Bronx Urban Community School have dresses and clothing for prom and graduation. The middle school has 365 students, all of whom come from families at or below the poverty line. About a quarter live in shelters or temporary housing. With scarce resources, purchasing a prom dress or special graduation outfit is a hardship. However, these little things create important memories and boost the confidence. "I'm really thankful because the kids in this school don't have to stress out about finding the perfect dress when there are plenty of dresses here," 8th grader Arly Acurie said. "It's free, so you don't have to make your parents pay like \$400 for a dress."



“I would say to my old self that you can't bring me down anymore. That's not who I am anymore. Deep down inside, I am the sweetest person ever. But the things that I've been through, it changed me into somebody that I wasn't. The old Kim is gone. The new Kim is here.”



KIMBERLY

Kimberly came to our Residential Treatment Center after having been placed in several psychiatric hospitals. Following a childhood of abuse, she struggled with depression and anger that made her confrontational with peers and the adults in her life. After a year of continuous encouragement and therapeutic supports, Kim has learned not only to cope with her challenges but to appreciate her worth as she looks to a positive future.

Creating Confidence to Learn

SPECIAL EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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Across our Special Education, Residential Treatment Center, and Community Schools programs, we offer targeted supports for youth so they have the tools, knowledge, and confidence to move onward to the best lives possible.

We provide a nurturing setting and establish structures and supports in which all youth are mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially ready to learn, grow, and pursue a positive path into adulthood.

The children and youth we support face a wide range of challenges, including learning and behavior disorders, developmental and intellectual disabilities, mental health challenges, and experiences with significant trauma. Some struggle to overcome histories of abuse and/or neglect.

In our education programs, we offer a set of supports that go well beyond a traditional classroom. We know that other aspects of a student's life impact performance at school. We build each student's self-confidence which fosters their capacity to learn and achieve academic success. We encourage each student to identify that which motivates and excites them, engaging them as active participants in their own learning.

We employ Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a proven model that promotes, recognizes, and rewards positive behaviors resulting in improved attendance and academic outcomes.

BIONDI EDUCATION CENTER

At the Biondi Education Center, we educate and support youth, grades K-12, with significant academic deficits, histories of truancy, emotional and behavioral disorders, and learning disabilities.

We combine the curriculum delivered in small classes with an array of social work services, therapies, creative and athletic activities, life-skills development opportunities, and support during crises.

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER

Our Residential Treatment Center provides 24-hour care to youth, ages 12-21, with histories of abuse, neglect, trauma, and/or multiple or persistent psychiatric hospitalizations, mental health challenges, and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities. In a structured environment with comprehensive counseling and therapeutic services, residents learn a wide range of skills so they can return to the community and prosper.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

As part of the NYC School Renewal Program, we partner with two Bronx-based middle schools to provide health and mental health services, positive youth development opportunities, afterschool and summer activities, and opportunities for family and community involvement in the school setting.

Seeing Positive Paths Forward

JUSTICE FOR YOUTH & FAMILIES

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NON-SECURE & LIMITED PLACEMENTS

Our Non-Secure Placement (NSP) and Limited Secure Placement (LSP) programs are community-oriented residential programs supporting New York City teens post-adjudication. Using the Missouri Approach, a nationally recognized treatment model, we promote positive peer relationships through group work, where counselors and peers help youth understand the roots of their delinquent behavior and develop skills to address personal challenges. Simultaneously, we support youth's educational success as they attend school.

RESPITE PROGRAM

Our citywide Respite Care program for youth who have committed crimes, are at risk for court involvement, or are at risk of residential placement provides up to 21 days of respite services to youth in the homes of specifically trained respite parents.

ALTERNATIVE TO PLACEMENT

Our Juvenile Justice Initiative Alternative to Placement program provides support to court-involved youth and families. Instead of out-of-home placement, we engage families in proven strengths-based Functional Family Therapy, while providing educational advocacy, connections to community resources and positive social activities, and crisis intervention.

AFTERCARE

Our Aftercare Services provide support, employing the Functional Family Therapy model, to youth and their families to help them transition back home and into the community following placement in a residential program.

A poor choice is seldom made for its own sake. For youth who become involved in the juvenile justice system, we know that there are complex underlying issues at play. We work with youth to understand the root causes of their choices, explore ways to address them, and help them discover their inner strengths and resilience to forge positive paths forward.

The youth supported in our justice for youth and families programs are overwhelmingly from families and communities that face challenges with poverty, violence, and lack of resources, often resulting from racial inequity. From environments where traditional educational, professional, and economic success are often seen as unobtainable, youth can retreat into delinquent behavior.

