

# RISE/rewind

Spring 2023

## SpringForward!

*\*celebrating our seniors\**

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Where do we even start trying to describe the absolutely wonderful and inspiring night we had at *SpringForward* on May 24. A gorgeous setting (thank you, Botanical Center of RI!), amazing food (shout out to Ge Ge's Southern Cuisine!), and our incredible graduating seniors, families, mentors, sponsors, donors and volunteers all under one roof, 110 strong! We watched our seniors receive certificates of achievement, honored Ronald Resmini for his firm's long commitment to sponsorship, and heard from Drs. Ed and Rena Wing and Steph Tudino, recipients of this year's Tim O'Neil Lifetime Mentor Award.



mentor spotlight:

# Ed & Rena

**Q. Why did you decide to become mentors for RISE?**

A. We wanted to help children who had challenges in their lives. We thought that mentoring as a husband and wife would bring a different kind of experience to our mentee.

**Q. What do you do for a living?**

A. I (Ed) am a physician with a specialty in Infectious Diseases and my wife (Rena) is a research psychologist.

**Q. What kinds of activities do you and Camren do together?**

A. We often meet for meals or snacks and share our news with one another. I (Ed) often play one-on-one basketball with Camren or watch him play in pick-up games.

**Q. What is your favorite thing about working with Camren?**

A. Camren is a delightful young man and it has been very gratifying to watch him mature from 5th grade to 11th grade.

**Q. As a mentor, are there any stories or lessons from your own life that drive you to be successful, or that you'd like to pass on to Camren?**

A. As a seventh grader, I (Ed) did not do well in school and was not particularly interested. I was much more interested in sports. My parents, particularly my mother, insisted that I do my homework, study and do better in school. I did better, but it didn't happen quickly. Only over the following 3-4 years did my grades improve and I finally became interested in my classes and the material. I went from being a mediocre student to having excellent grades.

