

RISE

/rewind

Summer 2025



CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES

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As the RISE Class of 2025 prepares to step into the next chapter of their lives, their stories are a powerful reminder of how far students can go when given the right support, community, and belief in their potential. This year, we witnessed inspiring journeys of growth, perseverance, and achievement. Whether through academics, athletics, the arts, or leadership, our seniors exemplify the strength and promise of RISE.

Many of our graduates shared how much they've grown - not just academically, but personally. Malia reflected on how she became more confident and self-aware after transferring schools, learning to stop trying to fit into others' expectations and instead embrace her true self. Zishonn shared that over four years, he gained better time management skills, stopped second-guessing himself, and found his voice in classroom discussions.



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For several students, extracurricular activities became their anchor. Being part of a sports team provided more than just structure - it created community, purpose, and lifelong memories. "Basketball taught me the value of resilience, trust, and fighting for something bigger than myself," Zishonn said. Others found belonging and personal growth through performing arts. Jesatey credited her theater directors and teachers for helping her stay motivated and engaged as she pursues a future in performance.

CONGRATS TO OUR GRADUATING SCHOLARS

**ZISHONN ALLEN • DAZAYAH COSME • MALIA MONTEIRO
GOD'ISS SANTOS • JESATEY ZAPATA • SEAN FRANCISCO
NELSON WILSON • NASIAH SHELTON • AMARI MONTEIRO
QIANA SUMNER, JR • GARY CLEVELAND**

welcome to the team:

Lauren O'Neill

RISE is pleased to welcome Lauren O'Neill as our new Program Manager. Lauren is responsible for our mentoring program and provides support to a small cohort of RISE scholars.

A proud graduate of Brown University's Master of Public Affairs program, Lauren discovered her passion for nonprofit work through her coursework and hands-on experiences during her time at Brown.

Before joining RISE, Lauren worked at the education nonprofit Bottom Line, supporting first-generation college students. She then transitioned into higher education, where she held student career development roles at the College of the Holy Cross and Framingham State University – serving as Director at the latter.

Lauren's connection to RISE began during graduate school, when she learned about the organization as part

of a class project and later trained as a mentor. Her deep appreciation for RISE's mission has only grown since.

Outside of work, Lauren enjoys life with her husband, young son, and a small menagerie of pets. You can often find her reading a good book on the patio or enjoying time outdoors with her family.



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As Executive Director of RISE, I am so honored and proud to stand with our bright RISE Scholars. Graduation is a recognition of your strength, your journey, and everything you've overcome to get here. We know that the journey wasn't always easy. Each of you faced challenges that could have knocked you off course. But instead, you chose to keep going. You showed resilience, focus, and strength — and you did it with heart.

RISE exists because we believe in potential. We believe that with the right support and opportunity, young people can rise above any obstacle. Today, you are the proof. Each of you has a story that's unique — but you share something powerful in common: you've faced challenges that many others haven't, and still, you rose. You chose to show up, to work hard, and to believe in your future, even when the road felt uncertain. That's something no diploma can fully capture — but we see it, and we celebrate it.

RISE isn't just about academics. It's about connections. It's about making sure no young person walks alone through a difficult season in life. It's about showing up with belief in your potential. It isn't just about education. It's about second chances. It's about believing in the potential of young people whose paths might not have always been easy, or straight, or clear. It's about mentoring, support, and a community that says, we see you — and we are walking with you.

Our seniors that we celebrate in this newsletter are strong, capable, and ready for what's next — and that's the greatest reward of all.

To our families, sponsors, donors and board members: thank you. Your steady support of these amazing young men and women helped light the way forward. Your encouragement, your presence, and your belief made a difference in their lives.

To our graduates: wherever you go from here —remember that you've already done something incredible. You've proven that the past does not define you. Your choices do.

You are scholars. You are leaders. And you are exactly what our world needs more of — people with resilience, heart, and a willingness to grow. Be proud. Because you aren't just graduating — you rose.

Congratulations to you all. We're so proud of you — and we're with you, always.



— DESCENDANTS —
Wealth Management of
RAYMOND JAMES

is committed to investing in our youth to support their resilience and hard work. We are so PROUD to recognize the RISE graduating class of 2025 as they embark on a bright future full of promise!

