
ANNUAL REPORT

2022

RISE[®]



BREAK THE CYCLE.



Authentic
Advice



Greetings RISE Friends and Supporters:

I'm pleased to share with you our 2022 annual report. The mission of RISE is to break generational cycles of incarceration. Our holistic approach to programs and initiatives that will achieve our mission are based on national best practices, feedback, and direction we receive from the system impacted individuals and families we serve in Nebraska.

This year we launched a "unit-based" version of our In-Prison Program in partnership with NDCS at the Nebraska State Penitentiary (NSP). 23 incarcerated people graduated the first class of this new model. They lived together in the RISE program gallery of a housing unit and were in class five days a week for six months. NSP reported that housing unit misconduct reports were cut by 50% as a result of the unit based RISE program. The second unit based class is underway and RISE programming also continues at the six other prison facilities we currently serve.

RISE launched a justice study this year, a research partnership with Harvard Law School's Access to Justice Lab and researchers from the University of Zurich, to track the impacts of cash bail on people at Lancaster County Corrections and Douglas County Corrections. 600 Nebraskans will participate in the study over the next three years which will collect data on factors like housing and employment to determine how they are impacted by short-term incarceration.

RISE reentry services and employment support continues for releasing program grads. The average starting wage for released RISE graduates is close to \$17 an hour and climbing as we work to build strategic partnerships with employers. With low unemployment in Nebraska there are more businesses hiring RISE graduates into meaningful career trajectories, but we still have a long way to go.

The RISE Business Academy and the Youth and Family Program both saw an increase in participation this year. We launched trauma groups to support people working through childhood trauma and the lingering impacts of their incarceration. Our virtual volunteer opportunities went nationwide in 2022 with volunteers representing nearly all 50 states.

Thank you for continuing to show up for RISE and our participants through your volunteering, your advocacy and your investment in our work.

It takes a village and I'm grateful you're a part of ours.

Best regards,

Jeremy Bouman
CEO



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

OUR MISSION

To break the generational cycles of incarceration.

OUR VALUES

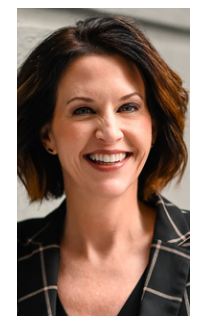
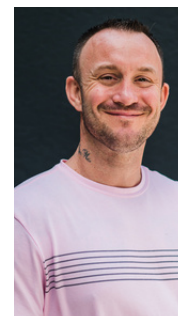
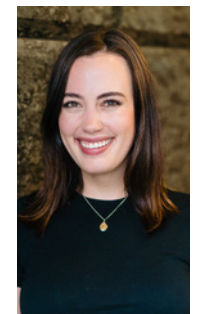
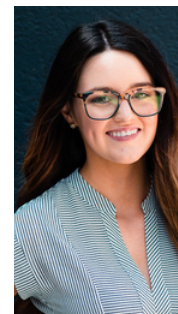
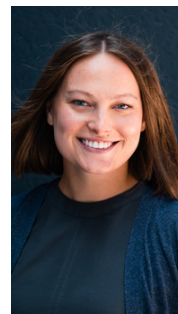
Tough Love
Witness
Entrepreneurial Mindset
Grit
Rebuilding

ABOUT RISE

RISE is the largest nonprofit organization in Nebraska focused solely on rehabilitative programming in prisons and reentry support. At RISE, transformation starts pre-release and continues post-release. Our inside/out model bridges incarceration to the community and considers all the critical steps in that journey.

RISE BOARD

Dan Walker - Board Chairman
Ken Stinson – Chairman Emeritus
Jeremy Bouman
Ava Thomas
Leah Smejkal
Jeff Slobotski
Naomi Hattaway
Dr. Mark Foxall
Wallace (Todd) Johnson
Jamie Berglund
Bill Hobbs, RISE Board Ambassador



STATEMENT OF FINANCIALS

Statement of Financial Position Assets

Cash	2,350,665
Pledges Receivable	1,056,195
Other Assets	39,995
Total Assets	3,446,855

Liabilities

Current liabilities	130,032
Total Liabilities	130,032

Net Assets

With Donor Restrictions	330,016
Without Donor Restrictions	2,986,807
Total Net Assets	3,446,855

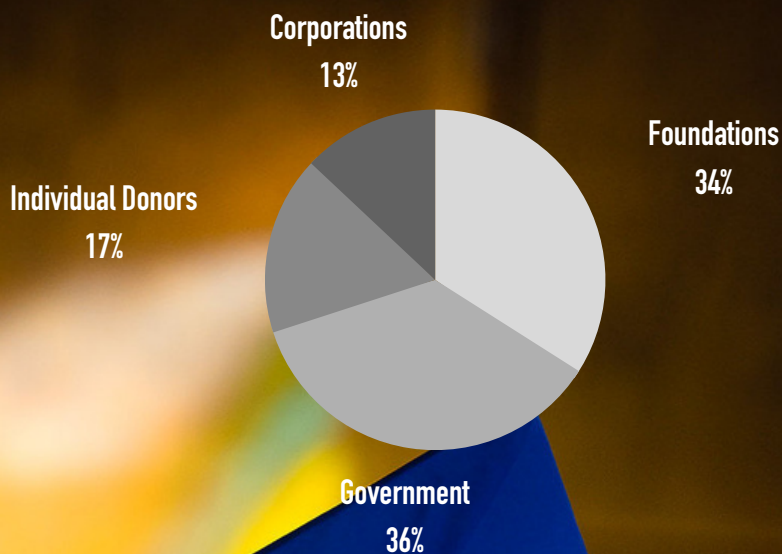
Statement of Activities Contributions

Foundations	892,474
Institutional/Government	921,588
Individual Donors	432,622
Corporate/Organization	345,785
Total Contributions	2,592,469

