

## Creating Space for Healing and Hope

**W**alking into Rising Ground's Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) on bustling Church Avenue in East Flatbush, Brooklyn there is an immediate vibe shift.

The walls of the space are painted with soothing and inviting colors, and the reception area is decorated with scenes from nature, accentuated by a trickling water feature. This calmness extends into the therapy rooms that are similarly decorated with beach scenes and soft coral colors. A vibrant children's playroom holds an array of enticing toys and books.

It feels warm. It feels welcoming. It feels safe.

All of this is deliberate and an integral part of the TRC which blends comprehensive care, advocacy, and outreach for survivors of trauma, violence, and loss. The TRC helps those who have experienced violent crimes overcome barriers to accessing mental health treatment, health care, and legal resources in the acute aftermath of trauma. It supports recent victims of violent crime, including survivors of physical assault, sexual assault, gun violence, stabbings, domestic violence, and human trafficking.

**Continued on Page 4 ►**



The children's space and members of the TRC team on opening day.



## A New Home for Community & Connection

Rising Ground expanded our presence in Brooklyn in March with the grand opening of The Yard – East Flatbush Family Enrichment Center's vibrant new space. Located at 3521 Church Avenue (adjacent to the Trauma Recovery Center) it includes a community meeting space, a children's play area and library, access to computers and printers, a food pantry provided by The Goldburg Family Foundation, a kitchen, laundry facilities, and a community closet for donated clothing. Everything about the Family Enrichment Center (FEC) – including the name, the physical layout, and the offerings it provides – is co-designed with families and community members. Participation in activities and events is open to all community members. At the center, families and children can connect with neighbors, volunteer their time, and connect to the resources and support they need to thrive. Community members are invited to take part in bimonthly virtual town hall meetings to express their ideas about what offerings and services they want to see at the FEC.

# Empowering People and Creating Change

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Matt Del Percio**  
President

**José Martin Jara**  
Vice President

**Allen Waxman**  
Vice President

**Carol Chen**  
Treasurer

**Brigette R. McLeod-Williams**  
Secretary

**Margery E. Ames, Esq.**

**Susan S. Benedict**

**Judith Benitez**

**Joyce R. Coppin-Mondesire**

**Vidia Cordero**

**Adani Illo**

**Rakesh (Rick) Jain**

**Jason Kyrwood**

**Dorothy Mehta**

**Gary Moross**

**Karen Myrie, M.D.**

**Ellen Polansky**

**Matthew Porter**

**Robert Schanz**

**David Theobald**

**Graham Thomas**

**Duncan James Turnbull**

**Dr. Colleen Griffin Wagner**

Members Emeriti:

**Carol Oughton Biondi**

**J. Dennis Delafield**

**Frances R. Olivieri, Esq.**

**Elizabeth Renyi**

**G. Crossan Seybolt, Jr.**

**Phoebe R. Stanton**

## From our CEO

Dear Friends,

Now more than ever New Yorkers are looking to their community for support and safety. At Rising Ground, we remain committed to the belief that we each can thrive when we have hope and opportunity. We continue to envision a New York where all are supported as they navigate life's challenges and positively direct their lives. Meeting the needs of children, adults and families facing significant challenges – poverty, mental health, disability, trauma, violence, inequitable access to resources and opportunities, or dealing with unnavigable or debilitating systems – is our sweet spot. It is where we all step up and push forward. And when we are met with the inner strength of the people we support, wonderful things happen. These moments of progress in people's lives are most especially welcomed in a world that is all too full of disappointment and despair.

To this end, the opening of physical spaces for two of our programs centered in East Flatbush, Brooklyn provided cause for celebration this Spring. As they say in the real estate world: location, location, location, and the Church Avenue site for Rising Ground's Trauma Recovery Center and our adjacent Family Enrichment Center enables us to provide support based on an individual's need and delivered by those who connect best with the people they support. We are proud to uplift and empower East Flatbush, and many other communities in our great city, and to bring assistance to neighbors who are often most marginalized. Delivering community services directly strengthens us all by making support tangible, personal, and effective.

As a nonprofit that delivers services largely via government contracts, including federal, state, and city, the individual support provided by donors and foundations is more critical than ever to ensure we can continue to act.