These patterns don't have to continue, however. Brain research tells us that cognitive development continues until age 25 and beyond, meaning the youth we support are still developing.

In all our justice programs, we hold youth accountable while also ensuring they are learning and growing. Youth explore the sources of their delinquent behavior, examining their roles within their families, schools, peer groups, and the community at large. In a nurturing environment, youth identify their strengths and explore ways to progress toward their goals.

While in the programs, youth are engaged in school, maintain and grow relationships with their families, and take part in the community. We employ proven approaches that demonstrate success, such as the Missouri Approach or Functional Family Therapy. We guide youth as they get a better understanding of their own challenges, conflicts, and successes. We do this work in a positive, supportive environment to encourage constructive choices in the future.



New mentoring program connects youth with adults who share their histories

Across all our justice programs, we help youth who have committed crimes to envision and lead lives free from criminal activity. Nobody can deliver that message quite as effectively as someone who has been in their shoes and made the choices they are facing. Credible Messengers are individuals who have had experiences that others can relate to and therefore are more likely to positively influence them. That understanding inspired the creation this year of our "My Next Move" Credible Messenger Mentoring Program for youth who had been in our juvenile justice residential programs and who continue to receive support as they transition to life back in their communities. Made possible by a \$100,000 grant from the Pinkerton Foundation, the program draws from other approaches that have proven successful in reducing criminal recidivism. The program incorporates mentoring, journaling, and group work.

“Programs like this help teenagers like me reevaluate their lives. I used to think I’d live off the streets forever. It’s easy to get caught up in it. I know now there are only two places you can go – dead or in jail. As much as I didn’t want to be in the program at first, I’m glad I ended up in it. I have so much more knowledge now. I am changing for the better.”

KEIARA

At 16, Keiara arrived at the Rising Ground Limited Secure Placement program in the Bronx. She brought with her the anger and aggression that she exhibited on the streets. With staff support, Keiara slowly came around. She started participating in group and individual therapy. She started engaging fully in school. From being perpetually truant, she is now more than halfway to her high school diploma. She aspires to one day be a lawyer working with youth.



New residential program provides greater options for independence

"I don't like it... I love it!" were the first words out of Anthony's mouth as he entered his new apartment this year. Anthony was one of the initial residents of a Rising Ground group home, opened in 2007 when the organization began its first services to adults with Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities Services. He was also one of the first residents to move into our newest type of residential setting, a supportive apartment offering him more independence. This less restrictive housing model, where Anthony shares an apartment with two other men, is designed for adults who do not require 24-hour supervision. "I've got my own room, and I can come and go as I please," Anthony said. "I have more freedom now."



“In the future, I’m going to get a job, but I’m not ready for that yet. Right now, I’m focused on my skills. I’ve learned a lot of them here. I’ve been loving being part of Rising Ground for a long time. It is a family to me.”



MATTHEW

Matthew, now 22, has been participating in Rising Ground programs for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities since he was 6 years old. He moved from the children's recreation program to our Pre-Vocational Training and Community Habilitation programs for adults. He is honing his life and work skills as he strives for a permanent job. Currently he is working at the café and mail room at Rising Ground as he prepares to take the next step at a job in the community.

Inspiring Independence

INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

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Every person deserves to pursue their goals and dreams, regardless of ability. In our work with children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we work with them and their families to identify those dreams and create individualized paths to help them overcome obstacles and reach them.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as their families, we work to provide individualized support and meaningful programs that provide the care that allow people to live the most meaningful lives possible. We work with people facing a wide range of intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injury, cerebral palsy, and other cognitive disabilities.

Using the Personal Outcome Measures (POMs®) tool, we work with each person and his or her family to define their aspirations. By identifying each person's strengths, we develop an individualized roadmap to address the challenges presented by disability and guide a journey to the best possible quality of life. Through our commitment to person-directed care and self-defined goals, as well as our individualized approach, we have consistently exceeded POMs standards established by its developer, the national Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL).

The dreams we help become realities include everything from gaining life and work skills, finding employment and volunteer opportunities, pursuing hobbies and recreation, and engaging in community activities to pursuing meaningful personal relationships.

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Our residential programs provide adults with the opportunity to live and participate fully within their communities. We provide supports based on each individual's needs intended to assist the individual to live and function as independently as possible. Supervision can be 24/7 or part-time, depending on the needs and abilities of individuals.

DAY HABILITATION

Our Day Habilitation program offers adults opportunities to develop social and daily living skills, engage in recreational experiences, and enjoy exposure to the greater world around them through structured, supported interaction with friends and peers.