Tricia S. O'Neil, CFA
Private Wealth Advisor
Managing Director, Wealth Management

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*a heartfelt
thank you
to this year's
Graduation Party
Valedictorian
Sponsor!*

graduate SPOTLIGHT:

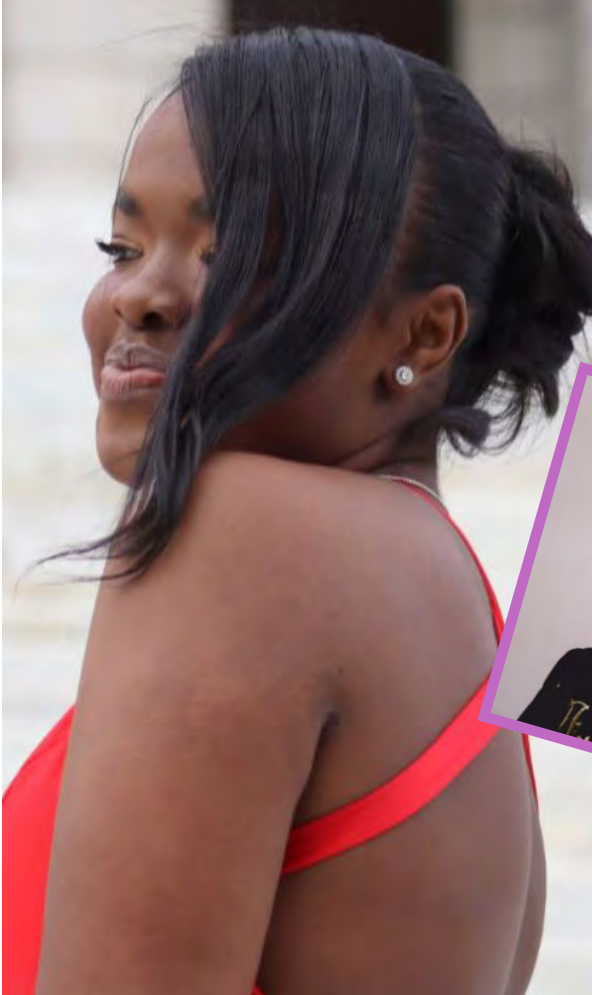
Dazayah

Dazayah spent her high school years pushing herself – maintaining honor roll all four years and thriving as a soccer player. Though the pressure was intense, she persevered, earning a spot in the honors program at Rhode Island College for Medical Imaging. “Because of RISE,” she says, “I was able to attend a school that challenged me and prepared me for college. Without that support, I wouldn’t be where I am today.” She calls RISE “a blessing.”

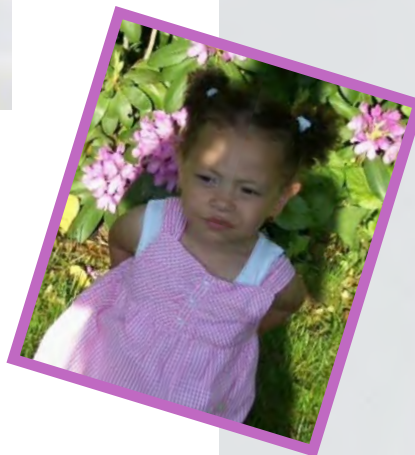
“a blessing”



Malia “family and growth”



Transferring schools as a sophomore was a challenge for **Malia**, who initially struggled with self-identity. But by leaning into her true self and surrounding herself with positive influences, she grew in confidence and clarity. She'll attend the University of Rhode Island, still exploring her academic path. Reflecting on her time with RISE, she shared, “They gave me the tools and the mindset to face college with confidence.” Her summary of the experience? “Family and growth.”



God'iss



Whether she was playing sports, maintaining a high GPA, or serving her school community, **God'iss** thrived by staying focused on her future. Her dream is to become a cosmetic chemist, and she's excited to continue her academic journey. RISE was there every step of the way, offering encouragement and resources. “All anyone needs is an opportunity,” she said. God'iss hopes to return to RISE one day – as a mentor.

