

# RISE ACADEMY

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## ANNUAL REPORT



# 2020

*Greetings RISE Friends and Supporters:*

I'm pleased to share with you our 2020 annual report. While the past year posed unprecedented challenges, RISE remained steadfast in our vision that "all people will find freedom from cycles of incarceration."

Leaving prison can be overwhelming for people who suddenly need to find housing, food and jobs, access to which may be restricted because of their criminal records. These challenges were exponentially magnified by the pandemic and economic downturn this year.

In March, we launched the RISE Reentry Emergency Fund (RREF) to respond to the growing needs of our released graduates navigating job loss, housing insecurity and COVID medical challenges. 100% of these funds were deployed directly to pay rent, utilities, medical bills and food. To date, we've paid out \$225,000 in support thanks to your generosity in response to the pandemic. We anticipate there will be similar challenges in 2021 and stand at the ready to support returning citizens impacted by these times.

We pivoted to run programming and services in different ways and launched new programs in 2020 despite the pandemic. Highlights include:

- Our in-prison program ran uninterrupted this year through a hybrid of RISE staff teaching inside facilities and sometimes facilitating classes via Zoom across six facilities.
- We launched the RISE Mentoring Program in January and trained 40 volunteers. The mentors provide six months of weekly mentoring support to RISE graduates returning to the community.
- We launched new programming at the Community Corrections Center in Lincoln serving women that are on work detail and work release. This is our second in-prison program that specifically serves women.
- We held 15 "virtual" volunteer events for the in-prison program that engaged 175 volunteers including 80 first time volunteers. This provided a way for people to volunteer while working from home during quarantine, and allowed for volunteers to participate from 9 states and 2 other countries.
- Our reentry team continued providing post-release case management support, employment support, job readiness training and meeting basic, immediate needs.

New programs and initiatives are underway that will allow us to improve our services and support of returning citizens in 2021 and beyond including:

- A strategic partnership with Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska and Nebraska Legal Aid that will provide relationship and parenting training, mental healthcare, case coordination, reentry services and legal services to fathers returning home from incarceration. This program is funded through a grant with DHHS.
- In partnership with the Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), the RISE Academy Business Program will launch in January of 2021. This 12-week program will be available to anyone in the state with a felony background interested in launching a small business. This program will run quarterly throughout the year and takes place one evening each week.
- The RISE Passport Program will launch in 2021. This innovative approach to reentry considers all the critical steps in the reentry process and creates individualized plans that translate to reentry success.

We can't do any of this without you. Thank you for supporting RISE and the people we serve during an especially challenging year. You are truly making a difference in people's lives every day through your time and resources.



Jeremy Bouman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy J. Bouman".

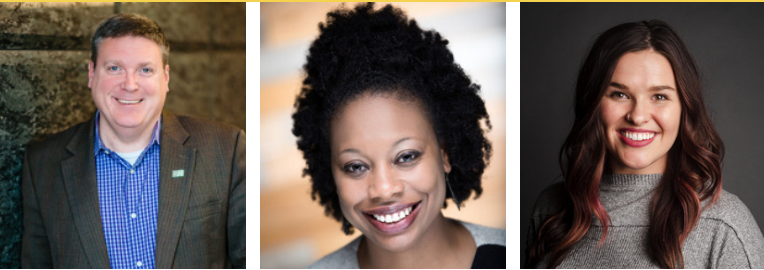
RISE CEO & Founder





# Company Profile

OVERVIEW, GOALS & OBJECTIVES



## OUR MISSION & VISION

That all people will find freedom from cycles of incarceration.

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.

We prepare and train people for each phase through intensive character development, employment readiness, job creation through entrepreneurship and case management. We transform people in the community by building awareness and empathy that leads to support and opportunity.

These connections heal families, create employment pathways and lower recidivism.