Expenses

General Operating Expenses	266,107
Program	1,800,535
Fundraising	206,142
Total Expenses	2,272,784
Revenue over Expenses	319,685**

**Multi year pledges recorded in year of award.
Pledges as of 12/31/21 received in 2022 = 608,333



A special thank you to our individual donors, recurring monthly donors, and the following companies, foundations and organizations for your support of RISE in 2022:

Adventure Golf Center
Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture
Annette and Paul Smith Charitable Foundation
Bank of the West
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Bluestem Capital Partners
Bob Barker Foundation
Category One Consulting
Charter Communications
CHI Health
City of Omaha
Creighton University
Department of Health and Human Services (NE)
Donald C. Scott Charitable Fund
Dream Corps Justice
Dundee Bank
Farm Credit Services of America
Firespring Foundation
First Lutheran Church Avoca
FNBO
Google
Hawks Philanthropy
Healthy Blue Nebraska
Henry Niles Foundation
Heistand Family Foundation
Immanuel Vision Foundation
J.C. & Jessie Seacrest Family Foundation
Ken and Ann Stinson Fund
The Kim Foundation
Lincoln Community Foundation
LinkedIn
The Lozier Foundation
Lutheran Family Services
M & M Foundation

Mammel Family Foundation
Medica
Moglia Family Foundation
Morgan Stanley Foundation
Mutual of Omaha Foundation
National Christian Foundation
Nebraska Civic Engagment Table
Nebraska Department of Labor
Omaha Community Foundation
Omaha Morning Rotary Foundation
Pape Family Foundation
Papillion La Vista Rotary
Peter Kiewit Foundation
Robert B. Daugherty Foundation
Safe and Just Nebraska
SHARE Omaha
The Sherwood Foundation
Sid Dillon Chevrolet
Skillwork LLC
Spreetail
Starbucks Foundation
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Stonecatcher's Society
Suzanne & Walter Scott Foundation
The Retirement Research Foundation
Todd and Mary Heistand Family Foundation
United Healthcare
United Way of the Midlands
Verizon Foundation
Vic Gutman & Associates
VLS
William & Ruth Scott Family Foundation
Women's Fund of Omaha



IN-PRISON PROGRAM

By Maria Moreno-Godemann, Director of Programs



In February, RISE launched a pilot in-unit program at the Nebraska State Penitentiary where program participants live together in an intentional learning community while attending classes five days a week. Those selected to participate in the “RISE Academy” live in a 40-bed wing of a housing unit along with a handful of previous graduates serving as peer facilitators.

The program serves individuals living in Housing Unit 2; a unit of individuals at a higher security level. They historically have less access to programming and have higher needs when returning to our communities.

Using evidence-based program interventions, RISE’s pilot program had a significant impact including a 50% reduction in the frequency and severity of misconduct reports during the program period. Thanks to the work of our Program Associate Bryan Dahlberg and our team of peer facilitators, RISE is making a significant impact by challenging participants to shift mindsets, resolve problems without violence, communicate effectively and stay focused on goals for the future.

Meeting more frequently opened the door for opportunities to participate in supplementary coursework, including an eight-week creative writing and poetry workshop facilitated by the Nebraska Writers Collective called “Writers’ Block.” This program provides a creative avenue for participants to process and heal as they work through the pivotal character development portions of the RISE curriculum. RISE also partners with Lutheran Family Services on a 12-week “Nurturing Fathers” course which provides additional tools for healthy parenting.

In addition to launching new programs, 2022 was a year of growth for the In-Prison team. We welcomed three new program associates, each of them bringing over 20 years of experience in their respective fields of recovery support and business management.

In March, Ali Schwanebeck joined RISE along with Dr. Tommy Moore, followed by Heather Austin in August. We are thrilled to welcome Ali, Tommy, and Heather to our team. They each bring unique perspectives and gifts and have quickly built trust and rapport with our participants and the facilities where they serve. This year we graduated 5 classes from four facilities and held two community graduations for those who completed the coursework while living in the community.



605 IN-PRISON PROGRAM GRADUATES TO DATE

“

RISE has allowed me to grow in areas that I once lacked: confidence, dealing with challenges, and education. It has given me a sense of hope and a set of skills mentally and emotionally. For the last six months I went from giving up on myself to having a purpose in life. Through all my ups and downs, RISE gave me a reason to believe in myself. - RISE Graduate

Insights Specific to 2022 Graduates:

92% reported having an immediate family member incarcerated or previously incarcerated.

Median age of first arrest: 11 years old

Average age of first incarceration: 16 years old

62% were on state assistance as a child.