**Q. How long have you been mentors?**

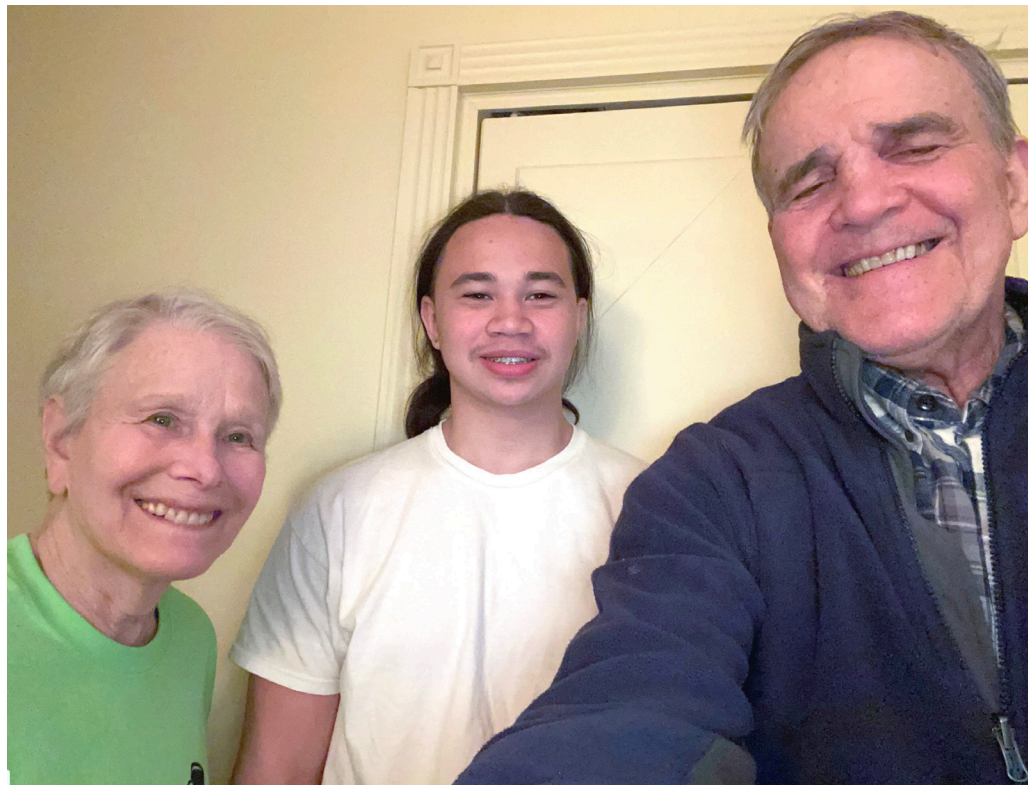
A. Five years

**Q. In what ways do you feel you've made a positive change in Camren's life?**

A. We provide support, often just listening, and have stressed the importance of an education, especially graduating from high school.

**Q. What has working with Camren taught you?**

A. How difficult and different the lives of mentees can be, how often they need to overcome obstacles and how resilient they are.





# LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

We are fast approaching the end of another school year, this one marked not by fits and starts due to Covid but by continuity of attendance, learning, practicing, performing, competing, growing and achieving. RISE students have finally experienced a year where they mix with peers and faculty, coaches and conductors, our RISE staff and volunteers, and by all accounts they feel great!

The RISE staff and volunteers have made the most of the opportunity to gather in person...there was an event for students, families and caregivers during the winter holidays that saw attendees practically squeezing in from outside to partake of conversation, camaraderie, fantastic food from GeGe's Southern Cuisine and gift cards. Wonderful supporters from Bristol RI held a highly successful fundraiser that introduced many new friends to the RISE mission and generated gifts that will allow us to support even more students in effective schools next year. To these new supporters and volunteers, as well as our loyal supporters and volunteers, I extend a huge thank-you. What you do gives our RISE students the opportunity to shine and fulfill potential. I am so proud of them for grabbing opportunity and running with it.

And finally, a huge thank you to everyone who came to gether for our year end *SpringForward* celebration in May. It was truly a wonderful evening of honoring RISE graduating seniors, key partners and volunteers, and celebrating our generous and tireless community that makes positive change happen!

Warmly,  
Robin Boss  
RISE Board President



## 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# Welcome aboard to our newest staff member!



## Irving Ogando

RISE is thrilled to welcome Irving Ogando as the new Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator.

As a lifetime Providence resident, Irving first became acquainted with and connected to RISE in 2017, when he was the Director of Graduate Support for the San Miguel School (a middle school in Providence for boys for low-income families), where he also served on the Board of Directors. During his role there, he advocated for students to reach out to RISE to learn more about the scholarships available to them, and, in the process, grew closer to the mission of RISE, with garnered interest to become involved first-hand.

Irving will be responsible for recruiting mentors, mentees, and scholarship applicants, through his outreach efforts to expand awareness of the programs into the community. “What I am most looking forward to is being able to work directly with families,” Irving begins. “I have always enjoyed meeting people and serving as a resource to those in need. Getting to know our community, understanding their needs, and helping be part of the solution to those needs, is the most the fulfilling work I’ve had the pleasure of doing.”

Irving is excited to build relationships and share RISE’s mission. “The most important career lesson that I learned is that, regardless of how difficult or prosperous things may be within the lifecycle of an organization, its mission should always remain at the forefront of the work being done and the decisions being made.”

Outside of work, Irving enjoys experiencing life with friends and family. RISE is excited for and grateful to his welcoming into the organization.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

There is an exciting world of opportunity on the horizon for senior Alexis, as she solidifies her decision in which college to attend, next year.

A RISE student since the 6th grade, Alexis will be moving on from Wheeler to one of the seven colleges she was accepted to, where she will study psychology, with hopes for a career as both a family/child therapist and real estate agent.

## Alexis

“One of my greatest achievements is going to a private high school and being accepted into so many colleges,” Alexis says. “A lot of people may not get these experiences or opportunities, so I am very grateful for those achievements.”