COMMUNITY HABILITATION

Our Community Habilitation services provide in-home support for families, teaching children and adults various life skills while providing essential respite to parents and caregivers.

PRE-VOCATIONAL TRAINING & SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT

Our various employment programs give adults the opportunity to engage in vocational training, volunteer, and work in pursuit of greater independence through meaningful employment.

Fostering Holistic Well-Being

COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES

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BRONX FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

The Bronx Family Clinic provides mental-health services to children, youth, and their families in the Bronx, where the number of youth facing mental-health challenges far surpasses the services available. Services include psychosocial and psychiatric evaluations; individual, group, and family therapy; medication management; and grief and trauma counseling.

CARE MANAGEMENT

Our Health Home Care Management program provides children with complex needs and various medical conditions with comprehensive coordination of medical, behavioral-health, and psycho-social supports. Care Managers coordinate everything from linkages to appropriate health and mental healthcare providers, safe housing, and transportation to scheduling appointments.

If unaddressed, health concerns can hinder a child's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. In the high-needs neighborhoods we support, higher than typical instances of various health issues combine with limited resources to create an environment in which health concerns can continue and worsen. Health service inequities align with and exacerbate other inequalities within low-income families and communities that suffer from a lack of resources.

In our Bronx Family Mental Health Clinic, we create treatment plans and utilize proven therapies to address trauma, grief, sadness, anger, and troubling behaviors at school, at home, or in the community. Among the practices we employ is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, a hands-on, practical approach to problem-solving that helps children and families to change patterns of thinking and behavior.

We work with youth and their families to identify issues that could be impacting family stability, as well as children's success in school and in their social lives. We then work with families to develop appropriate care coordination or direct treatment for mental health issues.



Serenity Room provides safe space for children to feel and heal

For children and youth who have experienced trauma and/or are struggling with mental health challenges, understanding and working through their feelings can be difficult. That's why we have created a welcoming safe space to engage children in trauma-informed therapy. This year we created a dedicated therapeutic space, the Serenity Room, in our mental health clinic. With apt furnishings, soothing colors, and a chalkboard wall to express feelings, the room is ideal for alternative therapeutic opportunities through play, recreation, and artistic expression. **"It helps me calm down. Sometimes the therapist will play with you and help you connect with them,"** said one 12-year-old who has benefitted from the room.

“ Since coming to Rising Ground in 2016, Michael has been able to obtain tools that have led him into the driver’s seat of guiding his life in the right direction. ”

MICHAEL & ELAINE

With a history of trauma, Michael came to Rising Ground's Biondi Elementary School so he could get the academic and therapeutic support he needed to help him learn. At first, he continued to struggle. He rarely got to class on time and behaved aggressively in the classroom and at home. He was hospitalized for depression. As an organization providing multiple targeted supports in addition to our special education school, we were able to direct him and his family to our own Bronx Family Mental Health Clinic, where he was engaged in counseling. He was also connected with our Heath Home Care Management services, where we worked with his family to make sure he was able to get the medical, mental health and related services that were available to him from various doctors and provider organizations. Through individual and family therapy, Michael and his mother, Elaine, developed coping and communication skills that led to better relations at home. That change at home translated into changes at school. Better grades and behavior set the tone as Michael and his family celebrated not only his graduation from Biondi Elementary in June but also recognition as class salutatorian.



Rising Ground is funded through several public sources, as well as through the generous support of our Board of Directors, individuals, foundations, and corporations.

Public funding sources include New York City Administration for Children's Services, New York City Department of Education, New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, New York State Office of Children and Family Services, New York State Education Department, New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Head Start and Office of Refugee Resettlement, Medicaid, Westchester County Department of Social Services, Westchester County Department of Health, and local school districts of Nassau, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties, and the state of Maine's Department of Social Services.

While a large portion of Rising Ground's funding comes from public contracts, individual and corporate contributions are critical to ensuring we are able to provide the highest quality of support to help New York City area children, adults, and families overcome adversity.

Thank you to our supporters!

LEARN MORE & GIVE AT
RisingGround.org/Donate

Financial Position

ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 4,731,947
Investments	\$ 7,847,148
Accounts Receivable	\$ 9,671,905
Contributions Receivable	\$ 133,128
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 838,719
Other Assets	\$ 4,913,086
Fixed Assets - Net	\$ 32,352,740
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 60,488,673

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES	\$ 43,897,031
Current Liabilities	\$ 18,716,941
Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 25,180,090
NET ASSETS	\$ 16,591,642
Unrestricted	\$ 12,462,821
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 174,556
Permanently Restricted	\$ 3,954,265
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 60,488,673

Auditors: Loeb & Troper, LLP

655 Third Avenue, 12th floor • New York, NY 10017

A copy of Rising Ground's most recent audited financials is available upon request.

