

Rising

Strengthening New York, Together

 **RISING**
GROUND
NEWSLETTER
Winter 2026

Expanding Our Reach Across New York City

Rising Ground's Fatherhood Initiative and our JustUs diversion program will deepen their roots in 2026.

Two Rising Ground programs are expanding to touch more lives across New York City. The Fatherhood Initiative helps non-custodial fathers develop healthy parenting practices and strengthen family bonds. JustUs assists girls and LGBTQ+ youth aged 13-18 who are involved in, or at high risk of involvement in, the juvenile legal system, setting them on a more pro-social path. Though they serve different populations, both programs share a common mission: guiding participants onto paths of positive change with resources and support to overcome challenges and thrive. The Bronx-based Fatherhood Initiative is expanding into Brooklyn and Manhattan with a broader scope that now includes mothers. Meanwhile, JustUs is growing into The Bronx, initially doubling its capacity citywide, with further expansion possibly in the works.

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L-R: Fatherhood Initiative Director, Reginald Mitchell, Case Manager, Katie-Leigh Camacho, and person-supported, Shatek, at our Fall Benefit.



The JustUs team in Brooklyn showing their support of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

195 Years of Strengthening New York

March 2026 will mark Rising Ground's 195th year – a significant milestone reflecting our remarkable history and evolution from an orphanage to a wide-reaching and impactful human services organization with deep roots across the Greater New York area.

Please join us at our annual Gala on **Wednesday, March 11, 2026** at the Tribeca Rooftop to celebrate the enduringly positive impact on the lives of thousands of children, adults, and families and to fortify our commitment to empowering individuals and strengthening communities.



OUR COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING OUR NEIGHBORS REMAINS STEADFAST

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Dear Friends,

The new year offers an opportunity to both look ahead and reflect on the year that has passed. As our country continues to navigate change and discord around domestic economic and social policy, Rising Ground's commitment to supporting our neighbors remains steadfast. We continue to expand our work as we look to a future in which every child has an equal opportunity to succeed, vulnerable individuals and families have the resources and support they need, people with disabilities can access opportunity and fully participate in their communities, and all are supported as they navigate life's challenges.

This past year, Rising Ground delivered over \$200 million worth of services to children, adults, and families – an 11% increase from the previous year. Our nearly 2,000 staff members work from 143 locations throughout New York City and lower Westchester County, and in homes and other places frequented by the people we support. We are reaching more neighbors than ever before, and our constructive impact has never been greater.

Our expansion is strategic and responsive to the needs of our communities. Programs including the Fatherhood Initiative and the JustUs program for young girls and LGBTQ+ youth featured in this newsletter, have proven so successful that we are now deepening our roots across the city. These are two, among many programs, providing demonstrable positive paths forward.

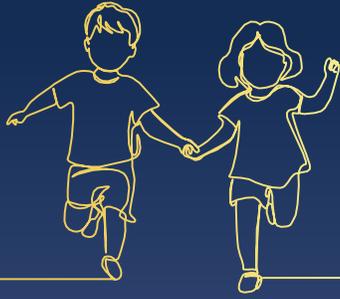
In March 2026 we will celebrate Rising Ground's 195th anniversary. Our organization's long history and continual evolution is remarkable, with an enduringly positive impact on the lives of thousands of children, adults and families throughout New York City and Westchester. This impact is only possible when our contracted services are bolstered by funds raised by a community of partners, advocates, and supporters that believe each of us can thrive when life has hope and opportunity.

As we expand to meet growing needs, your support remains vital as we continue to strengthen New York, together. I hope many of you will join us to celebrate this momentous anniversary and our legacy of life-affirming work at our Gala on Wednesday, March 11 at the Tribeca Rooftop.



Alan Mucatel
Chief Executive Officer





Gala 2026



Wednesday, March 11, 2026
Cocktail Reception 6 pm | Dinner 7 pm

Tribeca Rooftop
2 Desbrosses Street, New York, NY

Join the Celebration

Join us on Wednesday, March 11 for our annual Gala and help strengthen our community by celebrating our work supporting our neighbors in need while connecting with others who share a passion for making a meaningful difference. The joyous evening includes a cocktail reception, dinner, and an inspiring program that allows you to engage with our work on a deeper level, hearing directly from people we support. Last year's event was Rising Ground's most successful fundraising event and we hope to raise even more in 2026 – our 195th year! You can support this effort by becoming a sponsor of the event, purchasing a table or tickets, or advertising in the digital journal. Use the QR code to register today.



