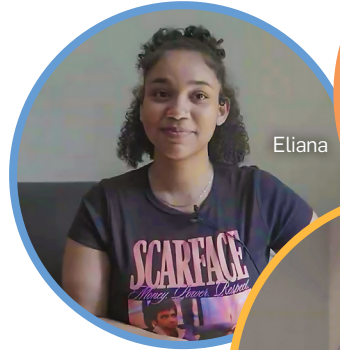
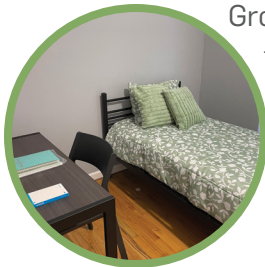


From Foster Care to Fearless Futures

How Rising Ground's Supervised Independent Living Program is Empowering Young Women to Thrive Independently.

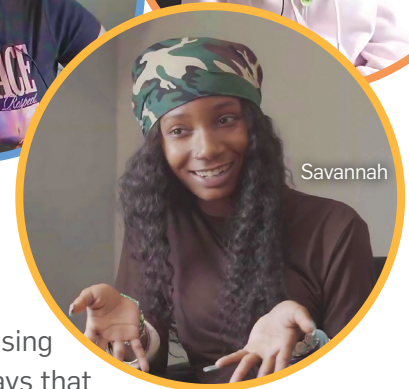
Young people yearn for the freedom and independence of adulthood. In movies like *Big* and *Freaky Friday*, child and teenage protagonists achieve their wish to "grow up" only to discover that independence comes with obligations and responsibilities for which they are not ready. Rising Ground's Chief Program Officer (CPO), Susan Sampogna, says that for many young people, 18 is the magic age that often resonates: "They go off to college and they have the experience of making decisions on their own – they have to budget their money, they have to figure out their meals, they have to set their own alarm – they have to do all these things that prepare them for life."



Eliana



Destiny



Savannah

Continued on Page 4 ►

Riverdale Ribbon-Cutting

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in August to celebrate our new Day Habilitation Program facilities in Riverdale. The new location includes classrooms, a sensory room, and recreational areas supporting over 60 people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). It also serves as the hub for I/DD services staff working in our Community Programs. People supported, their families, Rising Ground staff, and members of our Board of Directors were in attendance. They were joined by the Commissioner of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, Willow Baer, State Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz, Council Member Eric Dinowitz, and Rabbi Barry Dov Katz, Eric Saidel, and Susan Schwartz from our new neighbors, the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale, for the occasion, all of whom expressed their support for Rising Ground's vital work in the community.



Longtime Rising Ground Day Habilitation participant, Matthew Valiplackal, prepares to cut the ribbon in Riverdale.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

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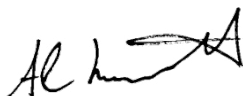
Dear Friends,

Helping New Yorkers find positive paths forward is the driving force behind our work. This is evident as we ensure people receive the resources and guidance needed to embark on the next stage of their development. This includes children and young people starting the new school year with backpacks filled with fresh supplies and young adults transitioning out of foster care and learning to live independently.

Success is rarely a straight line. Behind every triumph lies a journey marked by setbacks and detours. While the world often celebrates the final achievement — the graduation, the job, the apartment — it is being able to navigate obstacles and continue undeterred on the journey that truly defines success. In these moments Rising Ground's support is imperative and the inner strength and perseverance of the people we support emerges.

Obstacles come in many forms — self-doubt, financial limitations, lack of resources, or societal expectations. Yet, what distinguishes successful individuals is not the absence of these barriers but their response to them. The ability to confront difficulties head-on, adapt, and keep moving forward was the theme of our recent Youth Summit.

At Rising Ground we bear witness to personal growth and strength every day. In addition to reading about examples of these triumphs, please consider joining us at our Fall Benefit on October 23 where you will have an in-person opportunity to celebrate more of these successes. I hope you will join us.



Alan Mucatel
Chief Executive Officer



Fall Benefit

Thursday, October 23, 2025 @ 6:30PM

📍 Amber Room

55 West 21st Street, New York, NY 10010

Join the Celebration on October 23

Rising Ground's work across New York City is more critical than ever. As major federal policy shifts and funding cuts continue, we remain unwavering in supporting and advocating for the people and communities who rely on us. We are proud of how our friends and allies pull together to support and nurture Rising Ground's work. We invite you to celebrate with us at our Fall Benefit cocktail reception on **Thursday, October 23**.