Financial Statements

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

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Activities

REVENUES & OTHER SUPPORT

\$ 88,929,622	Government Contracts & Program Development Grants
\$ 1,339,974	Individual, Foundation & Corporate Contributions
\$ 529,441	Special Events
\$ (124,720)	Direct Costs of Special Events
\$ 127,387	Capital Improvement Grant
\$ 1,572,442	Investment Income
\$ 469,160	In-Kind Contributions
\$ 92,843,306	TOTAL REVENUES

OPERATING EXPENSES

\$ 83,228,811	PROGRAM SERVICES
\$ 30,611,977	Child Welfare (Foster Care, Preventive Services & Residential Treatment)
\$ 16,513,217	Special Education
\$ 11,184,425	Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities Services
\$ 11,292,134	Justice For Youth & Families
\$ 13,627,058	Early Childhood Education
\$ 9,285,036	SUPPORTING SERVICES
\$ 9,002,971	Management & General
\$ 282,065	Fundraising
\$ 92,513,847	TOTAL EXPENSES
\$ 875,000	Depreciation

90%
of funds go to
direct services

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**A Big
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Thank you to our employees who took part in our Employee Giving Campaign!

Now in its fifth year, Rising Ground employees contributed more than \$60,000 this year. Funds from the Employee Giving Campaign support initiatives in our programs as well as to assist persons in need of support during emergencies or to meet one-time, unique needs. Employee donations have provided a family new furniture and clothing after a household fire, assisted young adults in obtaining proper documents for employment, and provided supplies and funding for our high school students to participate in after-school opportunities.

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Suneel Agerwala
Maerone Alfa
Bibi Suffiya Allie
Kenisha Ambrose
Yexenia Aponte
Christabel Appiah
Megan Askew
Chanell Atkinson
Wendy Baldera
Nathaniel Balyut
Katherine Barcenas-Inesti
Sasha Barnes
Caroline Baudjan
Roiasia Beaufort
Sophia Benitez
Samantha Blake
Beralda Blanco
Daisy Bobadilla
Caroline Botvin
Imani Bracey
Shavonne Branch
Sade Brinson
Michelle Brooks
Darrina Brown

Ashley Budhai
Lillie Burke
Tirah Burnett
Michael Campbell
Shadiasha Campell
Shanice Campbell
Marlene Canapi
Franco Cardiello
Shanice Casey
Antonio Castro
Venecia Castro
Zahedi Castillo
Romariel Cepeda
Antonio Cerna
Jeannie Chan
Starr Chandler
Nathalie Chang
Ashley Charles
Katherine Cheng
Vincent Cohen
Iris Colon
Jacob Commodore
Marlene Concepcion
Chris Copeland
Laureen Cornell
Maribel Crespo
Miriam Cruz
Nicola Daley
James Darrell
Fatamata Data
Jennifer Davis
Stephanie Delura
Michael Densico

Ayanna Denully
Louis Devito
Diana Diaz
Kayla Diaz
Johnairo Dilone
Morisanda Diouboute
Nestlene Dorilus
Olivia Douglas
Rasnij Dundas
Danisha Eaddy
Alex Eagle
Vensha Edwards
Latisha Edwin
Daniel Elfawal
Kimberlee Ellis
Jacklyn Escobar
Cinergy Espinal
Nicole Facey
Shanique Farrell
Latoya Felder
Lixiomara Feliciano
Farrah Fernandez
Adobeia Fleischer
Phillip Foster
Amy Fox
Dimitri Francis
Norman Fulton
Chavely Garcia
Lynessa George
Ian Gill
Victoria Giordani
Nicole Giraldo
Konstance Gonzalez
Katisha Gopaul
Nateisha Gordon
Rebecca Green

Anthony Griffin
Brianna Gutierrez
Rebecca Guzman
Allison Hall-Williams
Arlet Hamilton
Mary Robyn Hardwick
Austeen Harrison
Sharon Hawkins
Quintasia Hayes
Christina Henriquez
Denmar Henry
Zeronia Henry
Paola Heredia
Alexander Hoberman
Anastasiya Holubyeva
Dasha Horelick
Tyrell Hubbard
Whitney Hudson
Carolyn Jackson
Noris Jimenez
Destiny Jones
Luzmarine Jorge
Crystal Kaminsky
Jihyun Kang
Oura G. Kassou
Eliezer Kinberg
Nick Klimberg
Montien Kromah
Patrisha Larocque
Demetria Lazos
Andres Julian Leal
Franz Lewis
Shavonne Little
Alexis Lloyd
Michael Loeffler
Crystal Lopez
Dazary Loubriel



Volunteers from EY (left) and Google (right) join in special activities for children at our preschools.