**In these pages you will read how that support was in abundance at our Gala in March and how your support for initiatives such as our Back-to-School Drive – now underway! – continues to deliver on the promise of hope and opportunity today and in the future. Thank you.**



**Alan Mucatel**  
Chief Executive Officer





Luwam Samuel, Rainiel Lopez, and Matt Del Percio.



L-R: Johnathan Kraus, Jason Kyrwood, Diana Kyrwood, Alvin Moyer, and Carlos Gushiken.



Susan Benedict, Niles Stanton, and Diana Amado.



Ingrid Smikle and Michael Cuoco.



Alan Mucatel, Margery E. Ames, Esq., and G. Crossan Seybolt, Jr.



Connie Marquez, Robert Goldberg, and Kayla Rockefeller.

## A Night to Remember

Rising Ground's Gala on March 12 was our biggest ever! Close to 300 friends and supporters gathered at the Tribeca Rooftop in Manhattan to support our life-affirming work and to raise critical funds. A highlight of the evening was hearing directly from people supported, including Gabrielle, whose son was placed in foster care with Rising Ground and who spoke about the crucial role her Parent Advocate played in her being permanently reunited with him; Ash, who shared her experience of homelessness and how our Transitional Independent Living program has helped her to become more confident; and Trevelyn, who spoke about how Rising Ground's Family Foster Care programs have guided him towards a brighter future. As a special surprise, Trevelyn – who is currently studying for his real estate license – received an on-the-spot invitation for a summer internship from Lindsay Ornstein, co-founder of OPEN Impact Real Estate, an offer he enthusiastically accepted! To cap off the night, the immense contributions to Rising Ground by board member emeritus G. Crossan Seybolt, Jr. were celebrated with the presentation of the 2025 Thelma Stackhouse Award. The award was presented by board member Margery E. Ames, Esq. On accepting the award, Mr. Seybolt called his experience with Rising Ground "my MBA," saluting the organization's mission-driven work.

Trevelyn, who is in foster care with Rising Ground, with Lindsay Ornstein, co-founder of OPEN Impact Real Estate.



## Save the Date!

Our **Fall Benefit** cocktail reception will be held on **Thursday, October 23** at the Amber Room in Manhattan. Join us!



Scan here to Register

► Continued from front page

## Creating Space for Healing and Hope

Rising Ground's TRC was launched in August 2023 providing services virtually and in the community until the physical space opened. To date it has supported over 160 survivors of trauma, defined as "a severe traumatic event that resulted in a death of a loved one or severe change in daily life that is unsustainable." The new space at 3521 Church Avenue opened in March and allows the TRC to expand its reach deeper into the community and provide onsite care. TRC staff includes therapists, a community support coordinator, and a holistic healer. Services are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. The TRC provides onsite childcare for clients in session. Survivors of trauma are accepted for free services regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, citizenship status, religion/spirituality, nationality, socioeconomic status, and insurance status.

Rising Ground's TRC was established with New York City Council funding for recovery support in communities underserved by traditional victim services but most affected by violence. The TRC's model of care was developed in 2001 at the University of California San Francisco that has been proven to improve the economic, health, and social outcomes of those who receive services. They improve public safety by interrupting cycles of violence and increasing participation in the legal process.

the positive transformation it catalyzes within the lives of individuals facing complex challenges of the community. We are excited to expand this work with the opening of our new location and encourage people needing help to contact us."

The physical location enables Rising Ground's TRC staff to act quickly when a traumatic incident occurs in the community. Just a month after moving into the new space, children at the nearby Cortelyou Academy witnessed an accident when a school bus struck a mother and her child. They survived but were severely injured and the whole school community was left shaken.

"We went into the classrooms and held workshops to help the kids process what they had seen. We taught them coping strategies, we gave them some stress balls and we had them do art activities to express their emotions. We wanted them to have outlets to process that something scary had happened, that they survived it, and that we can talk about it," says Cadet Mareus.

In another example, TRC staff stepped in following a fire in a well-known local pizza shop where many onlookers had gathered in the street. Staff went to the site to provide assistance to the owners of the building and to community members.