JOIN US!

Scan the QR Code to purchase tickets.



Robert Schanz and Matt Del Percio.



OPEN Impact Real Estate Co-Founders Lindsay Ornstein and Stephen Powers.



Giovanna Bernardini and David Theobald.



L-R: Matthew Porter, Karen Myrie, Dorothy Mehta, Robert Schanz, Alan Mucatel, Bridgette R. McLeod-Williams, Matt Del Percio, and Duncan James Turnbull.

Jeff Cohen

Rising Ground welcomes Jeff Cohen to its Board of Directors. Jeff is the Global Head of Leveraged Finance and Private Credit for Santander USA's Corporate and Investment Banking division. Matt Del Percio, President of the Board of Directors, said: "With his strong background in banking and financial leadership, Jeff brings valuable expertise that will strengthen our strategic planning and financial stewardship. His commitment to community service aligns perfectly with our mission, and we look forward to the insight and dedication he will bring to our work."



A Night of Community & Connection

Our Fall Benefit cocktail reception at Manhattan's Amber Room on October 23 brought our community together to celebrate a shared passion for our mission-driven work. Thank you to everyone who joined us, demonstrating your care and commitment. A special thank you to all our sponsors for your generosity and to Shatek, a participant in our Fatherhood Initiative which seeks to reconnect non-custodial fathers with their children, for sharing his story and illustrating the impact of our work on individuals and families.

► Continued from front page

Expanding Our Reach Across New York City

Fatherhood Initiative: Building on Eight Years of Success

Director of the Fatherhood Initiative, Reginald Mitchell, says the new contracts represent a significant milestone, allowing our efforts to build on eight years of success strengthening families while dramatically expanding our reach to include younger fathers as well as mothers. Our work remains centered around providing fathers with parenting and life skills to improve relationships with their children. Research has shown that stronger father-child relationships result in children being less likely to get into trouble at home, at school, or in the neighborhood, and more likely to exhibit self-control and pro-social behavior.

For the fathers, many of whom come to the program via the courts following an arrest, frequently for intimate partner conflict, the most compelling reason to commit to the program comes from a pointed question asked by Mr. Mitchell: "In 20 years' time, do you want your child to ask 'how are you?' or 'where were you?'"

This question eliminates much of the resistance men may have to being told how to parent, and any perceived challenge to their masculinity, getting to the heart of the work rooted in providing trusted support. The 10-week curriculum builds on men's strengths and examines any weaknesses, providing tools and support in those areas, while also emphasizing accountability and communication. It includes one-on-one and group sessions. Support also includes helping people obtain their GED,

résumé building skills, financial literacy workshops, and assistance with job placement, all with the goal of building a stronger foundation for family resilience.

Additionally, the work with fathers includes addressing underlying issues and trauma as we seek to avoid adverse impacts on next and future generations. Case managers provide anger management training and, when needed, refer participants to other Rising Ground services such as the Atlas program for family therapy, or our community mental health services.

Group outings foster real-life peer engagement as well as valuable opportunities to engage in fun activities with their children. Mr. Mitchell says community flourishes in these settings: "It might be a baseball game, a basketball game, or a pool outing. Sometimes we go bowling or just order in food. It's a chance to talk to peers. It's more comfortable because participants feel like they are not the only one going through something."

The groups often engage with past program participants.: "We may have an alumni dad with us at an event to share his story. They can often sway a lot of dads, encouraging them to think 'I can't give up now because if I say I really love my kid, then this should be a no brainer for me.'"

Mr. Mitchell says the program's consistency and availability of its case managers who stay in regular contact with the participants, is key to the program's success, as is fostering the mindset among the fathers that they are participating because they want to, not because they must.

"We remind these dads that, at the end of the day, there is no manual for being a parent. It's not that any one of us is winging it, but there will be things that come up that one may not have a remedy for right away. That's when having someone you trust and who is available to you can help."

With the expansion into Brooklyn and Manhattan, Mr. Mitchell says the program will build on its proud history of improving lives, strengthening communities, and addressing persistent social challenges, now reaching even more families across the city.



Shatek (right) speaks about his experience in the Fatherhood Initiative with CEO Alan Mucatel (left) at our Fall Benefit.