An intimate and informal evening, the Fall Benefit brings together compassionate individuals who share a commitment to making a positive impact across New York City and Westchester with funds raised directly supporting our programs. In addition to enjoying cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, the evening will provide an opportunity to hear firsthand the positive impact Rising Ground has on the lives of our neighbors.

This year's event will take place at the Amber Room at 55 W 21st Street in Manhattan. You can support Rising Ground by becoming a sponsor or purchasing tickets. **Please join us!**



Amber Room



JOIN US!

Scan this QR Code to purchase tickets now.

Save the Date!

Celebrating 195 Years of Rising Ground

Our 2026 Gala will be held on Wednesday, March 11 at the Tribeca Rooftop. This very special occasion will also mark Rising Ground's 195th anniversary, providing an opportunity to celebrate our legacy of helping children, adults, and families to rise above adversity. As our biggest fundraising event of the year, the Gala is also an opportunity for you to help ensure we can continue to strengthen New York, together now and into the future.

195
YEARS

JOIN US!

Scan this QR Code to purchase tickets now.



► Continued from front page

Supervised Independent Living Program

For young people in foster care, turning 18 can be different. In New York, young people can remain in foster care until they are 21. However, from the age of 18, they are required to give their written consent. Some choose to be discharged and return to living with family members. Others transition from care to be fully independent. In all cases, youth are required to work with a case manager on a plan that addresses housing, income, and creates a network of supports in their community before a family court judge will release them from care. Rising Ground's **Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP)**, started in June 2024, provides a new pathway, taking care of essential needs as the young person pursues their goals and works towards a permanent living situation.

"Many youth who are in care at age 18 have been in care for a very long time and they're thinking about what their adult life is going to look like," says Sampogna. "The SILPs create an opportunity for young people to have normative, transitional adult experiences, with a safety net."

Rising Ground's SILP operates from three apartments in The Bronx housing up to 12 female or female identifying young people aged 18-21. Each young woman is given her own bedroom and shares living spaces and facilities with three other program participants. However, unlike group homes or other Rising Ground residential services, they are free to come and go as they wish and live in these apartments with greater autonomy.

"The rent is paid, and basic personal needs are addressed," says Sampogna. "Here they have greater control over their lives, while at the same time having a support system to back them up."

To be selected for the SILP, the young woman must be able to demonstrate that they are ready for this experience. This can include being in school or having a job. As participants, they meet weekly with a case planner and attend workshops on topics such as budgeting and financial wellness, food preparation

and nutrition, and career growth. Support can also include assistance with obtaining essential documents such as social security cards or birth certificates and help with applications for education, employment, and housing. For the program participants, the commitment to nurturing their goals is clearly evident and the program's requirement of taking ownership is welcomed.

Director Aneka Mathieson emphasizes that the SILP is focused on tapping into the individual's strengths and goals. As case planner Johanna Polanco describes: "Our program is more than just housing. We provide opportunities for hope, growth, and independence.

What makes this work so impactful is that our team members show up with heart, patience, and purpose. With the right balance of support and self-reliance, the youth can build a strong future for themselves, breaking cycles of instability, poverty, and homelessness. I am proud of what we are accomplishing here."

For 21-year-old Eliana, the SILP provided an environment where she could turn a skill into a career: "I've always been creative and artistic. I lived the broke life growing up. My family couldn't afford for me to get my nails done. So I did them myself. People would say they liked them and ask me to do theirs. I started doing nails for others and have stuck with it."

In January Eliana opened her own nail studio in Harlem. She also works as a nail technician at another beauty shop while studying for her cosmetology license. Program staff express their admiration for Eliana for her commitment, her focus, and her planning. They also applaud her for weathering the challenges of running a business and for continuing her education to ensure longevity and success in her chosen field. Eliana credits the financial workshops for encouraging her to save the money to open her business.



Twenty-year-old Destiny was referred to the SILP from a foster care group home in White Plains. She says she draws motivation from the SILP staff: "They want to see me progress, and I want to show them that I can do it and that I can see it through. I feel like I found a real supportive home here."

Nineteen-year-old Savannah says she was a young person who could not wait to be out on her own. She found it especially disheartening when she felt she was demonstrating independence at a young age by doing things on her own like shopping and laundry, but was still living with restrictions due to her age. "I told the judge and my lawyer that I wanted to be in a peaceful setting with no one telling me what to do or where to go and where I could show that I could do things by myself."