The core of the TRC's work is with survivors of severe trauma through the free therapy sessions it offers. Services often begin with case management support to address practical needs. This may include connecting them to resources for safer or more stable housing or to alleviate food insecurity, connecting them to legal assistance, helping them to return to work, or assisting with access to victim compensation programs. Without these concrete interventions, the survivor may face a heightened risk of long-term instability and further victimization, deepening the cycle of trauma and hardship.

Cadet Mareus says offering these services, particularly resources for housing and financial assistance, has surprised some of the people they support and has been much welcomed. It is then in therapy that the work on emotional well-being begins.



L-R: ENDGBV Commissioner Saloni Sethi, Rising Ground CEO Alan Mucatel, and New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams. Photo: John McCarten/NYC Council Media Unit.

"The outcomes of the TRC's efforts are profound and directly impact the community we serve," says Director Gerardine Cadet Mareus. "We've already observed that clients experience a decrease in psychological and medical symptoms and an overall improvement in the quality of life. The TRC's success is not just measured in numbers but in

"There's a change in someone's body as a result of being exposed to a really stressful incident," she says. "In the case of a fire, it could translate into difficulty sleeping or intrusive thoughts about what had happened. They could have visions of it in the middle of working. There could be a deep sadness, anxiety, rage and anger: 'Why did this happen to me?' Trauma impacts everybody differently but there is a clear differentiation between how they were functioning before the incident and afterwards. We want to provide a space where we can gently help people start to feel and experience the trauma and to process these emotions."

She says sessions involve psychoeducation – guiding people receiving help in understanding why they may feel or act a certain way.

"If someone has been physically abused there can be a lot of anger. When they come into therapy, they may say 'I'm so angry all the time, there's something wrong with me,' or 'I don't know why I always want to fight somebody.' They may think they've become a violent person. They don't realize it's because something happened to them. We help them see that it is not who they are but who they have become as a result of an experience, which is helpful to many people."

Rising Ground TRC staff also provide holistic services that help to build a high level of trust with the people they support. They are themselves supported with regular clinical supervision, group meetings, and training. As a member of the National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers (NATRC),

they have access to information on best practices and data drawn from the 59 programs around the country. A NATRC survey of New York State clients included the following testimonial, illustrating that the TRC space is indeed empowering healing and embracing hope: "I do not usually feel safe, respected, or understood in the community, but [the TRC] is the one place where I feel the most like me. I feel like I can come here to find peace and relaxation, without worrying about being brushed off. I am very grateful for the fact that this space exists; I would not have been able to handle everything the way that I have if it were not for you all. I am very grateful for the way you have all supported me and my family in a very open and honest way." ★



## Contact:

**Helpline:** 917-444-1908

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

3521 Church Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11203

**Walk-ins welcome**

## Rising Hope: Anti-Human Trafficking

Rising Hope is a new Rising Ground initiative that addresses human trafficking and the associated harms it causes. Overseen by Coordinator, Jennifer Hammer, Rising Hope's efforts specifically target vulnerable youth. With a two-year grant from the New York Community Trust, Rising Hope increases support available to young people who have been trafficked, expands staff knowledge of human trafficking through trainings and assistance, and mitigates the criminalization of those impacted by trafficking through training, assessments, interventions, mentoring, counseling, outreach, and collaborations. In addition to working with Rising Ground programs, Jennifer will train providers at government agencies and other nonprofits.



# Celebrating Service & Employee Excellence

Rising Ground's 2025 Employee Excellence Awards celebrated 96 staff members marking Length of Service milestone anniversaries from five to 40 years, and 16 Excellence Award winners. These are peer-nominated awards recognizing staff who embody our core values of Accountability, Connection, Service and Tenacity, and who meet our expectations of Respect, Achievement, Safety, and Responsibility. The evening culminated with recognition of our Managers of the Year and our two Employees of the Year. The award winners were selected from a record-breaking 784 nominations. You can find the full list of winners and honorees on our website.



Payroll Manager, Lilly Prasad, received a standing ovation in recognition of her 40 years of service.

L-R: AVP Runaway & Homeless Youth, Jeffrey Moore, SVP for Residential Services, Shanikwa McIntyre-Ligonde, Operations Coordinator for Runaway & Homeless Youth and 2025 Employee of the Year, Ivory McQueen, and CEO Alan Mucatel.