27% experienced foster care as a child (national average is 6% population having experienced foster care).

57% experienced housing instability as a child.

27% were homeless or in temporary shelter with friends or family at the time of arrest.

38% were unemployed at the time of arrest.

82



In-Prison Program
Graduates in 2022.

5



Graduating cohorts in
2022 within five facilities.



“

Before RISE I lacked confidence and had never applied myself or put much effort into anything because I hadn't believed in my ability to do well or succeed. The RISE staff, volunteers, and peer facilitators changed that for me. - RISE Graduate

”

CREATING COMMUNITY WITH VOLUNTEERS

By Chantal Wentz, Volunteer Relations Manager



Even with the persistence of Covid-19 and modified operations within Nebraska prisons, the community continued to show up for RISE participants and staff in impactful ways this year. 152 volunteers, 97 of whom were new, supported RISE program participants both in prison and in the community by participating in 11 events in 2022.

Thank you to our volunteers for demonstrating patience while waiting to gain clearance from NDCS to attend in person business coaching days and business pitch competitions inside facilities. Thank you to everyone that volunteered virtually by providing our participants much needed feedback on resumes, personal statements and business plans via our online portal from their own homes all over the United States for our modified coaching events.

We also had volunteers show up to serve as judges, mentors, speakers, and audience members for the RISE Business Academy and the Youth and Family Program taking place in the community. All of these examples provide hope and humanization for an often overlooked and underserved population. If you are interested in helping justice involved people live their dream of small business creation, please consider joining our RISE Business Academy Advisory Council.

We had several unique opportunities in 2022 to educate and engage other non-profit and for-profit organizations by hosting employee events and lunch and learn speaking engagements that resulted in volunteering and financial support. We plan to do these events on a regular basis in the future. Please reach out if we can share our mission, work and volunteer opportunities with your organization. We'd love to get you and your company plugged in.

As 2023 gets underway, RISE will continue to invite the community to help build empathy and opportunity for system-impacted individuals and their families. The time, talents and resources that volunteers share with RISE are so very valuable to our RISE family and crucial to helping everyone break the cycles of incarceration. There is much work to be done!

152

Unique
Volunteers
in 2022.

97

New
Volunteers
in 2022.

11

Volunteer
Opportunities
in 2022.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Mike Sciandra



“

I was taken aback by the appreciation shown by program participants for taking the time to be a part of their special day! I received so many questions about my personal and professional experiences, and everyone involved with the event was excited to learn and grow. To use a RISE value, the "witness" I felt that day and at the other in-prison events is my greatest lasting memory.

”



How did you discover RISE and what inspired you to volunteer?

When I started my current career opportunity in outreach and advocacy back in 2021, I wanted to network with and support organizations with a mission that aligned with my beliefs.

As someone from a family familiar with incarceration, I am intimately aware of the struggles of the currently and formerly incarcerated. I knew my personal and professional experiences, complimented with my passion to serve, could provide benefit to RISE and to program participants.

What has been your RISE volunteering experience?

My first volunteering experience with RISE was offering online coaching. This was an excellent way to provide input and guidance to participants without even leaving my office! It also gave me the opportunity to learn about the many aspirations of the participants and fueled my desire to begin volunteering inside prison.

My first in-prison volunteering experience was at the Nebraska State Penitentiary. It was an amazing experience that led me to volunteer inside two other facilities in 2022.

I was taken aback by the appreciation shown by program participants for taking the time to be a part of their special day! I received so many questions about my personal and professional experiences, and everyone involved with the event was excited to learn and grow.

To use a RISE value, the "witness" I felt that day and at the other in-prison events is my greatest lasting memory.

I have been blessed to not only serve with RISE, but to also learn with RISE as well. The knowledge gained from RISE staff and participants has served as motivation for me to do more.

While there are a variety of programs within RISE, all have the same mission; to break generational cycles of incarceration. Each program has its own personality, but all of them have the same purpose. That sort of passion is powerful and infectious.

This might sound trite, but when I complete any volunteer experience with RISE, I feel like I get more out of the experience than I could have possibly given to others.

The positive energy I feel after an event is powerful! There are volunteer opportunities for nearly everyone in the community. No matter your professional and personal background, everyone has gifts that are needed and appreciated in a variety of RISE programs.

I would encourage everyone to learn more about RISE, and find a volunteer opportunity that speaks to you.

Mike Sciandra is a Lincoln-based addiction recovery advocate and the Education and Outreach Coordinator at Choices Treatment Center.



REENTRY SERVICES

By Erica Raetz, MSW, Director of Reentry Services

“ I would have never come, had you not been with me. ”

The RISE Reentry Team has the privilege of being up close and personal with the most magnificent successes as well the darkest depths of struggle with our program graduates. Living out RISE’s mission - to break generational cycles of incarceration - is messy, beautiful, and oftentimes both simultaneously.

Over the past year, we have welcomed over 50 individuals home to the community. We’ve provided over \$16,000 for rent, transportation, and other basic needs. We’ve handed out prepaid cell phones for people to be able to stay connected to us, their loved ones, employers, and parole officers. We’ve given out 40 ‘Welcome Home Bags’ so people don’t need to worry about basic necessities immediately upon release. But those numbers do not tell our complete story.