Corporate & Group Volunteers

Altman Vilandrie
BDO
BNY Mellon
Calvary Hospital
College of Mount
Saint Vincent
Deutsche Bank
Enterprise
Ernst & Young

Google
Hall Capital Partners
New York Special Forces
Oath
Pajama Program
TD Bank
United Chaplains of America,
Yonkers
Yonkers Police Department

Synthia Lrizrarry
 Lorena Madera
 Allison Maidman
 Diamond Malachi
 Denise Maldonado
 Nicholas Mannino
 Krishendaye Marajh
 Crysthal Marin
 Ines Martinez
 Mark Massengale
 Tina McBride
 Paul McDonald
 Najimah McKensie
 Alexa McMullen
 Amir Mehdizadeh
 Lynn Meissner
 Emma Mendes
 Stephanie Mendez
 Gabrieal Mendoza
 Awilda Mercedes
 Demitri Metz
 Nicole Meyer
 Tamia Middleton
 Rogette Mighty
 Christina Migliaccio
 Damian Miranda
 Mrinalini Modak
 Christopher Monson
 Chanier Moore
 Dionna Morales
 Joaquin Morales
 Lisette Moran
 Rodolfo Moran
 Kasandra Morbury
 Jenny Mullakary
 Kate Mullen
 Caroline Mullis

Ashlie Munroe
 Christine Nasol
 Margaret Nguyen
 Albert Nieto
 Alexandra Nordberg
 Deborah Ofosu
 Jessica Oh
 Krystal Ortiz
 Blessing Ozoemena
 Stephanie Padilla
 Tracee Page
 Taina Paniagua
 Susana Parody
 Libia Pava
 Robyn Pena
 Tiffany Pena
 Leslie Peralta
 Brianna Pierce
 Dianne Pincay
 Jonathan Pineiro
 Quaneisha Player
 Whitley Plummer
 Alexmi Polanco
 Ashley Polanco
 Frinny Polanco
 Lucia Ponce
 Nora Querido

Shujon Rahman
 Jonathon Ramirez
 Brigid Rattinger
 Leslie Reyes
 Emely Richardson
 Abigail Ricketts
 Giselle Rivera
 Kasheen Robinson
 Anny Rodriguez
 Cherylyn Rodriguez
 Gabriel Rodriguez
 Jennifer Rodriguez
 Madalin Rodriguez
 Julia Romero
 Ciara Rosa
 Rebecca Salas
 Sara Salzbank
 Unique Santiago
 Nikieta Seecharan
 Joseph Sensini
 Grace Servera
 Dijon Simms
 Ishwarpreet Singh
 Diane Souvenir
 Falan Sprour
 Shannon Stichel
 Wendy Strauss
 Jeneva Taylor

Sabrina Taylor
 Regina Thomas
 Maryn Gannon Tillman
 Monica Torrejon
 Christine Torres
 Leslie Torres
 Stephanie Torres
 Mariely Valerio
 Nisha Varughese
 Maria Vasquez
 Stefanie Vazquez
 Emily Vega
 Virginia Velazquez
 Kimberlyn Vgola
 Sarah Voelkl
 Jamilya Walker-Robinson
 Odaelys Walwyn
 Myriam Webb
 Robert Wechsler
 Maxine Weinberg
 Michael Welch
 Riceal Wells
 Courtney Wessling
 Chad Williams
 Marissa Williams
 Brian Wilson
 Ben Wojick
 Moniek Wright
 Christian Yepes
 Tasheba Young
 Yvanna Young Barnes

“ Volunteering at Rising Ground has been life changing for me. I was honored and privileged to be able to work with people in my community. I am grateful for this opportunity I was given. ”

FARRAH FERNANDEZ
 CUNY Service Corp. Volunteer
 at the Brownell Preschool

BLESSING OZOEMENA
 Volunteer at Family Resource
 Center

“ Volunteering at Rising Ground brings you closer to your community and its pressing needs. I was able to network and build relationships, serve my local community, and develop new skills. It’s truly one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences I have ever had. ”

KASHEEN ROBINSON
 Tutor with Family Foster Care

“ I enjoyed volunteering at Rising Ground and seeing the smiles and joy that it brought to the children. I witnessed them having a great time, and so did I. ”



RisingGround.org

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