JustUs: Helping Teenagers Find Community

JustUs is similarly placed as the program prepares to initially double its capacity, building on five years of proven success diverting young women from the juvenile justice system. Rising Ground launched the pilot program in 2020 in Brooklyn following the identification of a gap in services for young girls and female identifying youth who were involved in, or at risk of involvement in, the juvenile justice system. The first cohort gave the program its name as they recognized their own agency. The initial years of JustUs demonstrated that by addressing the environmental causes of girls' behaviors including truancy and fighting, and bolstering skills in economic sustainability, the girls could be successfully diverted onto paths of self-sufficiency and personal growth.

The expansion brings the program's total capacity to 96 participants across the two boroughs. JustUs in Brooklyn accommodates up to 48 girls with the length of time spent in the program ranging from six to nine months. The Bronx program, which also supports 48 participants and has bilingual staff, reflecting the community, began accepting referrals in late 2025. There is hope that the program may expand further in 2026.

JustUs provides three core services: individual counseling, economic empowerment, and therapeutic/skill-building groups. It provides dedicated physical spaces where the young people can gather. Program Director, Alexandra Wynters, says these spaces are crucial, providing a safe space outside of the home and away from school: "It's shocking to me that despite the social media they have access to and all the things offered within schools, so many young people are very lonely. For them to build healthy relationships, they need a safe physical location – a space where they can breathe, or have a little breakdown if needed, or eat, or rest, or connect with other people."

The program incentivizes engagement by offering a stipend to participants. This, alongside connecting the girls to internships – including a partnership with CUNY that allows them to gain college credits – and job opportunities, encourages them to focus on their future and work towards self-sufficiency. Group sessions cover topics ranging from financial literacy, résumé building, and job interview run-throughs to

Young women supported by JustUs and staff celebrating Thanksgiving together in Brooklyn.



self-care focused activities or coming together for awareness and activism events, such as Denim Day to support victims of sexual violence, mental health awareness month events, and LGBTQ+ Pride. JustUs also offers college scholarships, providing five this year.

Mrs. Wynters says that over the past five years JustUs has built a robust referral stream from current and past participants recommending the program to their friends and family.

"As youth build trust with their counselor, they are more open to learning and discovery. Then, as they heal, there comes a moment where they ask, 'What do I do with this newfound knowledge?' I think it is beautiful that a lot of them go back to their homes and into their communities, expressing their feelings to those around them and encouraging important but difficult conversations."

With the expansion to The Bronx, even more young women will have access to this transformative support.

Both Mr. Mitchell and Mrs. Wynters are excited about reaching more people with their expanded work, proud of the caring teams they have built, the trust that has been earned, and the communities their efforts have fostered. The expansion represents Rising Ground's continued commitment to meeting critical unmet needs across New York City, bringing results-driven programs to more youth and families.

For more information or to inquire about making a referral, please contact the programs by email at Fatherhood@RisingGround.org and JustUs@RisingGround.org. ■

Delivering Warmth, Hope, & Nourishment

With the government shutdown delaying SNAP food assistance in November, the struggles that so many families were already facing were starkly amplified, with some forced to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table.

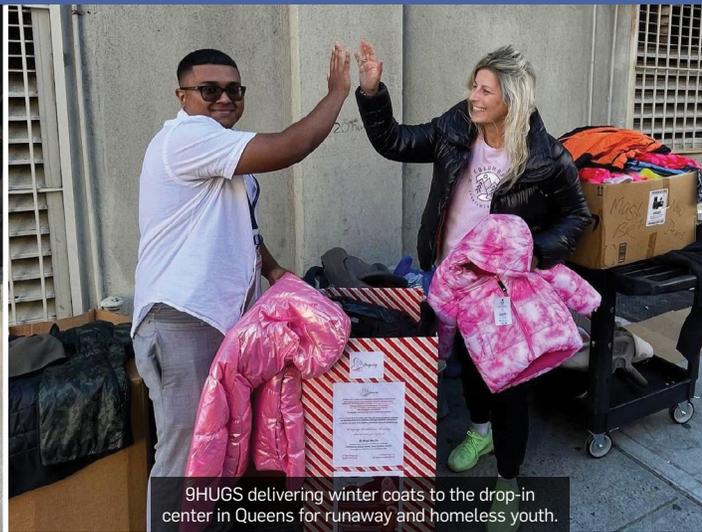
Rising Ground's donation drives throughout the year, including our Thanksgiving Food Drive that provided 1,500 families with turkeys and other food items in November, has an important impact on the families and communities we support, meeting basic needs to relieve financial burdens and provide dignity, comfort, and stability during difficult times. These donations also allow us to stretch our resources further, enabling us to support more people and expand the reach of our community-based programs. Beyond meeting immediate needs, donation drives are a vivid reminder that even small acts of generosity can create meaningful change and offer hope to those facing hardship.