The numbers do not show the graduate we welcomed home after a lifetime of system involvement - foster care, youth detention, and finally incarceration.

It leaves out the story of a mother planning diligently for her reentry, only to struggle with her relationship with her children, sending her back into a cycle of depression and addiction that led her to prison years ago.

The numbers could never show the conversation our team facilitated between a son and his mother as they both struggled to navigate one’s alcohol use and the other’s mental health.



But yet, the magnificent moments not captured by numbers exist as well:

Supporting a mom while she got her first apartment where her children have their own bedrooms.

Sitting next to a reentering father, practicing how to send a text message so he could communicate with his children in a different state; rehearsing how to lovingly have a tough conversation with friends whose values no longer align with their own.

Walking into a community organization for mental health services with someone who stated, “I would have never come, had you not been with me.”

The cumulation of these small wins add to the cycle of success for our program graduates. Their confidence grows, they learn more about themselves, and lean more deeply into their relationships and skills. And our mission begins to emerge in behaviors, decisions, and life trajectories - that generational cycles of incarceration have been broken.



174 GRADUATES IN THE COMMUNITY TO DATE

“

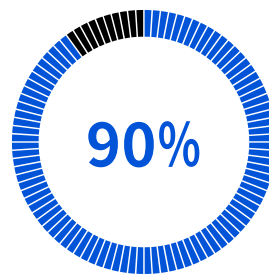
...I will use the tools and knowledge methodically to conduct myself as a loving, compassionate, empathetic, and goal-oriented individual. I will help others along my journey. I will share my story and I believe people will listen to me because I now speak with passion and conviction. Thank you for everything you've done for me! I promise to pass this hope on. - RISE Graduate

Insights Into 2022:

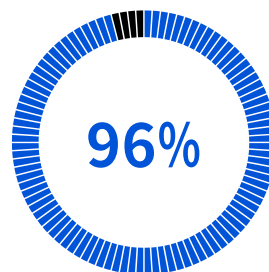
196 RISE graduates received reentry services.

RISE provided 2,698 services to graduates - an average of 14 services per reentry participant.

Provided 199 stabilizing services to graduates in the community. Services include crisis intervention, financial assistance, housing assistance, and mental health assistance.



Released graduates served by reentry assistance were identified as having completed successfully.



Released graduates are on a path of desistance within the first three years of release.



Non-Binary Success Post-Release: Overall Well-Being & Desistance of RISE Graduates

By Erin Cooper, MS-CJC, Director of Research & Evaluation

The landscape of measuring success for the formerly incarcerated population is undergoing a significant shift. Academics, researchers, and practitioners are shifting from the traditional binary measure of success (recidivism or not), to one that consists of multiple characteristics or milestones associated with overall well-being and entering a long-term pathway of desistance. These two concepts are complex, challenging to measure, and are still being scrutinized as accurate success measurements. However, these concepts of overall well-being and desistance more accurately reflect the realities that success post-release is not linear. And when measuring an outcome that is not linear, a binary or black and white definition of success is not appropriate.

RISE began to recognize the need to incorporate measures of overall well-being and desistance into our evaluation model in 2021 as a way to capture the complexities of reentry. Measures include several areas directly related to an individual's overall well-being. These areas include prosocial thinking patterns, positive support systems, safe and affordable housing, employment stability, and even more personal measures such as sobriety or mental health stability. Program evaluations also began to explore circumstances surrounding parole revocations and reincarceration, not just the act itself. People and life are nuanced; both are complex and varied and not black and white, therefore, defining and measuring success for participants or programs must be nuanced as well.

RISE currently defines success of post-release participants as achieving overall well-being as characterized by having stable employment, safe and affordable housing, and reliable use of transportation for at least 30 consecutive days. To date, 90% of released RISE graduates have successfully achieved a sense of overall well-being. These participants are also considered self-sufficient; they are able to rely on themselves and/or know how to access and utilize appropriate resources to ensure their needs are met. The high percentage of stability and self sufficiency is indicative of effective programming.

As mentioned, the use of desistance as an outcome is a new concept and practice for reentry academics, researchers, and practitioners. Definitionally, desistance is the ongoing process of lessening deviant behavior over time. Lessening deviant behavior is not a linear process and is influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors. Again, just like the concept of overall well-being, a nuanced and individualized approach to measurement must be taken. RISE considers a person on a path of desistance if (1) any new offense is less severe than the original offense(s) related to the first incarceration, (2) time increases between recidivating events, or (3) recidivism is the result of a parole violation. To date, RISE has 174 graduates residing in the community and 96% of those released participants are on a path of desistance.

The first two years of this measurement model were rudimentary and exploratory in nature due to the limitation of best-practices or availability of tools that could be utilized to enhance or further support the qualitative measures associated with overall well-being and desistance. However, through this explorative time of outcome measurement, RISE developed a measurement model designed to quantify overall well-being and desistance through the use of validated assessment tools, internally developed assessment tools, and qualitative data. This model will be piloted in 2023 and RISE is hopeful outcomes will continue to support our promising practices as effective methods of breaking generational cycles of incarceration.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

By Erica Raetz, MSW, Director of Reentry Services

The RISE Employment Program continued to expand to meet the needs of our program participants throughout 2022. Whether it was providing weekly employment support to participants at Community Correction Centers (work release), or totaling out the year with over 150 employers in Nebraska open to hiring RISE graduates, we are both proud of the progress we have made, and motivated by the challenges we will need to overcome in 2023.

