



Rise-NY
P.O. Box 393
Endicott, NY 13761



Administration:
(607) 748-7453
Hotline:
(607) 754-4340 /
1-877-754-4340



www.rise-ny.org



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RISE-NY

More essential than ever

Annual Report

Our Mission

Rise's mission is to assist families who experience or are threatened with domestic violence and to increase the community's awareness of this pervasive problem.

Our Work

We provide comprehensive domestic violence services, including: shelter, hotline, advocacy, legal, group and individual counseling, and community education.



Provided **3,357** safe shelter nights to **113** adults and **82** children



2,357 calls to our 24-hour hotline were answered



11,807 advocacy services were provided to **1,814** survivors



415 individual and group counseling sessions were completed



28 trainings and talks were provided to the community

A note from our BOARD PRESIDENT



2020 has been a year of hardship but also one of perseverance. We've all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has wreaked havoc on our personal relationships, financial stability, and health. However, domestic violence victims have been negatively impacted more severely than most.

All of the efforts to keep us safe have made conditions more difficult and dangerous for those experiencing intimate partner violence. Consider: stay at home orders, school and child care closures, limitations for businesses (which have caused job loss or underemployment), or

requirements for those in essential worker roles to continue to report. All have the unintended consequence of making life at home more stressful and making it harder for victims to seek help and leave. Survivors are less likely to be able to rely on friends, family, medical providers and colleagues who might notice ongoing issues, offer support, and even provide a means of escape. Conditions have also made it harder for survivors to build an independent life by gaining employment and finding affordable housing. Even an individual's ability to report DV has been impacted given that some precincts require in-person reporting.

I am so grateful for the staff at Rise who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to support and advocate for survivors. The conditions of the pandemic are trying for us all, and the added challenges for DV survivors even more infuriating. I am so thankful that an organization like Rise exists to ensure that no matter what there will always be support for survivors to get them to the happy, independent and safe life that they deserve.

Adapting to COVID

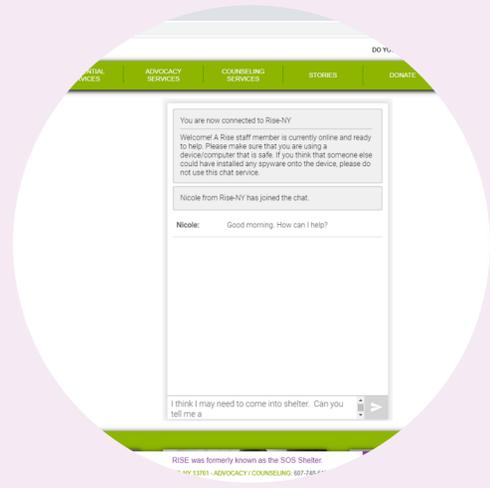
The COVID pandemic offered an unprecedented challenge as we attempted to find a balance between the emerging safety concerns faced by our clients and keeping clients and staff healthy. The Rise shelter temporarily closed in late March, the first time in our 41-year history, so that Rise could acquire PPE, cleaning supplies, and deep clean the building. We reopened two weeks later with new COVID guidelines in place. These included requiring masks in all communal areas, screening new admissions for COVID exposure and symptoms, and limiting capacity to one individual or family in each of our 7 bedrooms. Many families have been reluctant to enter a communal living facility during a pandemic, and as a result we've experienced unusually low census at our shelter this year.

Our non-residential advocacy and counseling staff worked remotely during the shutdown, but offered assistance obtaining emergency orders of protection over Zoom with survivors and family court. Since reopening, staff have offered both virtual or in-person services depending on a survivor's needs and comfort level. The calls we are receiving for help have had a new urgency this year, as many former safety nets and temporary respites from violence such as Family Court, criminal court, workplaces and schools are either offering reduced hours or are closed.

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Making help more accessible //

The COVID pandemic changed the ways in which survivors could seek help. From sheltering in place or quarantining with an abusive partner to working from home, calling our 24-hour hotline was no longer a viable option for many. In response, Rise introduced a new online chat program on our website. This program is end-to-end encrypted to ensure confidentiality, with the caveat that devices need to be free of spyware, malware or viruses. The chat is staffed by our advocates during business hours, Monday- Friday 8:30-4:30.

Expanding educational access //

In the early months of the pandemic, Rise was ill-equipped to support students at shelter who were learning remotely. Staff spent the Summer preparing for the new academic year. With state funds designated for COVID preparation, we



transformed office space into a classroom, outfitting it with wireless internet, three computers with webcams, and desks. We also hired a part-time educational support specialist. This staff member, Stephanie, coordinates with local school districts to ensure that children are enrolled and able to access remote learning, assists families with navigating educational platforms and lessons, creates schedules for each student, tutors students in subjects they struggle with, and creates educational plans for continued access and learning after the family discharges from our shelter. Stephanie also supports our youngest learners by creating developmentally-appropriate learning activities for infants and toddlers.