## OUR VALUES

Tough Love  
Witness  
Entrepreneurial Mindset  
Grit  
Rebuilding



## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ken Stinson - Chair  
Othello Meadows  
Amy Johnson  
Jeff Slobotski  
LaShonna Dorsey  
Cortney Bauer

David Bills  
William Ochsner  
Jeremy Bouman  
Leah Smejkal  
Pamela Larsen



# Statement of Financials

RISE contributions increased 21% in 2020, compared to 2019. Additionally, RISE nearly doubled unique donations, receiving 611 unique gifts compared to 2019's 362 and 2018's 194.

RISE currently has 24 monthly recurring donation (RISE Anchor Group) members and aims to double that by the end of 2021.

## Programs

In-Prison - \$446,035  
 Re-Entry - \$653,385  
 Advocacy - \$141,774

## Statement of Financial Position Assets

Cash	1,488,194
Pledges Receivable	1,598,500
Other current Assets	7,132
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>3,093,826</b>

## Liabilities

Current liabilities	20,313
Long-Term Liabilities	161,046
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>181,359</b>

## Net Assets

With Donor Restrictions	453,057
Without Donor Restrictions	2,459,410
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>2,912,467</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>3,093,826</b>

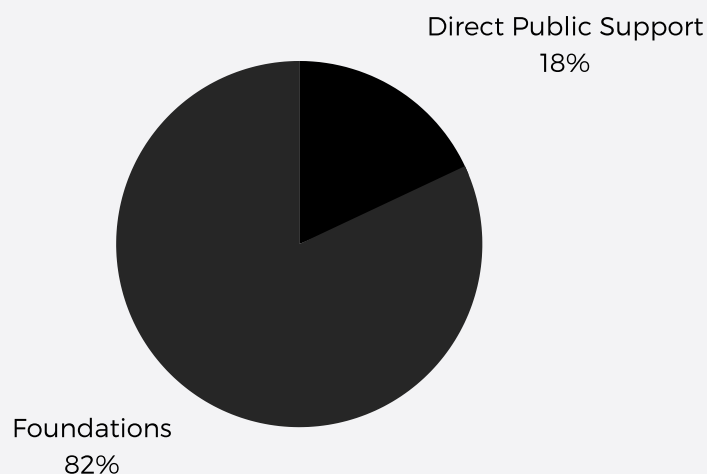
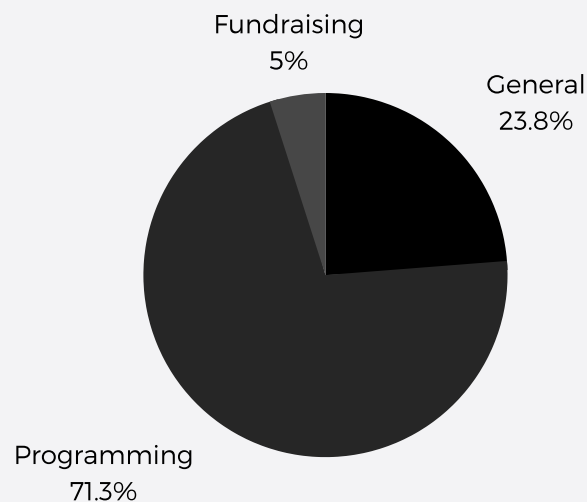
## Statement of Activities

### Contributions

Foundations	2,175,270
Organizations/Government funding	476,302
Individual Donors	85,720
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>2,737,292</b>

### Expenses

General Operating Expenses	410,672
Program Expenses	1,241,194
Fundraising Expenses	72,781
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,724,647</b>
<b>Revenue over Expenses</b>	<b>1,012,645</b>