The average hourly wage of those working in the community is over \$17, and 87% of RISE graduates are currently employed. With a low unemployment percentage in Nebraska, RISE is able to quickly guide formerly incarcerated individuals into entry level employment. This is particularly crucial to individuals living at Community Corrections Centers and those on parole; individuals in these groups are required to apply, interview, acquire, and begin employment in a two-week time frame or face repercussions.

Employment alone is a low goal when we serve individuals who are highly skilled, willing to learn, and desire to make a livable wage for themselves and their families. We worked diligently to secure partnerships with employers able to provide salary and benefit compensation. Yet, many of those positions are still only open to those with specific criminal charges and lengthy amounts of time between their crime and their application to a position. This immediately disqualifies competitive candidates, and is disheartening to those who have been years removed from their conviction, and are working towards a better future.

In 2023, RISE will strategically work with employers in the Nebraska labor market to match program participants to appropriate roles with salary compensation, benefit packages, and long term career paths.

When employers prioritize second chance hiring, it creates confidence and stability in the lives of our program participants. This results in healthier families, safer communities, and a clear path to the end of generational cycles of incarceration.

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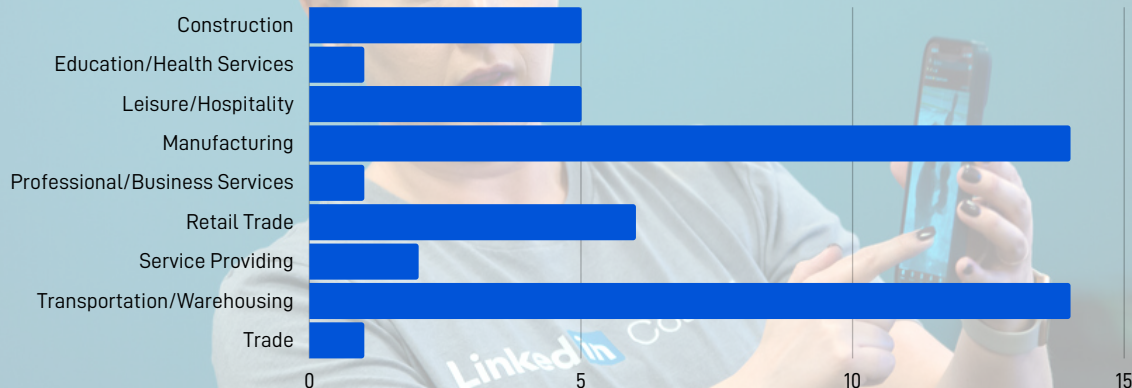
Graduates served in the program in 2022.

\$17 /HR



Median starting wage. A \$2 increase from 2021.

Graduate Employment Industries



RISE BUSINESS ACADEMY

By Dr. TJ Dickson
Director, RISE Business Academy

“

They had every reason to say, 'I can't be anything more than what society deems me to be.' But they still said 'I'm going to dream,'...They came with heart, and they care about humanity and their community — A community that's sometimes not here for them, but they still want to give back.

Dr. TJ Dickson

”

In 2022 we held two RISE Business Academy (RBA) cohorts and one graduation with seven graduates. 11 of our 19 program graduates currently have their businesses in operation.

Dr. TJ Dickson became the Director of the RBA in July 2022. She facilitated Cohort 5 and graduated the largest cohort thus far.

We held hybrid classes for the first time with participants joining in-person in Omaha and on Zoom from Lincoln, Bellevue, and as far away as Oregon and California. The RBA is a 12 week program that takes place one evening each week. Each year we plan to hold three hybrid cohorts starting in January, May, and August.

Our challenge during Cohort 5 was participants balancing family life and entrepreneurship. There remain countless barriers for system impacted people even if they've been back in the community for a while.

We know RBA participants also need case management support, character development curriculum and access to programming like



(RayShawn A., Business Pitch Competition, November 21, 2022)

the RISE Youth and Family Program.

Additionally, for our participants who live out of state, we are exploring how to serve them with more resources in their local communities.

Small business funding is an ongoing need for graduates lacking resources to launch their businesses in addition to growth opportunities for their existing businesses. RISE is establishing a micro-loan fund in 2023 to address this need. We are seeking additional investments for this fund.

During the year we had some great full circle moments:

- Holding the Cohort 5 Business Pitch Competition and Graduation at a local event space managed by a previous In-Prison Program graduate.
- Another In-Prison Program Graduate completing the RISE Business Academy and has launched his business.
- Two RBA Graduates had loved ones also graduating from the In-Prison program the same year.

These moments reflect the real inside-out approach RISE takes to serve people with lived experience.



