



With Every Story We Rise

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

For 10 years, Rise has trained parents to write and speak about their experiences with the child welfare system. Rise's mission is to deepen understanding of fragile families; provide information, healing and encouragement to parents; and guide child welfare professionals in becoming more responsive to the families and communities they serve.

Rise amplifies parent voices in child welfare reform and changes the story of who these parents are – and can be.

Rise Staff + Board

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Dear Rise Supporters,

This year Rise celebrated its 10th anniversary!

Since 2005, Rise has provided parents with a platform to speak, be heard and contribute to meaningful change for families affected by the child welfare system.

Rise's first decade was dedicated to providing direct support to parents with child welfare cases and to creating a more accurate, nuanced picture of who these parents are.



Rise's Pia Zadora Footman and Nora McCarthy

As we look forward, we will expand our focus to ensuring that our stories and parent leaders make the greatest possible impact on improving child welfare policy and practice. That means getting the right stories to the right people at the right time. Our strategic goals are to:

Support Parents

- Partner with preventive, foster care and legal agencies to include Rise stories in their frontline work with parents;

- Launch a new website and build our digital media strategy to better reach parents, professionals and the public;

Educate Professionals

- Partner with training providers and agencies to include parent stories in training;

- Create parent-led presentations that offer child-welfare professionals greater insight into parents' perspectives and recommendations;

Influence Policy

- Develop opportunities for parents to provide meaningful input into policy planning.

Rise stories are a powerful tool. They lend a much-needed hand to both parents and professionals, offering the information and insight that is essential to successfully navigate the

child welfare system.

Rise's writing process and parent leadership development programs also provide parents with the skills, confidence, peer support and information they need for successful professional and family lives.

We thank all of our parent contributors, professional partners, funders and individual supporters for your tremendous support over the past 10 years. We look forward to your continued partnership in this important work of ensuring that no parent faces the child welfare system alone.

Sincerely,
Nora McCarthy
Rise Director

Rise Publications

Rise uses literacy as a strategy to provide emotional respite to parents who feel voiceless, ashamed and overwhelmed. Working one-on-one with an editor, and in groups of their peers, parent writers become more able to think through and make decisions about their lives. Writing for Rise provides stigmatized parents with the opportunity to develop a positive self-identity ("writer," not client) and to influence public perception of child welfare-affected families.



In 2015, Rise published three issues related to the experiences of parents who grew up in foster care and have faced child welfare as parents. These issues — **Generations in Foster Care**, **What It Takes** and **Someone to Turn To** — explore how child welfare systems help and harm fragile families, with a focus on services that these parents have found effective.

Facing Race: Rise's Fall 2014 issue *Facing Race in Child Welfare* focused on parents' perspectives on involvement in a

system that disproportionately affects black and Native American families, and policy responses to reduce this disproportionality.



Federal Funding for

Prevention: Rise produced a special online report on efforts to reform federal child welfare funding to increase prevention.

New York Times Motherlode

Blog: Published Piazadora

Footman's essay on searching for stable affordable housing.



Graham workshop graduates and staff

Rise **Writing Workshops**

Rise offers therapeutic writing workshops that provide a safe place for parents to reflect on their experiences, set goals for their futures, and become more attuned to their children's needs and their own. Rise writers develop their stories through a painstaking draft process. A typical workshop includes 6-8 parents and meets for two hours each week for 16 weeks. Rise runs writing groups at community partners including advocacy organizations, legal providers, foster care agencies and family support programs.

October 2014-March 2015

Graham Windham Writing Workshop: Parents in this 16-week workshop wrote stories examining their challenges and strengths in keeping up hope while their children are in foster care. Writers, their families and Graham staff celebrated the graduation by hearing the parents' stories and sharing a meal. This was Rise's first writing workshop at a foster care agency, and we will partner with Graham again in Winter-Spring 2016.

February-May 2015

Center for Family Representation My Story, My Life Writing Workshop: This workshop for young parents who grew up in foster care met weekly for 16 weeks, culminating in a presentation of stories by two participants.

October 2015-January 2016

Rise Advanced Writers Workshop: In this special workshop for writers who grew up in foster care and have written for Rise previously, participants have taken a leadership role in defining the messages in upcoming Rise issues; participated in trainings to strengthen their writing skills; and written stories for upcoming Rise issues about child protective investigations and the impact of poverty on parenting.