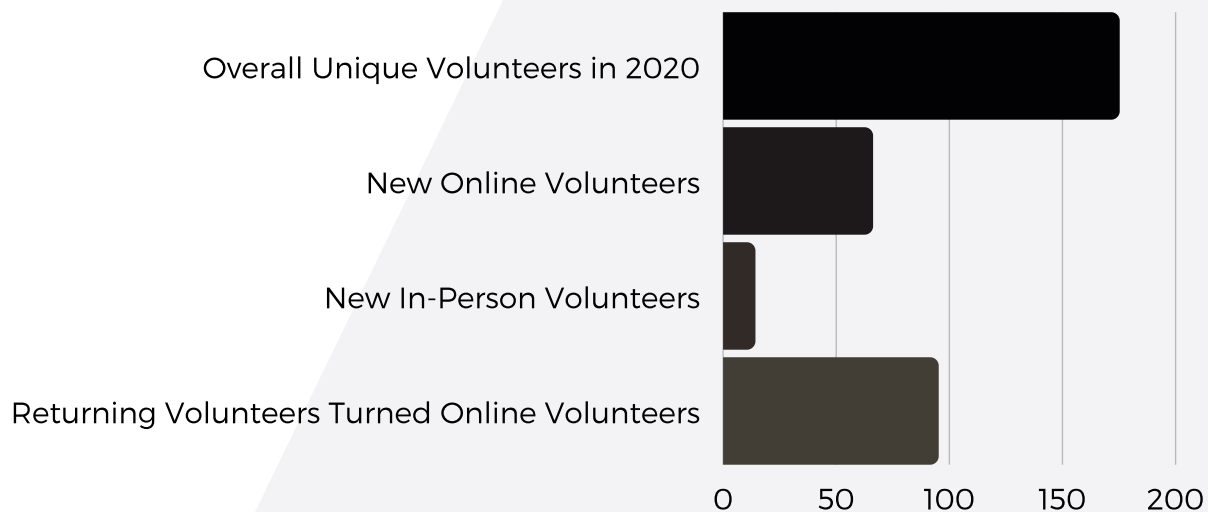


# RISE Volunteers

RISE welcomed **175 unique volunteers** to events in 2020! Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were only able to host two in-person events, one in January and one in February. Combined, those events brought **14 new unique in-person volunteers**.

RISE made a huge pivot in March turning future in-person coaching days and pitch competitions to online, modified events. This not only kept recurring volunteers engaged, but created an opportunity for new volunteers to be introduced to RISE and active. Through hosting new online events, RISE welcomed over **75 unique online volunteers** and brought **95 previous volunteers** online as well.

We found online modified events to be **extremely** successful and beneficial for RISE Builders. The feedback received from volunteers was thorough, thought-out and extensive. We look forward to continuing online opportunities in addition to our in-person events in the future.



Recruiting RISE volunteers to participate in online events has been a great introduction for new volunteers and will lead to increased participation in future in-person volunteer events. Additionally, through the new online system, we've had volunteers participating from **nine states** and **two countries!**



*"Today, I finally got to go back to prison via Zoom to do mock interviews with some of our lady Builders & see some familiar faces from my RISE volunteer family. To say I have been struggling lately with severe depression would be an understatement. So, when I tell ya I get more out of the RISE program than our Builders do, it is the truth. I'm so proud of their hard work despite COVID changing everything. These women were AMAZING today and renewed so much of my depleted hope. Today, I am happy."*

*- RISE Volunteer*



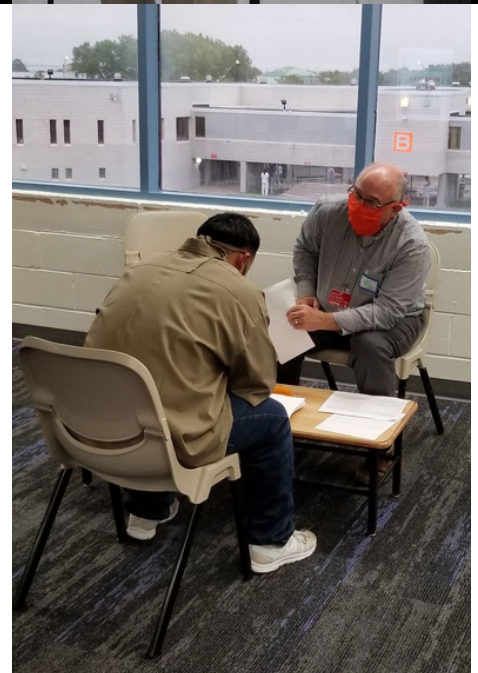
***"I loved, loved, loved our [Modified] Coaching Day. I learned something from every single person. They gave me a lot of advice to make my resume and cover letters. It is useful because it helps me look better and more professional."***