19 BUSINESS ACADEMY GRADUATES TO DATE

“ —

I feel like growing up, there wasn't a lot of people to give back to me. And that could have been because I was coming from the streets, living in the projects [of Chicago]. And now coming from that environment, I want to be able to motivate and uplift people. - RISE Business Academy Graduate

Businesses Launched and Running out of the RISE Business Academy:

- Wideman and Walker Restoration and Flooring
- Q.U.E.E.N.S Butterfly
- Family Ties Transportation
- Irv's Sewing LLC
- Rebuilding the Past
- Hope Virtual Services
- Maid to Clean
- Rock Solid Landscaping
- E'rbody Eats / Vivid Images, LLC
- Out of This World Automotive Services
- Fermented Felon

7  Business Academy Graduates in 2022.

11  Businesses launched and running to date.

**E'RYBODY
EAT**



E'RBODY EAT

By McKenzie Ring, Director of Marketing

“Success is measured by how much your time is worth. It’s about belief. I want to be responsible for my own outcome.”

E'RBODY EAT

Where skill meets opportunity.

A journey on creating your own outcomes and finding peace where you're passionate.

Mindset is crucial. It determines how ones world is perceived and what can be done to change it.

The RISE In-Prison Program dedicates a significant amount of time learning about mindsets. Fixed, growth, victim, creator, entrepreneurial - all making an exceptional impact on how our program participants perceive their worlds of the past, present, and what they can do to positively impact their futures.

RayShawn was in RISE's second In-Prison Program cohort at the Nebraska State Penitentiary back in 2017. He was driven, confident, and quickly recognized having a growth mindset and self-freeing beliefs would allow him to expand and achieve his highest potential.

He went from thinking, "My value is in what I do" to, "My value is who I am at my core - morals and integrity - not determined by my mistakes or accomplishments."



(RayShawn, In-Prison Program Coaching Day, August 2, 2017)

In November of 2017, RayShawn would graduate from RISE and pitch his business, Rare Breed Establishment, a company designed to enable individuals and small businesses from inner-city communities to succeed and overcome the hurdles of their environment through social marketing.

Upon completion of the In-Prison Program,

graduates are asked to write a reflection essay.

RayShawn's said, "RISE has helped me officially detach myself from the street culture and grasp at a higher way of living. RISE has exposed to me that a better life exists and that even people like us can have success in that world if we just apply the same energy there as we applied to illegal lifestyles."



(RayShawn, In-Prison Program Graduation, November 2, 2017)

A better life, indeed.

He would spend the next few years inside focusing on his growth, reentry plan, writing, and even volunteering as a business coach when RISE staff and community volunteers couldn't come in during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RayShawn came home to the community in October of 2021 and leaned on the support of RISE's reentry services, Alumni Association, and Family Program.

However, there was one more piece he desired upon his reentry. Entrepreneurship. It's all he's ever known.

"I don't like working for anybody. I was doing entrepreneurial activities the wrong way and I figured that it's all a skill. I just as well apply that energy into something that can't get me incarcerated."

In the fall of 2022, he was encouraged to apply for the RISE Business Academy.

"Me...I'm full of ambition, but I don't know that I need to keep this business money separate from my personal money or that I need to have this building under my business instead of personally for tax purposes. The knowledge and awareness of what was previously unknown to me was priceless." (Continued...)

E'RBODY EAT

Where skill meets opportunity.

Continued...

While the In-Prison Program has significant entrepreneurship and business-building aspects to it, the methodology behind it is different compared to the actual startup of a business on the outside.

On the inside, the entrepreneurship piece is more about learning to ask for help. How to think critically around a problem and how to make the most of the opportunities you have. It all comes back to mindset.

On the outside, however, the RISE Business Academy is pure entrepreneurship. Applying the mindset and becoming business-savvy to launch an actual business.

In addition to weekly classes with facilitator, Dr. TJ Dickson, program participants are paired with a local business mentor to walk with them on their entrepreneurship journey.

Business Academy Mentor, Erin Artz, a Corporate Associate Attorney, was perfect for RayShawn in launching his umbrella investment company, E'rbody Eat, and subsidiary business, Vivid Images, LLC.

"It has been wonderful working with RayShawn as well as being a part of the RISE Business Academy. RayShawn is an entrepreneur who is always looking for the next idea or way to improve his businesses. It's fun to work with "idea" people like Rayshawn, and it is awesome to be even a small part of helping those ideas become a reality," says Erin.

Erin's mentorship was, and still is a significant support to RayShawn and his business. She's helped with everything from filing tax ID paperwork, to insurance, and the lease to RayShawn's storefront.

When asked if they'd stay in touch, RayShawn laughed. "As long as she doesn't get tired of me asking questions."

The connection, support, and "been there - done that" experiences from a mentor is one of the greatest entrepreneurial resources one can have. Business Academy mentors come with realistic and prior knowledge allowing participants to focus on what works when launching their business.

"This mentorship has been super beneficial to me. Some things - if you've never been taught something, then you just don't know how to do it. So somebody that's already taken these steps is helpful to guide, help, and fulfill the tasks we need to be successful."



[RayShawn, RISE Business Academy Graduation, November 21, 2022]

RayShawn's Business Academy pitch competition and graduation took place nearly five years to the day after his In-Prison Program pitch competition and graduation.