When one student entered our shelter, the school district informed Stephanie that she had just one absence left before Child Protective Services would be notified. Stephanie helped this student attend her full days of classes and during breaks, tutored her in a math, the subject she struggled with the most. This student worked with Stephanie for two months. During the end of this period, her school counselor called to express her appreciation for the role that our shelter filled. She said that before our intervention, the student regularly left the lessons playing and walked away from her device. Now she was more focused and was actually participating and absorbing the knowledge being taught. Once the family located a new apartment, Stephanie worked to prepare the student's mother for her continued success. She provided a class schedule, a hotspot from the school district, and a backpack full of school supplies.

Managing remote learning has been challenging for many parents. Survivors are already overwhelmed when entering shelter with their children and must focus on healing from their trauma and rebuilding their lives. They have been very grateful for Stephanie's support.



A new approach to counseling //

The simple act of petting a dog has big impacts on well-being. It lowers blood pressure, boosts the love hormone oxytocin, and increases serotonin and prolactin, which lower stress and anxiety. The therapeutic effects of canines seemed like a natural fit for our counseling program. In February, 9-year-old Labradoodle Jojo joined our counseling team, working alongside LCSW Carrie and later, LMSW Machella.

Jojo was trained to sit or lie quietly by survivors during their counseling sessions. He was very attuned to emotions and had a knack for softly laying his head in someone's lap while they were discussing a troubling incident. Many counseling participants shared that he comforted them and enriched their counseling appointments.

Jojo passed away in November from aggressive bone cancer, which was a big loss for our team. We are currently training a miniature Saint Bernadoodle puppy named Olive to take over the role of emotional support dog in the hopes of continuing this beneficial program.

Survivor Story



Domestic violence survivors with disabilities have been especially vulnerable during the pandemic. People with disabilities are at greater risk of domestic abuse victimization, exacerbated by stress and isolation. One such survivor is Marissa, who is Deaf. As a result of NYS on PAUSE last Spring, Marissa's family court appointments for her order of protection were abruptly cancelled. Scared and concerned for her safety, she called her Rise advocate, who immediately helped her create a safety plan in the interim. Her advocate contacted the court and helped Marissa appear via Skype for her court dates. She referred Marissa to an attorney at Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, which Rise has a partnership with. Marissa also received counseling services with a Rise Social Worker through video chat. These counseling sessions helped her to create goals, set boundaries, and focus on self-care.

Emboldened by the lockdown and Marissa's limited access to resources, her abusive husband started to violate the protective order. He came to her house repeatedly to demand entry or access to his belongings. When police officers responded, he claimed that he had COVID to avoid arrest. This worked a couple of times, allowing him to suffer

no immediate consequences. Her abuser's family members also joined in the harassment of Marissa and her child. Marissa's advocate and Social Worker gave her support and the confidence needed to contact the police about these protective order violations. Her advocate and attorney collaborated to provide multiple police reports documenting this, which aided her trial in family court. As a result, Marissa was able to obtain a final order of protection, which her abuser has finally been respecting. Marissa is still in contact with her advocate and continues to work toward her goal of a safer life for her and her child.

In memory of our community members
lost to domestic violence in 2020

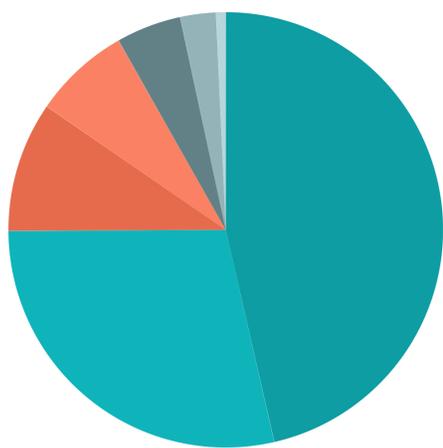


Lauren Ajax
Alison Salisbury

2020 Financials

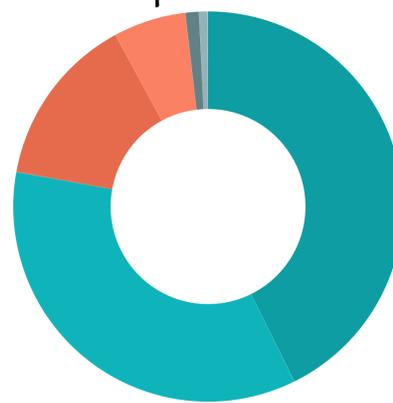
Based on a pre-audit cash basis

Revenue: \$1,104,386.45



- Residential Program Per Diem (46.41%)
- State Grants (28.5%)
- Local Grants (9.68%)
- Non-Residential Contract (7.2%)
- Individuals and Organizations (4.83%)
- Federal Grants (2.66%)
- Foundations (0.72%)

Expenses



- Shelter Program (42.71%)
- Advocacy Program (35.15%)
- Administrative (14.27%)
- Counseling Program (6.01%)
- Advertising/Fundraising (1.13%)
- Community Education (0.74%)



2020 has hit many people in our community, and of course entire world, hard financially. We appreciate all of donors who made it possible for us to continue providing essential services during the pandemic. **Thank you so much!**

Rise-NY is the d/b/a of SOS Shelter, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible.