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Rising Ground's 2026 Gala to Celebrate 195 Years of Helping New Yorkers to Rise Above Adversity

Wednesday, March 11, 6 pm at the Tribeca Rooftop

(New York, NY – March 2, 2026) In 1831, New York was a thriving global trading hub with a rising population driven by immigration and commerce. Social divides were already evident and while it would be 58 years before Jacob Riis's revelatory slum photos would ignite a movement for social change, some New Yorkers were already concerned by the rise in urban poverty and the lack of public aid. Among them was Westchester County Judge and former Congressman John Watts, Jr. who, with the bequest of his friend John George Leake, founded the **Leake & Watts Orphan House** "for the maintenance and education of helpless orphan children." At the forefront of the social responsibility movement, the Orphan House was one of the first private charitable institutions in the country dedicated to children in need.

Originally supporting 60 orphan boys on the grounds of today's Cathedral of St. John the Divine on 112th Street, by 1886, 1,374 children were in care, including 432 girls. Over the next 140 years, the Orphan House evolved into a wider reaching human services nonprofit, **Leake & Watts**, based in Yonkers. In 2018, merging with Edwin Gould Child & Family Services, it evolved once again into [Rising Ground](#), expanding its services and impact in communities throughout New York City and Westchester County.

Now directly supporting 30,000 children, adults, and families each year, Rising Ground's Gala on **Wednesday, March 11** will celebrate this [history](#) and continued commitment to its vision of a 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.

The Gala program spotlights the work that Rising Ground's nearly 2,000 employees do across 101 programs and 143 sites by inviting people supported and staff to speak, providing guests with insight into the impact of its life-affirming work. The evening will also honor [9 H.U.G.S. \(Help Us Give & Share\)](#) and the [Goldburg Family Foundation](#) for their commitment to providing ongoing, tangible support to young people and communities supported by Rising Ground.

"There aren't many organizations that precede the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, Carnegie Hall, Grand Central Terminal, and other city icons – but we do. Rising Ground is proud to be intrinsically New York, committed to supporting our neighbors, strengthening families, and providing paths to positive change for children, youth, and adults across all five boroughs and in Westchester Country," says **Rising Ground CEO, Alan Mucatel**. "Our commitment to providing the city's most vulnerable with the

resources and supports to meet the physical, mental health, psychological, and educational needs of youth and adults remains unwavering, and we look forward to celebrating this work at our Gala on March 11 and raising critical funds to ensure this important and impactful work continues for years to come.”

Tickets and sponsorships for the Rising Ground Gala are available at

<https://www.risingground.org/2026gala/>

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About Rising Ground

Rising Ground is a leading nonprofit human services organization, currently operating more than 101 programs at 143 sites across all five New York City boroughs and Westchester County, employing a workforce of around 2,000 people. 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, directly helping 30,000 program participants, reaching over 72,000 children, adults, and family members each year. Founded in 1831 as Leake & Watts Orphan House, Rising Ground has been at the forefront of supporting evolving community needs and is a leader in utilizing result-driven, evidence-based practices. In 2025, the organization opened a new administrative headquarters in Manhattan with hubs in Brooklyn, The Bronx, Harlem, and Queens. Today, Rising Ground delivers:

- Caring supports promoting independence and engagement for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Dedicated services to survivors of intimate partner violence as well as creative preventive programs that foster healthy relationships.
- High quality and effective community based mental health and health services that foster physical and emotional well-being.
- Trusted and targeted assistance and resources to elevate children and families, building on their strengths to overcome challenges.
- Concrete non-judgmental services and results-focused interventions that lay out a constructive path forward for runaway and homeless youth, as well as juvenile justice involved young people.
- Nurturing and compassionate care for unaccompanied minors making a new home in this country.
- Educationally rich and developmentally appropriate programs that build a foundation for the future growth of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

For more information, please visit [RisingGround.org](https://www.risingground.org).