***- RISE Builder***



*"I absolutely love it when Builders talk about how they are applying the things they are learning and how much it has helped them!!! Setting Boundaries seems to be one thing that I have heard across my cohorts this time around as being something that is super hard but so needed, necessary, freeing and is allowing them to reach their full potential when they never realized it was something they needed to do."*

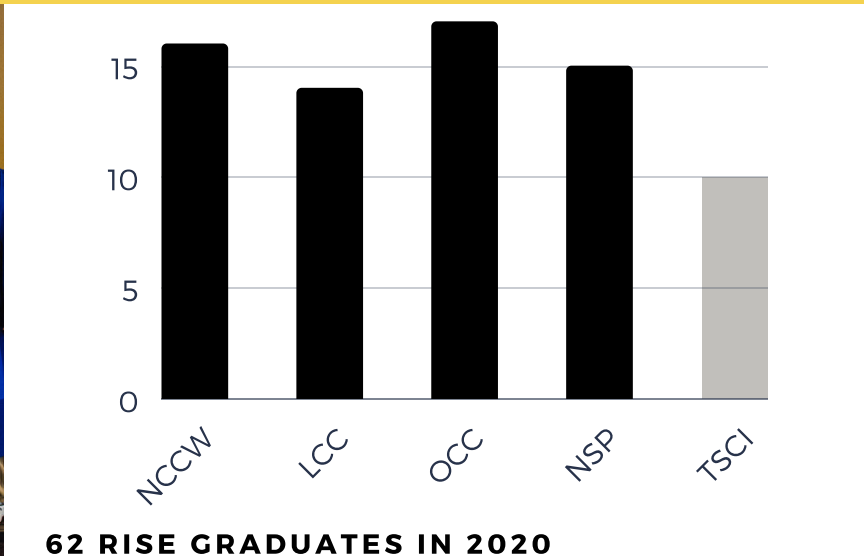
*- RISE Program Associate*





# In-Prison Program

A YEAR OF PIVOTING AND INNOVATION



## 62 RISE GRADUATES IN 2020

In 2020 RISE celebrated **16 graduates in-person at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women** in January. Additionally, we celebrated **14 new graduates at the Lincoln Correctional Center** in early March.

With the help of facilities, staff, and technology, RISE was able to virtually **graduate 17 Builders from the Omaha Correctional Center** and **15 from the Nebraska State Penitentiary**.

The Tescumseh State Correctional Institution has had one of the most difficult times with classes due to correctional staff shortages amid COVID-19. However, we project 10 graduates from this facility in early 2021.





# RISE

Written by Jermaine | **RISE Graduate**

Growing up in North Omaha was a struggle and challenge. Some people would say at the time my vision of the word "rise" was to hopefully wake up every day with a hot meal on the table, to not get hit by a stray bullet overnight from the shoot-outs the night before because all my mom could afford was section 8 housing. That is what "rise" meant to me; being the toughest kid in my neighborhood to keep from getting bullied, having to navigate through life believing I would never achieve nothing in life. Now that's rough - or maybe some people would consider that tough.

Being black in a corrupted world where most times you were misjudged because of the color of your skin, when in reality, all I ever wanted to do is win. Taking loss after loss defeats a person mentally over time.

Twenty-nine years later I was introduced to a program called RISE where I became an "entrepreneur" where I got to learn what it takes to create a successful business...

These people took a chance on a once poor kid who never even thought of owning my own business someday and being somebody in this world other than representing a gang that didn't have my best interest at heart.