Savannah found that peace in the SILP and says it allows her to focus on building a foundation for her future success. Now working, saving money, and awaiting approval for an apartment, greater independence has not come without setbacks. At one point she lost all her savings and had to

start from scratch, but she says the rewards of independent living are worth the risks: "I chose this, and I can handle this."

CPO Sampogna says the program's low level of direct supervision and high degree of independence differentiates it from other programs and requires putting a great deal of trust in the participants: "Owing to the selection process we have in place and the culture that has been fostered by the department that is committed to their personal growth, achievement, and success, the young people have truly flourished. They've proved that we are right to put our trust in them and they're using the experience as a successful springboard into adult life." ■



Program Updates

Our work supporting **runaway and homeless youth** is expanding with the opening of a new residence on Audubon Avenue in Washington Heights to house 17 homeless young adults ages 21–24. Audubon will join our nine Transitional Independent Living (TIL) programs which house and support 163 youth ages 16–24, as well as a Crisis Shelter for 20 youth ages 16–20. Given the demands for supports and services for young people who are runaway or homeless, we are pleased to expand our offerings to this population, which also include our drop-in centers in Jamaica and Far Rockaway.

Rising Ground has been awarded a contract that will grow our **JustUs** program. Currently serving youth in Brooklyn, the expansion will replicate the model in The Bronx supporting 48 young women, gender non-confirming, and nonbinary youth who are involved, or at risk for involvement, with the criminal justice system. The program will be in the storefront space of the Willis Avenue apartment building in The Bronx that also houses one of our runaway and homeless youth residences our three Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP) apartments for older youth leaving foster care, and a supportive apartment that is home to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



JustUs at Denim Day 2025.

Strengthening New York, Together

Over the summer, Rising Ground had a visible and vibrant presence in the communities we support with events fostering face-to-face interactions that provide direct assistance and build awareness of how we can be helpful to community members.



Families in The Bronx and Brooklyn celebrated their little ones "moving up" and onto Pre-K or Head Start after completing our Early Head Start program.



Our Bronx-based Family Resource Center provided over 300 families with backpacks and school supplies, setting them up for a successful start to the new school year.

In addition to distributing backpacks and school supplies, The Yard – East Flatbush Family Enrichment Center and partners gave the community a fun family summer block party!



Children and families supported by our Queens-based services had a fun day picking a backpack, decorating them with pins and art, and then stuffing them with supplies.





Young people in our Relationship Abuse Prevention Program Peer Leadership summer program gathered for the annual conference featuring presentations covering social justice topics including mental health, teen relationship abuse, race and racism, environmental justice, and more.



Our Safe Space Drop-in Center in Jamaica hosted a joyous prom for young people in our runaway and homeless youth programs, giving them the chance to celebrate milestones and make memories.

More than a Meal

In November, Rising Ground will help New Yorkers provide a festive Thanksgiving holiday for their families. We will be collecting non-perishable food items such as canned goods, pasta, rice, and holiday staples like stuffing and cranberry sauce, alongside frozen turkeys to be provided directly to families supported by Rising Ground throughout New York City. Together, we can make Thanksgiving a time of abundance for all members of our community. More than a meal, your donation delivers connection, nourishment, and hope.



Scan here to
Learn More

The Thanksgiving food drive, like the year-end holiday toy drive, the Spring essentials drive for runaway homeless youth and back-to-school backpack drive offer opportunities to provide tangible support through the year. To learn more please visit RisingGround.org/Thanksgiving-2025 or email Sharon Pyle at SPyle@RisingGround.org.

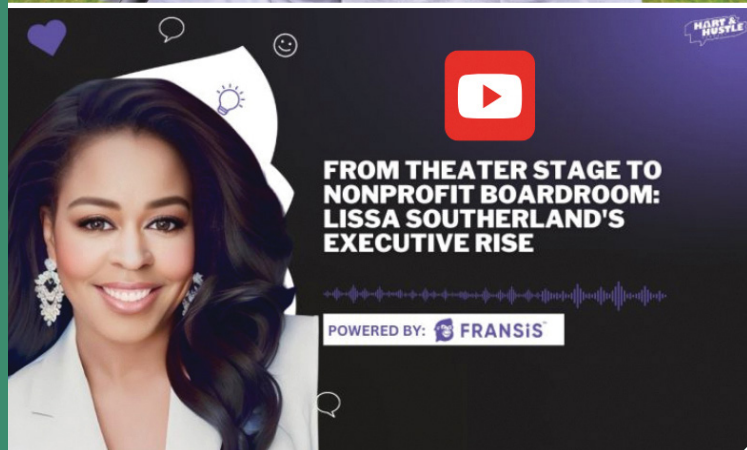
In The News

Rising Ground's Therapy Comes to The Bronx community event received coverage in **The New York Amsterdam News** and **BronxNet TV**. The event was presented by our Atlas program that provides therapeutic services, community support, and pathways to opportunities for court-involved youth and their families.

