



## Media Inquiries

Rising Ground regularly works with local and national media to cover the important work we do within the New York City area, touching the lives of more than 25,000 individuals and many communities. The Rising Ground Institutional Advancement team coordinates with media to raise awareness of our work and impact and address the local and systemic issues related to our work in the field of human services. Examples of media coverage we coordinate include:

- Coverage of community and school events across Rising Ground programs
- Success stories of the individuals we support and the impact of our work on the lives of New Yorkers
- Expertise, thought leadership, and editorial contributions from key staff on the field of human services, the many program areas in which we work, and the social issues our work addresses
- Coverage of our fundraising events, volunteer opportunities, and corporate and philanthropic partnerships

**Learn more about our programs and latest news, updates, and events**

[www.RisingGround.org](http://www.RisingGround.org)



[@RisingGroundNY](https://www.instagram.com/RisingGroundNY)

## Contact Us

**H. Aldervan Daly**  
Executive Vice President  
for Institutional Advancement  
[ADaly@RisingGround.org](mailto:ADaly@RisingGround.org)  
212-602-5847

**Adam Brill**  
Harrison Edwards PR

[ABrill@Harrison-EdwardsPR.com](mailto:ABrill@Harrison-EdwardsPR.com)  
914-242-0010 x108



**Helping  
Children,  
Adults, and  
Families  
Thrive**

Rising Ground is a leading 501(c)3 nonprofit human services organization, providing children, adults, and families in the Greater New York City area with the resources and skills needed to rise above adversity and positively direct their lives.

Rising Ground delivers:

- Innovative educational programs from early childhood through high school.
- Dedicated support that facilitates safe environments for children and helps families thrive.
- Result-focused programs that help youth involved in the juvenile justice system change the trajectory of their lives.
- Caring services that help promote independence for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Pro-active community health initiatives that foster physical and emotional well-being.
- Wide-reaching services that support those impacted by intimate partner violence and prevent future occurrence.

Founded as the Leake and Watts Orphan House in 1831, Rising Ground has been at the forefront of evolving community needs and has become a leader in utilizing result-driven, evidence-based practices. Today, the organization's work is a positive force in the lives of more than 25,000 individuals annually. Rising Ground (then Leake & Watts) has been honored as the Gold Winner of the New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Awards.

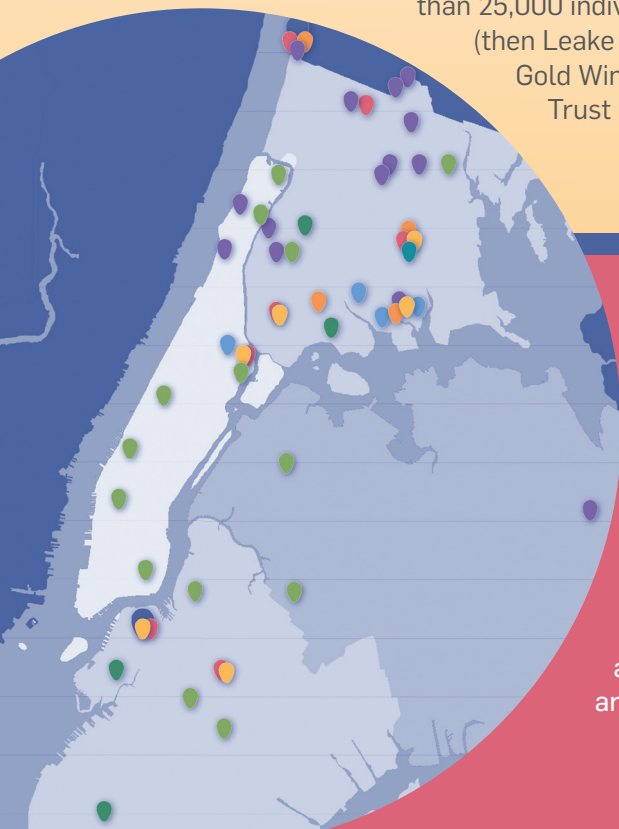


**92**  
sites

**78**  
programs

more than  
**10,000**  
direct program  
participants

more than  
**25,000**  
family members  
supported



## **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.

[www.RisingGround.org](http://www.RisingGround.org)

# A history of helping New Yorkers in need

**1831** Rising Ground is founded as the **Leake and Watts Orphan House** by the Hon. John Watts, Jr., in honor of John George Leake, in lower Manhattan.

**1843** The Orphan House moves to the current site of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in upper Manhattan.

**1891** We move again to a 33-acre farm in Yonkers, a campus that remains the site of several programs.

**1923** The notable philanthropist founds what will become the **Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families**, which later joins the Rising Ground family.

**1933** A **Social Services Department** is established to meet the therapeutic needs of youth.

**1944** As the **Foster Home Department** is founded, we begin placing children in homes in the community.

**1976** The **East Bronx Family Service Center** is founded providing Preventive Services with substance-abuse treatment, domestic violence support, and supportive housing assistance.

**1985** We become the first social service agency in the nation to support children with HIV/AIDS.

**1986** We became one of the first child welfare organizations in the nation to address **juvenile justice**. That same year, a group of incarcerated women testifying to their histories of battering and its relationship to their criminal charges leads to the founding of the **STEPS to End Violence** programs.

**1987** We shift focus to early childhood adding new child care centers and **Head Start** programs in the Bronx.

**1997** The **Marion P. Ames Early Childhood Learning Center** opens in Yonkers, the first to feature integrated special-education and traditional-education classes.

**2007** Three years after launching our **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Services** through Medicaid Service Coordination, we open our first residence for young adults with I/DD. We now operate 29 across the City.

**2010** Serving 60 preschool children exhibiting signs of autism at the **Children's Learning Center**, we expand our support and services in Manhattan.

**2013** We expand our **Juvenile Justice services**, opening a Non-Secure Placement program as part of the New York City "Close to Home" initiative.



**2014** We are named Gold Winner of the prestigious **New York Community Trust Nonprofit Excellence Award**. We open our **Passage of Hope** program for unaccompanied minors primarily from Latin America.

**2015** We open the **Family Resource Center** in the Bronx to support families with young children and open our first Brooklyn-based program.

**2018** We change our name from Leake & Watts to **Rising Ground** to embody our wide-reaching, life-changing work helping children, adults, and families find positive paths forward.

**2020** For the first time since 1891, the organization is once again officially New York City-based, reflecting the community we support.

**2023** After finalizing the sale of our Yonkers campus, Rising Ground continued to expand after acquiring programs from a colleague organization, making us one of the largest human services organizations in the New York City area.





## Senior Leadership



**Alan Mucatel**  
Chief Executive Officer

Alan Mucatel has been the CEO of Rising Ground since 2009. Under Mr. Mucatel's leadership and direction, the organization has more than doubled in size, impact, and budget with a steady expansion of existing programs and services and ventures into new fields since his arrival. Today, with an annual budget of more than \$120 million, Rising Ground supports more than 25,000 individuals and family members with 55 programs at more than 50 locations throughout all New York City boroughs and Westchester County. Prior to joining Rising Ground, Mr. Mucatel was the Executive Director of Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey (CPNJ) from 1998 – 2009. Previously, he was at the Coalition for the Homeless as Deputy Director from 1996-1998 and as Development Director from 1993-1996. He has an MBA and MA in Politics from New York University and a BA in Government from Wesleyan University.

[AMucatel@RisingGround.org](mailto:AMucatel@RisingGround.org)



**Laura Grossfield Birger**  
EVP, General Counsel

Oversees legal matters and compliance of all aspects of the organization and represents Rising Ground in legal proceedings.

[LBirger@RisingGround.org](mailto:LBirger@RisingGround.org)



**H. Aldervan Daly**  
EVP, Institutional Advancement

Oversees fundraising, donor engagement, public and media relations, and volunteering.

[ADaly@RisingGround.org](mailto:ADaly@RisingGround.org)



**Elliot Hagler**  
EVP, Chief Financial Officer

Oversees budget and all financial functions of the organization.

[EHagler@RisingGround.org](mailto:EHagler@RisingGround.org)



**Susan Sampogna**  
EVP, Chief Program Officer

Oversees the development and management of programming in the areas of intimate partner violence services and prevention education, residential services, health services, and immigration services.