Alexis attributes RISE’s endless support to her successes thus far. “The thing I love the most about RISE is that I always had support, no matter what. Whether I wanted to just talk or get help in school, they were always there.” She urges all of the other RISE students to never be afraid to reach out and ask for help too, because RISE will always be there to offer it.

When asked who her biggest role model is, she warmly tells us it’s her mother. “My mom has always pushed through to make sure things are good, no matter the circumstances. As a single mother, things are harder for her, but I never feel like anything is missing because she does it all. I aspire to be the woman my mother is.”

When she’s not in school, Alexis enjoys hanging out with her friends, playing basketball and softball, and volunteering at things like turkey drives or cheer and football.

We wish Alexis the best of luck in her upcoming ventures and journeys.





# RISE is proud to announce the following Grant Awards for 2022:

## AMICA

Andrade Faxon Charities for Children

Bank of America

Big Lots

Black Philanthropy Bannister House

Blue Cross Blue Shield of RI

Carter Fund

Dexter Fund

Gruben Charitable Trust

Henry Niles Foundation

John Clarke Trust

June Rockwell Levy

Mary Dexter Chafee Foundation

Nordson Corporation Foundation

Pappitto Opportunity Fund

Realtor Foundation

Rhode Island Foundation

RIF/Basic Human Needs Grant

Sidney Stearn Memorial Trust

Vermont Mutual

## meet Maison!

“My dream career is to work in the TV/film industry as a writer and director of my own TV shows and films. I hope to someday tell stories that people all around the world love, whether these stories take the form of animation, live-action TV/film, or theater productions.”

Maison is well on his way to a career in just that, as he will be attending Brown University next year to study a dual concentration in both Visual and Literary Arts.

Maison was accepted into RISE’s scholarship program in 2017, when he was a 6th grader at Nathanael Greene Elementary School. At that time, he was involved with the documentary, “Tre Maison Dasan,” which followed kids with incarcerated parents, and his director, Denali Tiller, was who first informed Maison’s grandmother about the program. “Denali introducing me to RISE only scratches the surface of the amazing things she has done for me. She is one of my greatest role models, an incredible artist, has always believed in and supported me, and was who pushed me to apply to Brown, even when I doubted it. I dream of doing as much good in the world as she has already done.”

Maison says that RISE has allowed him to thrive as a student, both financially and emotionally, and will always be grateful for their support of his dreams and ambitions.

“If I could give any of the other RISE students some advice, it would be to believe in yourself. I know it sounds cliché, but it’s true,” Maison tells us. “Believe in your voice and your ambition, even if it feels like nobody else does, because you have a unique perspective that no one else has or can take away from you. Even when I felt like my work wasn’t ‘worth



it” or ‘good enough,’ and wanted to give up, my confidence, beliefs and perspectives kept me going.”

We are so excited for and proud of Maison and wish him the very best of luck in his future ventures at Brown.



We are so grateful for the Bristol Friends of RISE who hosted an fundraiser at Linden Place in December. It was a resounding success on so many levels. Many new friends were touched by Tim Flanigan's description of founding RISE with Kevin Vigilante, and Eulanda LaFrance's story of her family's journey and the ways RISE has touched her life. It was a sold out event, and over 100 people were in attendance. The event raised over \$56,000 including 2 new sponsorships, college visit support, and many donors stepped up to support a matched effort to get people involved. Thank you to all board members and staff who attended and especially The Bristol Friends of RISE for being champions of fundraising!



# BRISTOL FRIENDS OF RISE!







We had a GREAT time at the RISE family holiday party. Eighty-five people attended the party at GeGe's Southern Cuisine restaurant in Providence. There was great food, fun crafts and meaningful conversation. It was wonderful to get everyone together before the holidays.

Special thank you to our festive Elf, board member Eulanda LaFrance Young, who helped set up, breakdown and pass out food and drinks.

## RISE CHRISTMAS PARTY



thank you for reading

**RISE**/rewind

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Questions or comments? email [kdellagrotta@riseonline.org](mailto:kdellagrotta@riseonline.org)