## Young Voices Rising

Rising Ground staff and young people from our *Paths to Success* programs came together to take part in Denim Day in April, giving voice and support to survivors of sexual assault and to speak out against sexual violence in all its forms. The day of advocacy and community featured a march across Brooklyn Bridge, culminating in a rally in Foley Square where Rising Ground's Director of Respect & Responsibility, Alvaro Pinzon, and Early Relationship Abuse Prevention Program Community Educator, Heidi Pena, spoke.



# Make a Will to Make an Impact

The statues of organization founders John Watts, Jr. and John George Leake and the commemorative plaques from former orphanages in 1843 and 1890 carved with the names of the earliest supporters of what is now Rising Ground on display in our administrative offices on Broadway in Herald Square are a concrete, or in this case, bronze and marble, reminder of how legacies endure through time.

August marks *National Make-A-Will Month*. At Rising Ground we are encouraging you to make your will and to make an impact. Over the past 194 years, we have provided 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. By creating your will, you can make a meaningful difference for all close to your heart. An up-to-date will is an essential way to: protect your loved ones, ensure your assets support the people and organizations you care about, and build a lasting legacy that will continue to help vulnerable individuals and families have the resources and support they need for generations to come.

We've partnered with FreeWill.com so you can easily participate in Make-A-Will Month. Their trusted online platform guides you through writing your will in as little as 20 minutes at no cost. Including a gift to Rising Ground is not required as part of the service, but will secure your legacy of ensuring our neighbors all are supported as they navigate life's challenges and positively direct their lives long into the future. You can find our Planned Giving resources at [RisingGround.org](https://RisingGround.org) or use the QR code.



Scan here for  
Planned Giving  
resources



# Gearing Up for Good!

Rising Ground proudly provides backpacks and school supplies to thousands of children and young people throughout the New York area. Our **Back-to-School Drive 2025** is now underway! We are seeking donations to be distributed in August and early September. Your donation of backpacks and school materials can lighten the financial burden for NYC families and children from preschool through high school and help a child rise, achieve, and succeed. You can shop directly for items at Amazon, or make it a group activity, and collect bulk items within your company or organization. These can either be shipped directly to Rising Ground, or we can arrange pick-up. We also have opportunities for volunteers to help with packing backpacks with supplies. To view the lists of requested items, to access the Amazon lists, or to find out how to contribute or volunteer, please visit [RisingGround.org/back-to-school-2025](https://RisingGround.org/back-to-school-2025) or contact Sharon Pyle by email, [SPyle@RisingGround.org](mailto:SPyle@RisingGround.org), or by phone at 212-437-3551.



Rising Ground holds several drives throughout the year and welcomes all donations to provide for people supported by our programs:

## September-November 2025

### Thanksgiving Food Drive

Requesting unexpired canned goods, frozen turkeys, dry goods, and pantry staples such as seasonings and condiments to support families experiencing food insecurities.

## October-December 2024

### Holiday Gift Drive

Seeking toys and games as well as \$25 gift cards from Amazon, Target, or Visa/Mastercard to support more than 3,000 youth at the end of the year. A gift from Rising Ground with your help is oftentimes the only gift youth will receive for the holidays.

## April-June 2026

### Spring Essentials Drive

Requesting toiletries, personal care items, cleaning supplies, and clothing for young people who are homeless or housing insecure supported by our Drop-in Centers and Transitional Independent Living residences.

## All Year, Every Year

### Year Round In-Kind Donations

Diapers (all sizes), laundry detergent, cleaning supplies, feminine hygiene products, and can openers are some of the supplies our community-focused programs require on an ongoing basis.



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 New York City area children, adults, and families rise above adversity. Founded as an orphanage in 1831, Rising Ground is a leading nonprofit human services organization that has been at the forefront of evolving community needs and is a leader in utilizing results-driven, evidence-based practices. Today, the organization's work is a positive force in the lives of over 30,000 individuals reaching 72,000 adults, children, and families across 101 programs at 143 sites.



[@RisingGroundNY](https://www.RisingGroundNY.org)

1333 Broadway, 8th Floor  
New York, NY 10018-1064  
[RisingGround.org](https://www.RisingGround.org)