“an opportunity”



Jesatey

Jesatey found her passion in performing arts. With the support of her teachers and mentors, she grew in both confidence and academic achievement. She plans to pursue a career in singing and acting, and credits RISE for helping her access the education and experiences that shaped her dreams. Her word for the journey? "Grateful."

“grateful”



Sean

Sean's most memorable moments were built around friendship and sports, especially during his senior year football season. He faced adversity on and off the field but matured through experience. Now heading to URI to study Civil Engineering, he's learned to appreciate the opportunities that came his way. "Never pass up an opportunity," he says – a lesson he'll carry into college and beyond.



“college and beyond”

Nelson “amazing teachers”



Though not one for the spotlight, **Nelson** made tremendous progress in his writing and communication skills during high school. Now heading to Boston University’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program, he reflects on the power of academic support and friendship. “Without RISE, I wouldn’t be able to attend my school now,” he shared. “I wouldn’t have made some of my lifelong friends or met the amazing teachers that helped me through these four years.”

Nasiah



Nasiah’s story began at Moses Brown, where he first stood out both in the classroom and in the pool as a member of the swim team. He was recruited to St. George’s School to play football, where he quickly became a force on the field. But his talents didn’t stop there—Nasiah (affectionately known as Bubba) also played lacrosse, showing his versatility as a multi-sport athlete.

Nasiah has been a RISE Scholar since the 6th grade. He consistently earned high honors throughout high school, balancing a demanding academic schedule with the discipline of varsity sports.

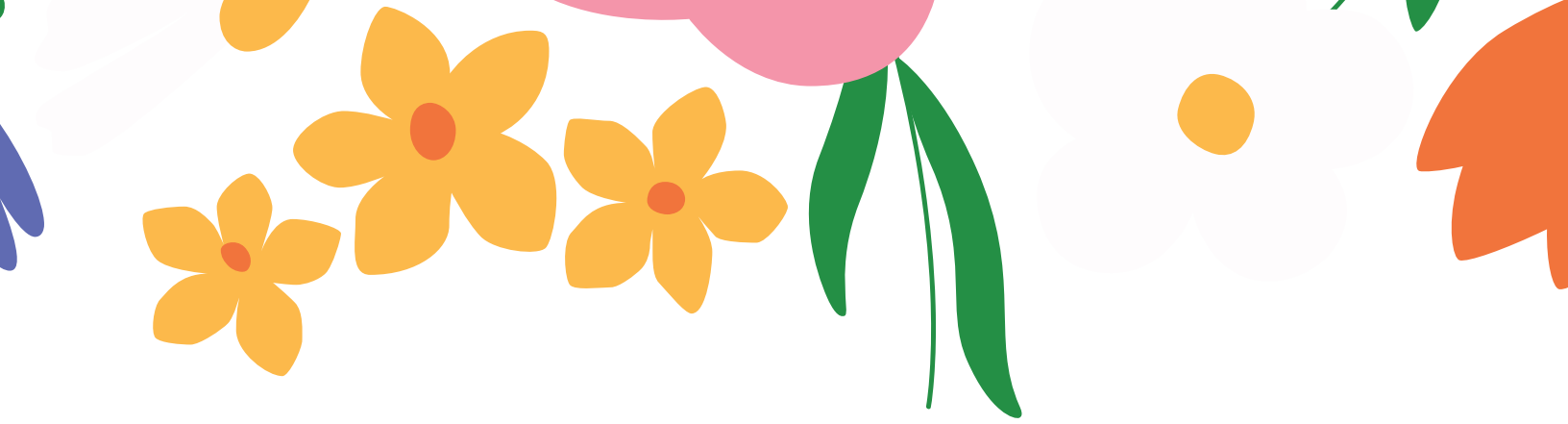
“discipline”

destined to shine!



COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OUR RISE SCHOLARS WILL ATTEND:

**UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND • COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND
PROVIDENCE COLLEGE • CORNELL UNIVERSITY • KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE • BOSTON UNIVERSITY
MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY • MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**



making us proud!