New Approach: **Writing Workshop for Staff**

Sheltering Arms Staff Writing Workshop: Rise's newest initiative was a writing group for frontline foster care staff to share their experiences working with parents. In personal essays developed over eight 2-hour sessions at Sheltering Arms, case planners and supervisors explored how they came to learn about, connect with and improve their work with parents. Their compassionate reflections document how sensitive casework can make a difference. Rise will publish these stories beginning in January and work with agencies to incorporate them into training. Rise will run a group for parents at Sheltering Arms in spring 2016.

**“Reading Rise is
a tutorial in
empathy.”**

– Andrew Solomon
author, *Far From the Tree*

Spotlight: **My Story, My Life Writing and Advocacy Project for Young Mothers Who Grew up in Care**

Since 2012, Rise's My Story, My Life writing workshops have given voice to the unique experiences of young parents who have faced foster care both as children and adults. My Story, My Life responds to the very high rate of removals of children from parents who themselves were in foster care in childhood.

Approximately one-third of young mothers in foster care in NYC from 2006-2012 lost custody of their children, according to Administration for Children's Services data. Similarly, some data suggests that 25-40% of parents with children in foster care were in care themselves.

Breaking this intergenerational cycle of foster care requires new approaches that build on a deeper understanding of the perspectives and challenges of these parents. My Story, My Life combines writing workshops, publications, parent presentations and advocacy.

Rise Parent Leadership

Parent voices are essential to meaningful conversations about how to improve the child welfare system. Rise's public speaking training program, Rise & Shine, provides parents with the training and tools to influence child welfare policy and practice. Rise's parent leaders present their perspectives and recommendations at meetings with senior leaders in child welfare and at professional convenings, trainings and panel discussions, reaching more than 3,000 NYC professionals in the past three years.

June 2015

Parent Leadership Team Meeting with Commissioner Carrión: Rise's Parent Leadership Team met with ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrión to present parents' priorities for improving parents' well-being in child welfare. To prepare, Rise parent leaders gathered the perspectives of 40 parents with open or recent foster care cases through focus groups at Bronx Defenders, Center for Family Representation and Graham Windham.

Discussion focused on:

- * Parents' need for information about navigating the foster care process;
- * Access to parent advocates and peer support;
- * Transparency in addressing concerns about children's care while in foster care;
- * Access to services that parents report being helpful, such as Parenting Journey, Baby & Me, parent-child therapy, visit hosting and coaching, and trauma-focused mental health services.



Parent Leadership Team members Dominique Arrington, Jeanette Vega, Lakisha Johnson, Teresa Bachiller, Robbyne Wiley with Commissioner Carrión (bottom left)

November 2015

Roundtable on Preventive Services with Congressional Staff: As Congress considers the Wyden bill to expand funding for preventive supports that keep children safe at home, Rise partnered with Casey Family Programs and Children's Village to educate staff of 11 members of Congress about parents' experiences with preventive services and foster care.

July-Dec. 2015

Collaboration with CSSP to Improve Practice with Expectant and Parenting Youth in Foster Care: Rise parents have provided feedback to the Center for the Study of Social Policy and its partners on an initiative to strengthen practice with young parents in foster care. Rise writers have led a focus group with pregnant and parenting youth; given feedback on the CSSP report "Expectant and Parenting Youth in Foster Care;" and participated as presenters in two webinars: one about how caseworkers can support pregnant and parenting youth in care, and one on mentoring these youth.

Staff Training: **Parent Presentations**

Rise seeks to reach child welfare professionals to help them better understand the parents they serve. Through parent-led trainings for caseworkers, lawyers, judges and policymakers at foster care agencies, parent and child legal agencies, family courts and parent-related forums citywide, Rise sensitizes professionals to parents' experiences and presents parents' recommendations for improving policy and practice. Our Rise & Shine workshop, started in September 2015, prepares parent leaders for public speaking.



December 2015

New York Zero-to-Three Clinical Roundtable: Rise Editorial Assistants Jeanette Vega and Piazadora Footman presented along with Director Nora McCarthy at a roundtable for members of NYC's Zero-to-Three Network at the Ackerman Institute.

Bronx Family Court: Rise writers Piazadora Footman, Nancy Fortunato, Dominique Arrington and Jeanette Vega presented about working effectively with young parents who grew up in foster care and are facing child welfare allegations as adults. Rise partnered with Strong Starts infant court and Bronx Family Court Early Engagement Workgroup to bring parent voices into the court.

November 2015

NYC Administration for Children's (ACS) Services FCLS Attorneys: In November, Jeanette Vega and Piazadora Footman presented six times, reaching all 300 attorneys for the city child welfare agency.



Presenting at Bronx Family Court (top); Piazadora Footman and Jeanette Vega



*Presenting at Manhattan Family Court (above);
Latoya Fitzgerald and Piaza Footman*

November 2015

Manhattan Family Court: Rise parent leaders Piaza Footman, Jeanette Vega, Nancy Fortunato and Bevanjae Kelley presented at Manhattan Family Court, discussing parents' experiences and recommendations for improving family court. Rise developed this presentation with the Court's Disproportionate Minority Representation committee.

NYU Law

School: Rise parents presented a draft of their court presentation to the Family Defense Clinic.



ACS Satterwhite Academy: Jeanette Vega spoke with incoming child protective investigators (CPS workers) on their first day of training.

February 2015

Center for Family Representation

All-Staff Training: Rise writers Piaza Footman and Latoya Fitzgerald presented parents' experiences on the family court

process, followed by a brainstorm to plan how staff can bring Rise stories more deeply into their work with families.

December 2014

Panel on Young Parents in Foster Care and Mental Health:

Piaza Footman and Lindsay Reilly presented young

mothers' stories about mental health and motherhood in foster care at a panel discussion for lawyers and social workers developed by CFR. Pia joined a panel with mental health experts to discuss her experience with parent-child video therapy

Partnerships: **Staff Training Through Stories**

Rise believes that effective training of child welfare professionals must include the voices of parents. We work with partners to integrate our stories into training so that frontline caseworkers and supervisors, parent and child attorneys, and foster parents can more deeply understand parents' perspectives.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network:

Rise partnered with the NCTSN subcommittee on parent trauma in child welfare in the creation of its new online program to train frontline casework staff to recognize and respond effectively to parent trauma. The training includes audio of eight parent stories.

Partners for Our Children: The STRIVE: Open-Source Parenting Program is aimed at keeping children safely at home and supporting family reunification; it includes audio of two Rise stories that model positive parent visits.

Solution Based Casework (SBC): SBC has begun to integrate parent stories that model how family crises actually escalate—and can be deescalated—into its training nationwide and at 11 foster care agencies in New York City.

Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC): This DC-based organization included Rise's 2009 issue on parent-foster parent communication in its

To lose a child is surely the worst thing a parent can imagine.

Thanks to the brief, heartbreaking stories in Rise, we do not have to imagine how painful it would be. This is one of the purposes autobiographical writing can serve: to offer a reader roads to empathy.

— Tracy Kidder
author, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

Family Link shared-parenting tool kits, reaching nearly 300 foster parents.

COFCCA: COFCCA hosted two day-long trainings for caseworkers and supervisors led by Rise Director Nora McCarthy. Attended by 25 child welfare professionals, the workshops modeled Rise's approach, using writing as a tool for reflection. The trainings also incorporated personal essays by both parents and frontline foster care staff.

American Bar Association and New York State Defenders Association: At national and state conferences for parent attorneys, Rise Editorial Director Rachel Blustain co-facilitated a discussion group and presented on a panel about involving parents in decision-making about their case, helping parents have a voice in court, and understanding the role that trauma plays in family court.

About Rise

New Staff: Rise welcomed four new staff members.

Gabrielle Gilliam, development director, has nearly 20 years of fundraising experience. **Jade de Saussure**, Rise & Shine public speaking training program director, is an experienced social worker with a theater background.

Elizabeth Koster, assistant editor, earned an MFA at Columbia and teaches writing in the NYC public schools. **Jeanette Vega**, editorial assistant, is a parent leader and advocate who has contributed to Rise since 2008.

Honors: Brooklyn Defender Services honored Rise at its annual fundraiser on November 5, 2015, presenting Rise Director Nora McCarthy and Board Member/Writer Bevanjae Kelley with an award for leadership in supporting parents and parent voice in child welfare.

Rise In the Media

Rise Covered in Fusion: Rise was covered in Fusion by journalist Ada Calhoun, in a story called "How the power of storytelling can change lives in child welfare cases."

Reporting in *The Daily Beast* and *City Limits*: Editorial Director Rachel Blustain published stories on child welfare investigations and adoption disruption in *The Daily Beast* and in *City Limits*, and was nominated for a Deadline Club award for her *City Limits* reporting.



At The New York Times

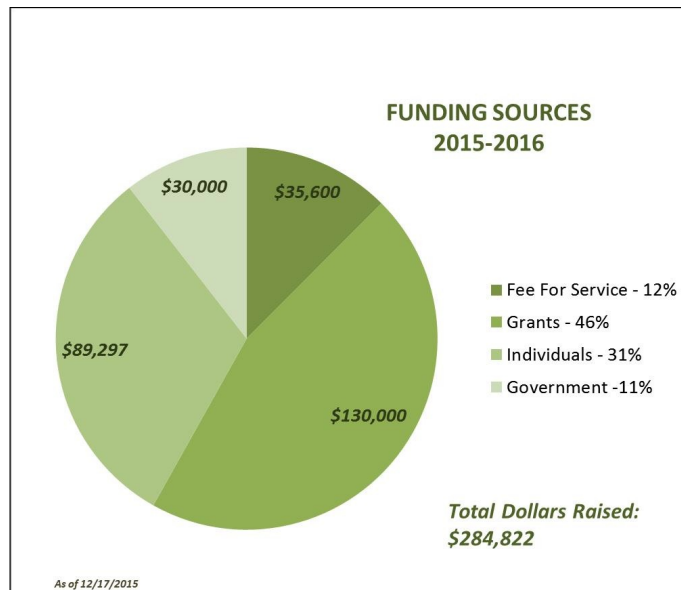
New Website: Rise debuted a new website, designed by BeBetter Studios, which took Rise on at its nonprofit rate. The new site makes it simple to search Rise stories by topic, and to connect with social media so that Rise can grow its readership (now 20,000).

Fund for the City of New York: Rise became a partner project of the Fund for the City of New York in July 2014.

Book Chapter: Nora McCarthy and Rachel Blustain contributed a chapter to the forthcoming book *Narrative in Social Work*, to be published by Columbia University Press in spring 2016.

Editorial Board: Tyasia Nicholson, Lindsay Reilly, Latoya Fitzgerald and Ashley Green met with *New York Times* Editorial Board Member Lawrence Downes to learn about editorial writing, and began including parent editorials in our issues.

Income 2014-15



2015-16 Grants

Child Welfare Fund
New York Women's
Foundation
North Star Fund
Pinkerton Foundation

2015-16 Contracts

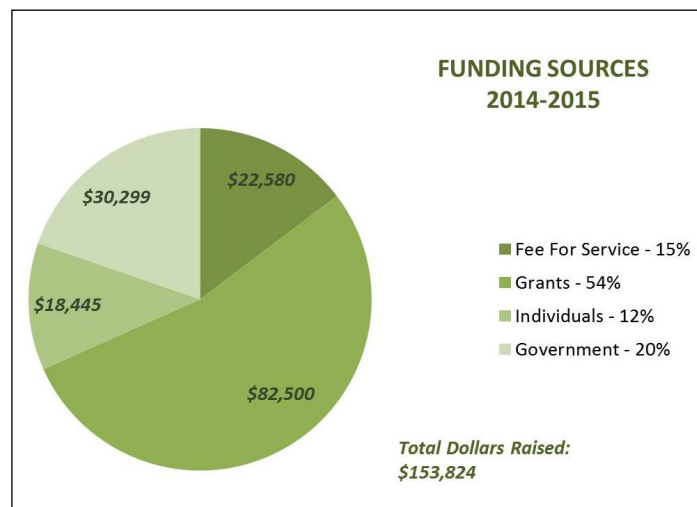
Administration for
Children's Services
Center for the Study of
Social Policy
COFCCA
Graham Windham
Manhattan Family Court
DMR Committee
Sheltering Arms