Our Chief Operating Officer, **Lissa Southerland**, was featured on the **Hart & Hustle** podcast. Her wide-ranging discussion with host, Keenan Hart, included how improv skills from theater have helped in leading operations, why saying "no" is essential for executive effectiveness, and the power of mentorship in fostering leadership ability. You can find links to this and the clips above on our website news page, RisingGround.org/News.



Scan here to
Learn More

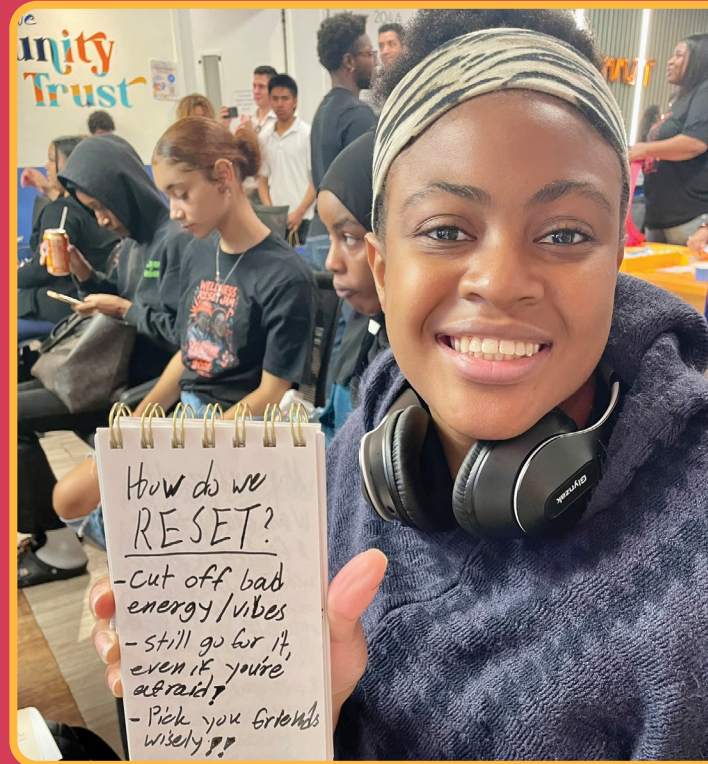


Navigating Bumps in the Road

Around 80 Young people from Rising Ground's runaway and homeless youth programs convened for the second annual Youth Summit presented by our *Roadmap to Adulthood* team. With the theme of **RESET - Reclaim, Evolve, Strengthen, Empower, and Transform**, the aim of the day was to create a safe, uplifting space where youth can feel seen, celebrated, and empowered to be able to reset as they pursue their goals, including continuing their education, securing employment, and finding a permanent home.

"No matter how heavy life feels, you can pause, breathe, and begin again mentally, physically, and emotionally," says Program Director and summit organizer, Rose Torcel, LMSW. "Each reset is proof that your story is still yours to write and a reminder that the power has always been within you. Get up, don't stay stuck. You give life and meaning to your reality."

The summit, held at our Safe Space drop-in center in Jamaica, Queens, included lively panel discussions where the young people heard from social workers and people with experience of being homeless about how they overcame challenges and obstacles, including advice on dealing with grief and trauma, and how social media "is not real life" and that "comparison is the thief of joy." They also received advice on how to manage their mental health and wellness with tips on journaling, the advantages of physical activity, and the benefits of experiencing gratitude. Additionally, workshops including art, soap-making, gardening, and color therapy allowed them to tap into activities to promote calmness and self-care. The day also included a nourishing meal and an energetic performance by Far Rockaway-based Rok Nation Dance Team.



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

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



Panelists, l-r: Tabatha Ferrer, Onyx Walker, Jada Clarke, Rose Torcel, Branny Mendoza, Wilfred Trye, and Tyler Noah Lewis.