**Now I represent hope and change.**

I will RISE to be a good father, I will RISE to be a success in the business world. I will RISE to give my time when I'm freed and while I'm still here to this great program and whatever they need from me. I will RISE to be the best version of myself. If you want people to follow you, you have to be real with yourself. I will RISE and make sure this generation doesn't make the same mistakes. I am no longer lost or confused. I will RISE and be sure of my future and goals I will accomplish and the many lives I will better along the way.

**So watch me RISE.**





# Graduate Recidivism

RISE's definition of recidivism is broader than other agencies. For our organization, overall recidivism includes parole violations and new offenses, both which can result in a return to a Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) facility.

RISE continues to maintain a recidivism rate nearly 20% less than national averages.

## Why the increase?

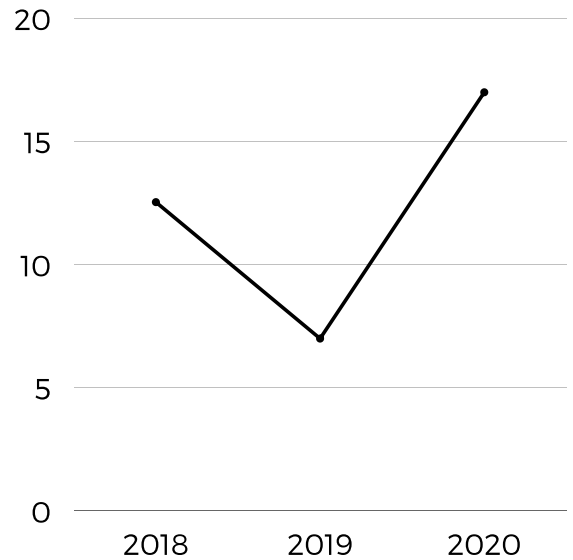
Much like we've seen throughout the country, **COVID-19 stressors** have **greatly** impacted the mental health and chronic disease of substance addiction of Builders.

In 2020, RISE found it important to begin distinguishing parole violations from new charges as it relates to recidivism. In 2020 alone, close to 90% of overall recidivism was due parole violations.

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# 150

Overall RISE program participants and graduates received reentry services in 2020.



GRADUATE 1 YEAR RECIDIVISM RATE

\*2020 data is tentative as not all Builders have completed 12 months of release yet; this applies to all recidivism tables.

2020 Released  
RISE Graduates

# 47

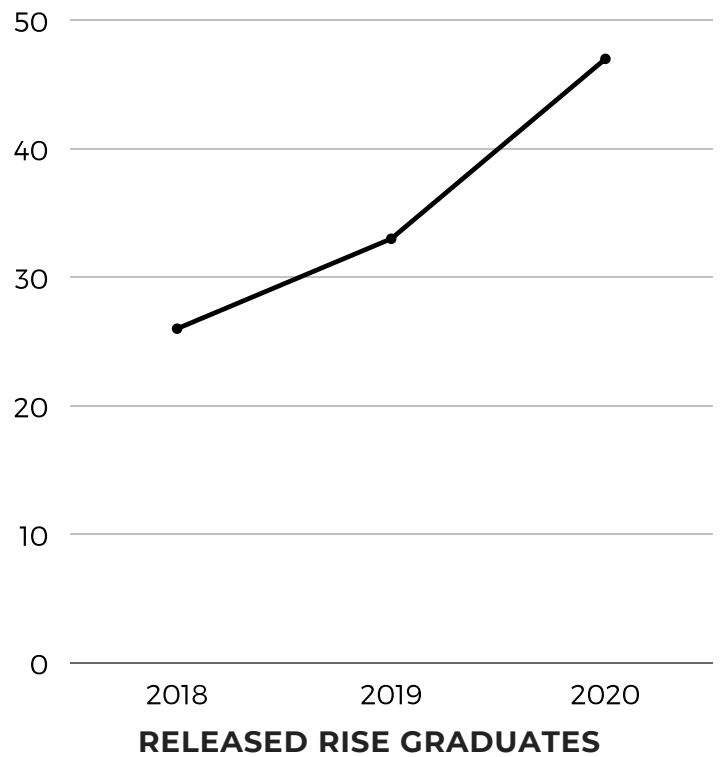
7 violated parole requirements and 1 reoffended.