Rising Ground holds four main drives throughout the year. Additionally, we seek immediate support for families in times of crisis, such as when SNAP benefits were delayed, and many of our programs accept donations of food and other goods such as diapers or clothing throughout the year, providing tangible and targeted support to those who need it the most when they need it the most.

If you or your company or an organization you know is interested in finding out more about how to support these drives, please contact our Development department by email at Development@RisingGround.org.



Bronx residents collecting their Thanksgiving turkeys and food from our Family Resource Center.



9HUGS delivering winter coats to the drop-in center in Queens for runaway and homeless youth.



A vibrant giveaway event at The Yard - East Flatbush Family Enrichment Center featuring Rising Ground Director, Natasha Esteve, Jack Goldberg of the Goldberg Family Foundation, and District 18 Council Member, Amanda Farias.



Sorting food donations before a community giveaway event in Queens.

How You Can Make an Impact in 2026

April 2026

Essentials Drive

Personal items, accessories, and clothing to provide runaway and homeless youth with essential daily items such as toiletries, underwear, and feminine hygiene products.

July 2026

Back-to-School Drive

Backpacks and school supplies to help children and young adults, rise, achieve, and succeed as they settle into the new school year.

October 2026

Thanksgiving Food Drive

Nourishing families and strengthening communities.

November 2026

Holiday Toy & Gift Drive

Showing children and young adults that they deserve kindness with toys and gifts to make the holidays brighter.

Questions? Contact Development@RisingGround.org



In The News

Rising Ground's **Community Mental Health Services** was featured in *City & State New York's* list of **2025 Top Mental Health Care Providers** with our clinics and in-school clinicians noted as "standout services."



Scan here to see the **Top Mental Health Care Providers** article



ABOVE L-R: Jerome Baldwin, Kidwise clinician at MS72; Joanna Barberri-Rosario, senior director, community mental health; and Carmen Martinez, an Article 31 mental health clinic administrative assistant.



Our CEO, **Alan Mucatel**, was named by *PoliticsNY.com* and *amNY* as a **2025 Nonprofit Power Player**. Asked how policymakers and everyday New Yorkers can support Rising Ground, he responded: "Policymakers can support this work by ensuring living wages for human services workers who are vital to our city and state and by assuring that contracts are registered on time, payments are made quickly, and that there are annual increases in funding addressing inflationary pressures."



Alan Mucatel



Scan here to see the **2025 Nonprofit Power Player** article

Join Our Movement

Rising Ground's new charity running group, **Team Rising Ground**, is raising funds for the children, adults, and families we serve across New York City. Our first major charity race will be the Brooklyn Half Marathon in April.

The team made its debut in September at the INCLUDEnyc 5K to show our support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The group next took part in the Bronx District Attorney's 8th Annual 5K Run/Walk/Roll to End Domestic Violence in October.

You are invited to join our team! Whether you are new to running or a seasoned pro, we encourage you to come and move with purpose and be part of a community that uplifts and motivates. Encourage others to join us as well. In addition to participating in events, Team Rising Ground comes together for practice runs, knowing that "we're stronger, together"!

For more information, please contact TeamRisingGround@RisingGround.org.



Rising Ground's annual Diamond Club luncheon was held in November, celebrating employees who have been with Rising Ground for 25+ years. This year five new members, Daphne Carter, Dr. Robyn Jacobson, Tracey Miller, Olga Mercado, and Darryl Pollock, were welcomed into the club, which has a total of 35 members. As our CEO, Alan Mucatel, says: "We are so fortunate that so many staff stay with us for an extended period, acquiring knowledge and skills that are not only directed to the people we support and the daily operations of our organization, but that are imparted to - and inspiring for - the rest of the people who work here."



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.instagram.com/RisingGroundNY)

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