2014-2015 Grants

Child Welfare Fund
North Star Fund
Pinkerton Foundation

2014-15 Contracts

Administration for Children's
Services
Center for Family
Representation
Delaware Dept. of Children
and Family Services
Graham Windham
Harvard Center on the
Developing Child
Sheltering Arms



Rise Events

10th Anniversary Celebration, With Every Story We Rise:

On Oct. 28, 2015, Rise celebrated a decade of writing by parents that changes minds and lives. More than 175 friends and colleagues attended, raising \$75,000 for Rise. Thank you to the Host Committee who helped ensure the event's success, and to speakers Gladys Carrión and Anne Williams Isom.



Annual Professional Partnership Dinner:

In June 2015, Rise held its annual dinner for child welfare leaders to provide input about how we can strengthen our impact. Thank you Elizabeth Kandall for hosting and Lauren Pilgrim for catering.



'Your Story Matters to Me' Friendraiser:

In March 2015, Rise held its first friend-raiser for 60 colleagues and friends to learn about our work, at The Ship. Thank you Steve Choo and Jeff Gramm for donating this event to Rise. Guest Jane Aronson wrote a blog post about Rise called "Telling Your Story Can Change Your Life."



Guests at our 10th Anniversary, top, and Friendraiser

Rise Donors 2015

\$10,000-\$15,000

Jane Orans
Steve and Lauren Pilgrim

\$2,501-\$5,000

Anonymous
Casey Family Programs
Jody Lyons

\$1,001-\$2,500

Forestdale, Inc
Jeff Gramm and Susie Heimbach
Math For America
SCO Family of Services
Sheltering Arms

\$751-\$1,000

Children's Village
COFCCA
Samuel Goldberg & Sons Foundation
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Lansner & Kubitschek
Bill and Roz McCarthy
MercyFirst
Janet Offensend
Shahmoon Family Foundation
Anne Williams Isom

\$501-750

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Jess Dannhauser
Sarah Gerstenzang
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Dana Guyet
Jane Spinak and Warren Scharf

\$251-500

Miriam Alkon
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Brooklyn Defender Services

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Clever Girls Collective
Liza and Eric Demby
Graham Windham
Keith Hefner and Diana Autin
Thomas Heller
Emily Heller and Joe Lazarus
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Jewish Child Care Association of New York
Patrick Jones
Emma Ketteringham
Bonnie Kornberg
Keith Little
Ted Pauly and Columbia McCaleb
Alan Mucatel
Ronald Richter
Stephanie Wang-Breal
Andrew White
Frank Wolf
Jonathan Wolfe

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Eon Parks
Diane Redleaf
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Frank Spain
Solutions-Based Casework
Kimberly Watson

\$150

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Emma Alpert
Ellen Amstutz
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Amie Keys Block
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Child Welfare Organizing Project
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John Courtney
Ann Derry
Monica Drinane
Aman D'Mello
Kaela Economos
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Rise writers and Mike Arsham

Rachel Tzamorotas
Michael Wagner
Stephanie Wang-Breal
Jessica Weidmann
William Weisberg
Frank Wolfe
Youth Communication

Up to \$100

Rachel and Avi Abel
Gladys Carrion
Caitlin Cassaro
Megan Crowe
Stephanie DerGarabedian

Aman D'Mello
Andrew Eisen
Paul Griffin
Tammy Kim
Oliver and Lisa Knowlton
Joaniko Kohchi
Katherine Legg
Diane Leske
Ann Lown
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Theresa Moser
Jarrett Murphy
Kathleen Pequeno
Maria Puglisi
Martha Raimon
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Nanette Schorr
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Taigi Smith
Meema Spadola
Eleanor Sypher
Melissa Wade
Richard Wexler

Rise Donors 2014

\$5,000-\$10,000

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\$1,000

Lindsay Adelman Studio
Ted Pauly and Columbia
McCaleb

\$500-\$999

Brooklyn Defender Services
John Mattingly
Elizabeth McCarthy
Shahmoon Family
Foundation
Jason Zinoman

\$150-\$499

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Genevieve Christy
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Betsy Krebs
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Sister Paulette LoMonaco
Gerard McCaffery
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Andrew White
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