An unpredictable year combined with the everyday crisis that is reentry made for a year of challenges. However unpredictable, RISE took the opportunity to reach out and bring hope to many in the community also impacted by COVID-19.

In 2020 RISE and the Reentry Team helped welcome **47 RISE Graduates** home from incarceration.

As our in-prison programming progresses, we will continue to see an increase in Builders releasing to the community in years to come, thus proving our need to keep reentry services abundant.



Median Wage  
of RISE Graduates  
In the Community

**\$15**

Per Hour

Employment rate of  
RISE Graduates

**93.9%**

Work Eligible





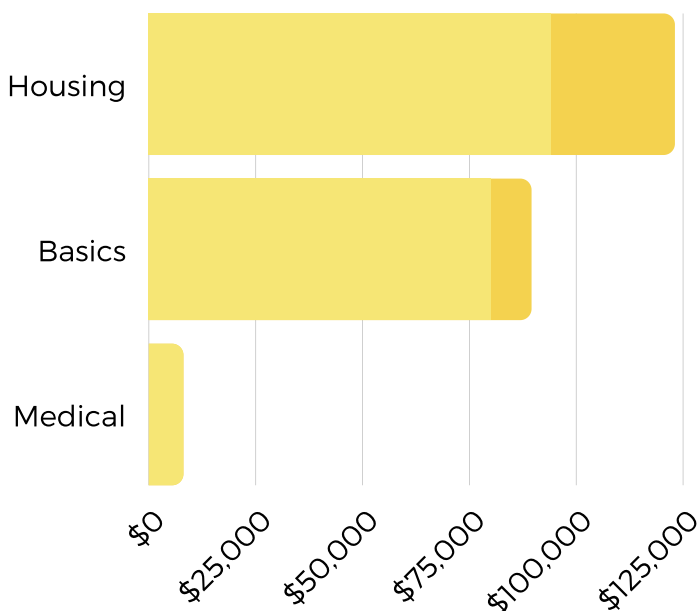
# RISE Reentry

## COVID-19 RELIEF

Like many across the country, COVID-19 greatly impacted the livelihood of RISE Builders.

Many employed were furloughed for long periods of time or lost work entirely. Parents coming out of incarceration were forced to navigate online learning with their children all while maintaining employment, fulfilling probation requirements, and attending school themselves.

Because of community support through the RISE Reentry Emergency Fund and Cares Act Funding awarded from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), we provided financial relief to over **79 requests for help, assisting more than 150 people** in the amount of **\$225,000**.



*"COVID has impacted us much like many others in the fact that I had lost employment and I have kiddos of different age and school districts that barely allow me to function as a single mom and their specific needs accordingly. I can work part time at best and will be doing my own online schooling as well to further my education, but as it stands now, day by day is how we function." - RISE Graduate*

*"Due to the COVID-19 virus, I was out of work for two weeks. During this time I had to borrow money, use my credit card, pay for rent, truck payment and groceries.*

*The money you are providing will help pay off those loans and credit cards. Thank you for helping during these trying times." - RISE Graduate*

*"As a result of the pandemic, I have been unable to find stable employment and have been unemployed now for several months.*

*My last employment ended on August 24, 2020, at the conclusion of the seasonal employment period at The Home Depot. Subsequently, I was denied full time employment due to an unfavorable return on their background check and my conditional offer was rescinded.*

*Since then I have been unable to find suitable employment and have only been able to survive thus far on the limited charity and generosity of friends and family." - RISE Graduate*

# POLICY & ADVOCACY

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

We saw no shortage of issues to address in our first year engaging in policy and advocacy at RISE.

From the introduction of bills that would decrease the incarcerated population, improve living conditions, and provide equitable economic and social progress for people impacted by the system to advocating on behalf of incarcerated individuals when COVID-19 appeared, RISE was there to ensure that the experiences and concerns of our Builders were not left out of the conversations.

Although it may seem like nothing was achieved this legislative session, there was great work and collaboration that happened to set the stage for continuous advocacy into the future.



Here is a snapshot of our policy and advocacy efforts this year:

- Testified on seven (7) Legislative Bills (LB) and 1 Legislative Resolution (LR)
- One (1) of twelve (12) national organizers for #cut50's virtual Day of Empathy with over 100 Nebraska attendees with an organic social media reach of 3,684 people
- Provided advocacy training to four (4) previously incarcerated individuals
- Advocated for COVID-19 testing for all incarcerated individuals, pause on rental fees at community correction centers, and for employers to hold jobs for individuals who were quarantined
- Signed on to three (3) eviction moratorium letters
- Signed on to one (1) advocacy letter to address the safety of youth in correctional settings during COVID-19
- Worked closely with Sen. Lathrop's office on LB1004 to expand parole eligibility
- Participated in Nebraska Civic Engagement Table's Digital Day of Action to encourage Early Vote By Mail
- Get out the Vote social media campaign for voting rights with over 7,000 people reached
- Establishing partnerships and groundwork for Cash Bail Reform

2021 will see many of the same issues being addressed with added initiatives, but RISE is committed to being a major partner in progressing policy and advocacy in Nebraska that impacts individuals that have experienced its criminal justice system.





# RISE Mentorship Program

It's been said that human connection and communication is what propels the success of one's personal and professional life. In 2020 we set out to do just that through the RISE Reentry Mentorship Program.

We've been truly humbled by our volunteer community support through the inception of this program having more certified mentors than we know what to do with. As is the common theme of 2020, COVID-19 heavily impacted our mentorship program in a multitude of ways, but reentry is a lifelong process of challenge and change, pandemic or not.

Intended to bridge the community face-to-face with those enduring the reentry process, mentors and mentees found themselves working together primarily through FaceTime or Zoom with the occasional coffee or lunch. Most certainly a different scenario than what we had planned, yet the interest in the program remained solid and proved valuable.

RISE Graduate, Alex, tells us, "I was interested in the Reentry Mentorship Program to not only develop my network, but I understood the importance of connecting deeper with the RISE program. My mentor, John, and I developed a great friendship and he has been the best supporter and cheerleader for me, encouraging me through my undergrad degree and starting my Masters. He's provided counsel and advice when I didn't really have other voices in my ear, and it's proven to be professional and proficient guidance."

"We've had an authentic connection," says John, Alex's mentor. "Alex and I are completely comfortable with presenting, examining and challenging how we happen to do life and how that serves (or not) our existing/developing priorities. My mentee is bright, informed, articulate, resourceful, persuasive and opinionated. He is completely at home in the world of ideas. He stretches my thinking and invites a healthy debate over a wide range of topics. Frequently, our conversation time feels like a good work out."

It's connections like Alex and John's that show us mentoring can work. "Being a part of the RISE Reentry Mentorship Program has kept me grounded and helped temper expectations. John kept my feet on the ground while encouraging my head to roam in the clouds."

In 2021 we look forward to more human connections like these, in whatever capacity the environment allows. We see great value in the mentorship program, not only for our graduates coming out of incarceration, but in building empathy on the outside. John, also a longtime in-prison volunteer tells us, "Being a RISE mentor is a continuing education. That may sound trite, but it is completely true. My understanding of incarceration and reentry, while still limited, has grown exponentially."

As this program evolves, we'll be leaning into peer support specialist roles as the perspective from lived experience proves to be a valuable one. The year and all that has come with it gives RISE a deepened motivation to continue pushing forward through the entire reentry process.