He's accomplished so much in those five years - winning third place with his pitch rewarding \$500 for his business; hosted a grand opening at the storefront he's leased in Omaha; written a book; and most recently performed as the lead role in a play in Los Angeles.

The RISE Business Academy is what RayShawn calls an, "excellent catapulting platform." It's a program empowering people impacted by the carceral system to manifest their dreams and bring them into the physical world.

So why entrepreneurship after incarceration for RayShawn?

"Success is measured by how much your time is worth. It's about belief. I want to be responsible for my own outcome. I don't want someone else's dream to dictate my worth."

*The best part of my life
has yet to come
RayShawn*

YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMS

By Maria Moreno-Godemann, Director of Programs



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I was all bottled up with many frustrating painful emotions and agonizing fearful thoughts as a result of my son's incarceration. I had no consistent safe space to process or speak about this difficult time in my life. At RISE, I found healthy methods to express myself. - RISE Family Program Participant

Throughout 2022 the Youth & Family Program consistently served over 50 system-impacted families through individualized support for loved ones and children or through their active participation in community programs.

RISE youth and family programs are specifically designed for families to talk through and process the trauma and collateral impact of incarceration. We held three wonderfully attended art shows where families were able to share their intimate thoughts and experiences with the larger community in an effort to destigmatize the topic of incarceration, build compassion, and facilitate the healing process. As one mother stated, “I was all bottled up with many frustrating painful emotions and agonizing fearful thoughts as a result of my son's incarceration. I had no consistent safe space to process or speak about this difficult time in my life. At RISE, I found healthy methods to express myself.”

The Family Wellness Collective is a year-long program families can attend during or after incarceration. The program includes a series of discussions focused on six topics related to individual and family wellness. 30 participants enrolled this year and we provided free childcare to nine children while their parents engaged with the program. 625 dinners were served and four guest facilitators joined on Friday evenings!

21 women attended the Lincoln or Omaha Women's Wellness Coffee Hours. 14 community volunteers joined to share their wellness wisdom with system-impacted women, including our program participants still residing at Community Corrections.

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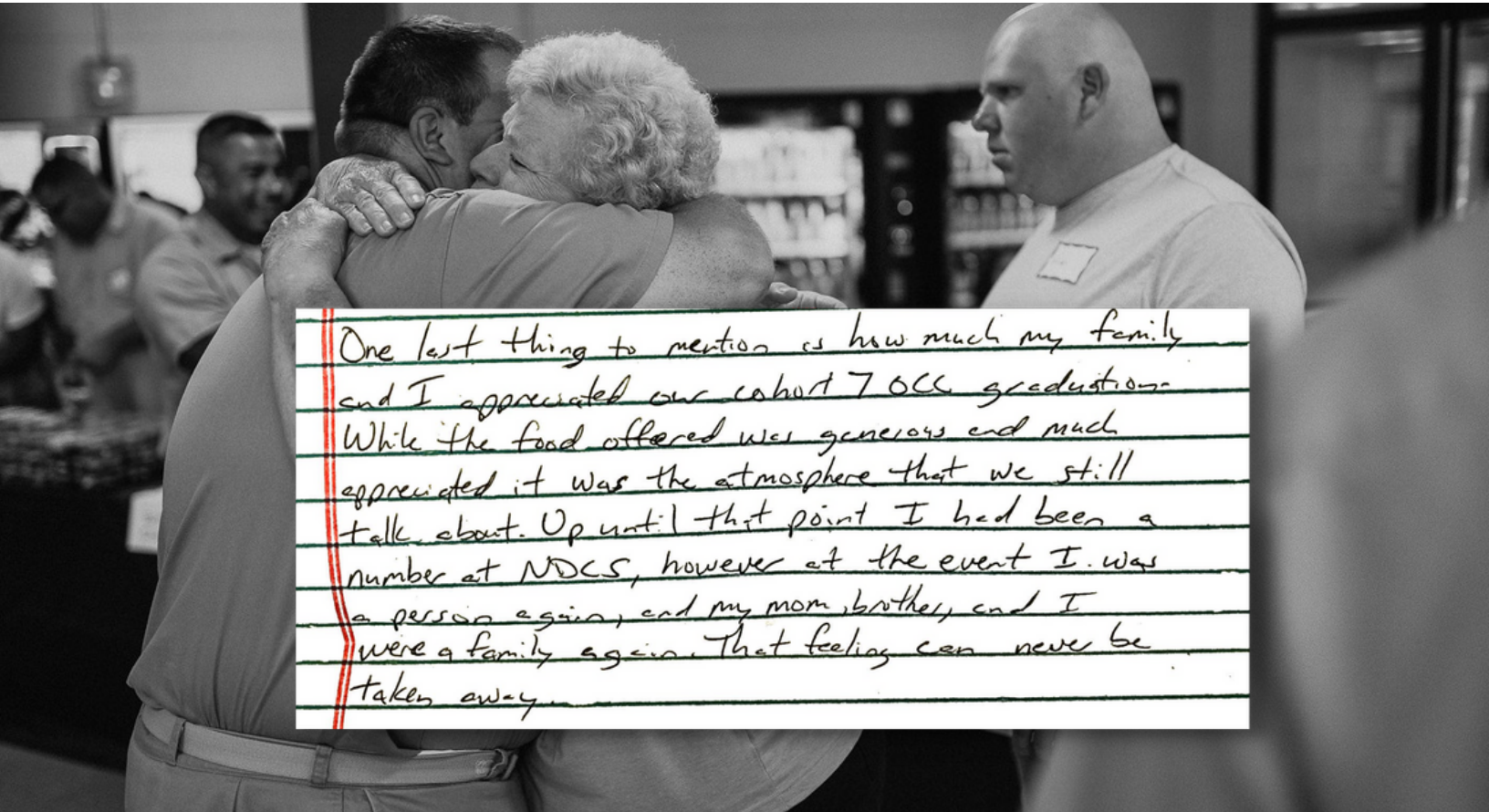
YOUTH & FAMILY PROGRAMS