[SSampogna@RisingGround.org](mailto:SSampogna@RisingGround.org)



**Lissa Southerland**  
EVP, Chief Operating Officer

Oversees Human Resources, Performance Effectiveness and Measurement, General Services, Management and Information Systems, Central Access and Referral, and Administration Departments, as well as the organization-wide PROMISE initiative.

[LSoutherland@RisingGround.org](mailto:LSoutherland@RisingGround.org)

## Key Staff

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**Diana Amado**  
SVP, Immigration Services

Oversees the Passage of Hope program for unaccompanied migrant youth and other immigration services.

[DAmado@RisingGround.org](mailto:DAmado@RisingGround.org)



**Ryan Garofalo**  
SVP, I/DD Services

Oversees community-based and residential programs supporting children and adults with Intellectual and Development Disabilities.

[RGarofalo@RisingGround.org](mailto:RGarofalo@RisingGround.org)



**Carlton Mitchell**  
SVP, Children & Family Services

Oversees children and family services, including foster care, preventive services, and justice for youth and family programs.

[CMitchell@RisingGround.org](mailto:CMitchell@RisingGround.org)



**Jose Reyes**  
SVP, Quality Management

Oversees the Performance, Evaluation, and Monitoring team, inclusive of the collection of data on program performance and the reporting and auditing by regulatory bodies.

[JReyes@RisingGround.org](mailto:JReyes@RisingGround.org)



**Travis Rodgers**  
SVP, Diversity, Fairness & Belonging

Oversees initiatives pertaining to diversity and fairness to ensure an inclusive and fair environment for all staff and persons supported.

[TRodgers@RisingGround.org](mailto:TRodgers@RisingGround.org)

# Diversity, Fairness & Belonging

As a leading nonprofit human services organization, Rising Ground provides children, adults, and families in the Greater New York City area with the resources and skills needed to rise above adversity and positively direct their lives. The New Yorkers we support face many different challenges, but the individuals and communities we support are subject to common, systemic issues, as well. Social and systemic bias are often aligned directly or indirectly with the adversity we seek to help New Yorkers overcome, and many of those we support and employ reflect the intersecting demographics that experience marginalization within our society.



More than  
**98%**  
of those supported  
by Rising Ground  
are low-income.

More than  
**95%**  
of those supported  
by Rising Ground are  
people of color.

More than  
**90%**  
of Rising Ground  
staff identify as  
people of color.

More than  
**15**  
languages are  
spoken by Rising  
Ground staff.

**At Rising Ground, we have taken a number of concrete, pro-active steps to celebrate and appreciate diversity and ensure inclusion, affirmation, and respect of all people.**

In 2014, we founded an **Anti-Racism Workgroup** with representation from all levels and program areas of our organization. All members and other staff have attended the three-day *Undoing Racism* workshop. Replicating the structure and reach of this group, we then founded the **LGBTQ+ Inclusivity Workgroup**. Each workgroup has created a mandate and statement, which has been approved by the Board of Directors. As we strive to promote diversity on our Board of Directors, Board Members are a vital part of these conversations and are asked to support these initiatives and provide guidance. In 2023, we welcomed to our senior leadership team our first **Senior Vice President of Diversity, Fairness & Belonging**.

**Some examples of actions that have come from our diversity work:**

- reviews of employee handbooks, policies, and practices through lenses that are specifically anti-racist and LGBTQ+ inclusive.
- the introduction of inclusive decision-making practices in hiring and determining policy and practice to ensure diverse voices are heard.
- the adoption of more generous tuition reimbursement, recognizing educational disparities linked to racial and socio-economic status.
- organization of staff conferences, lectures, and safe-space meetings to discuss issues pertaining to race, class, sexual orientation, and gender and how they relate to our work.

At Rising Ground, we recognize that social biases and systemic structures impact and shape the experience of all people, including our own staff and people supported. We strive to understand and minimize the impact of biases present in our society as they relate to:

- race
- ethnicity
- nationality
- language
- ability
- sexual orientation
- gender identity
- gender expression