Amari

Amari dominated his track and field events for La Salle Academy with unmatched speed, skill, and determination. His athletic excellence earned him multiple Providence Journal All-State selections, solidifying his reputation as one of Rhode Island's top high school track athletes.

His dedication to training, perseverance through challenges, and ability to rise to big moments have made him a role model for his peers and an inspiration to younger athletes.

“dedication”



Qiana

A standout basketball star, *Qiana* brought leadership, determination, and heart to every game. Her dedication to her sport earned her the Outstanding Athlete Award—a reflection of her tireless work ethic and team-first spirit.

At Bay View, Qiana excelled with distinction in the sciences and humanities. These awards speak to her intellectual curiosity, academic excellence, and love of learning.

“tireless”





Zishonn

After transferring schools, **Zishonn** faced uncertainty and self-doubt. But through basketball, he discovered the value of teamwork and resilience. He credits RISE for helping him stay focused and connected, and an internship at Ortho RI deepened his passion for physical therapy. Now heading to Morgan State University, he says, “Basketball taught me the value of resilience, trust, and fighting for something bigger than myself.” His time with RISE was, in his words, “life changing.”

“life-changing”



Gary

A proud member of the RISE Program since the age of 8, **Gary** was matched with an incredible mentor who helped shape his early years. At La Salle Academy and North Providence High School he excelled both academically and athletically as a member of the football team.

Gary experienced a devastating car accident in 2023 that nearly claimed his life. As Gary began the long and painful journey of relearning how to walk, his strength, resilience, and relentless will to recover became a source of inspiration to everyone around him.

Gary's received the prestigious Providence Journal Courage Award and was named one of the Northeast's Top 7 Most Positive Athletes—a true reflection of his character, leadership, and positivity in the face of overwhelming adversity.



“resilience”



graduation

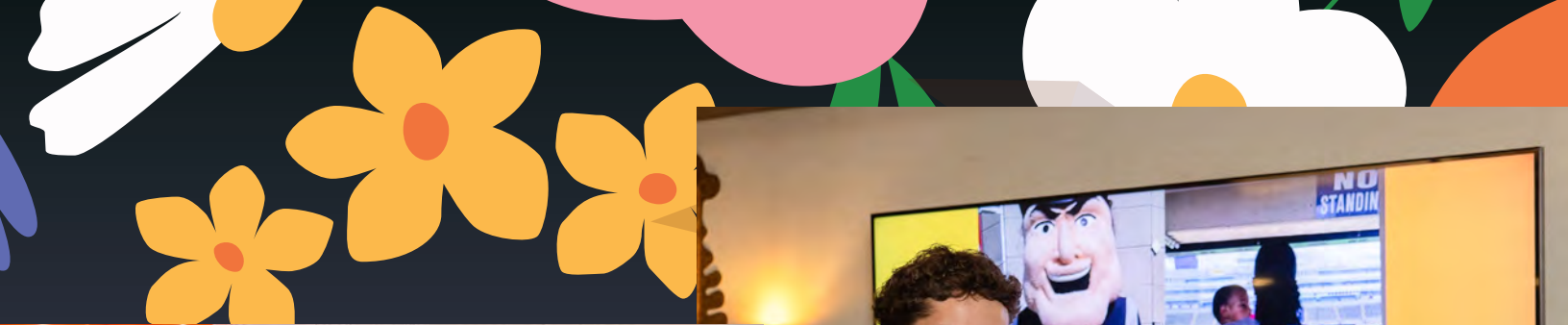


What a special night we had this past May at Circe Prime in Cranston at our RISE Graduation Party where we celebrated our amazing scholars with family, friends, mentors, fabulous food and inspiration to spare!

We presented awards and certificates to acknowledge the grads' incredible hard work and dedication that propelled their academic and extracurricular achievements, and learned of their exciting plans for college and unlimited success. Congratulations to them all, and enormous gratitude to our donors, sponsors and mentors who power RISE to make their journeys possible.

party 2025





graduation party 2025

thank you for reading



visit us on social media:



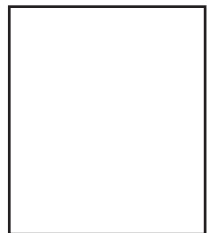
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