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ten children, ages five – 13, participated in the Rising Dreams Children’s Program we launched this year in partnership with the Rose Theater. This program uses creativity and play to develop social-emotional skills and explore tough topics such as emotions, healthy communication, incarceration, and managing loss.

The Family Program assisted families at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women and in the Family Wellness Collective, to write and illustrate 14 children’s storybooks addressing emotions and situations leading to incarceration: neglect, lack of self-worth, hopelessness, meaningful connections with others, and loss.

As the Family Program gains momentum and continues to build trust from system-impacted families, we are struggling to meet the high demand of needs. We look forward to expanding programs and services to continue to support the families we serve.



One last thing to mention is how much my family and I appreciated our cohort 7000 graduation. While the food offered was generous and much appreciated it was the atmosphere that we still talk about. Up until that point I had been a number at NDCCS, however at the event I was a person again, and my mom, brother, and I were a family again. That feeling can never be taken away.



PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

By Jasmine Harris, MPH, CHES
Director of Public Policy & Advocacy

As I think over this year for the Policy and Advocacy department, the main things that come to mind are growth and impact. There were many foundational steps laid in 2021 which paved the way for our legislative and community efforts in 2022.

The growth in the recognition of RISE by senators, the number of people who answered our calls to get civically engaged, and adding more staff to the department to take on an unprecedented research study and increase our policy efforts all play a role in the impact that we are having in the policy space.

Legislative Session

RISE's policy agenda for this session supported 16 introduced bills that would have removed barriers for impacted people. Many of our efforts went into educating and asking for support of LB920, which was a collection of 21 recommended policies from the Nebraska Criminal Justice Reinvestment Initiative from the previous year; LB121 to remove a lifetime ban on SNAP benefits for people with certain felony drug convictions; LB917 to give tax credits to employers hiring people with felony convictions; and LB1111 to ensure that \$15M went to community

organizations supporting people impacted by incarceration with programming and services.

The legislature heard nearly 30 hours of debate on criminal justice reform policies. During these debates, many senators mentioned the work of RISE and the impact we're having in Nebraska. It felt good to know speaking with senators about our work was not going unnoticed.

These efforts were also coupled with sending out email blasts with calls to action to our...
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PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY

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supporters and our annual lobby day, Day of Empathy. These were so impactful to have our supporters speaking with their senators about these issues and how they affect us all.

In 2022, our third Day of Empathy lobby day was the first time since we started to actually gather in person and go to the capitol building. There was a group of 34 individuals who learned more about how the legislative process works and shared their experiences with senators and how these bills would impact not only their lives, but their families and people who are still on that journey.

Community Engagement

When the legislature is not in session it's even more important for us to keep the conversation going and get more people involved.

Our community engagement efforts this year saw over 115 individuals participate in events and trainings including a viewing of the *The First Step* film following the journey of Van Jones and Dream Corp JUSTICE's effort to pass the First Step Act of 2018 in Congress; Continuing the Conversation on the Nebraska Criminal Justice Reinvestment Initiative to inform people about the legislative journey of the policy recommendations; and the *Telling Your Story: A Virtual Workshop for Testifying at the Nebraska Legislature*.

These opportunities allow for people to become more engaged on a topic near to them, learn how to become advocates and connect with other like-minded individuals, elected officials and organizations to move the narrative forward that will create change in Nebraska's criminal justice landscape.

The Justice Study

RISE has embarked on a journey as a nonprofit partner with Harvard School of Law's Access to Justice Lab and researchers at the University of Zurich on the first credible, randomized field study in the United States investigating the effect of short-term incarceration on people's lives.

Individuals who have been recently arrested in Douglas and Lancaster county jails and meet certain eligibility criteria are asked if they're interested in enrolling in the study and those who agree to participate have a 50-50 chance of being placed in an "Extra-Chance" group where their bonds are paid and can receive case management to connect with community resources, programming and services.

Enrollments will last for three years with two years of follow-up surveys and several years of collecting data on housing, employment, health and other factors that can be impacted by short-term incarceration. To date, there have been 89 enrollments where 45% are in the Extra-Chance group. This has resulted in over \$70,000 in bonds, making the average bond close to \$1,800.

As we continue to work towards creating systemic change through policy and advocacy efforts, we look for opportunities where we can grow, create impact, and get more people involved. The more we do this, the more we show there are so many people who care about the wellbeing of individuals who have experienced the criminal justice system.



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