

TWIN
CITIES **R!SE**

BUILDING CAREERS.
EMPOWERING LIVES.

RISING UP

AN UPDATE FROM TWIN CITIES R!SE



SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Dear TCR Friends and Supporters,

As we continue to move forward, turning the corner on this pandemic, TCR is planning its future and executing on its mission. Looking back, we can say with great pride that we adapted quickly to our new environment and successfully implemented a robust and effective way to bring our proprietary training to participants in their own homes. We are proud to say that over the last several months, we have helped many participants launch into new careers.

This summer, we are also celebrating our continued partnership with the State of Minnesota. In June, we received a new direct appropriation of \$1.4 million dollars of Pay For Performance (PFP) funds that will be available to support the work and mission of Twin Cities RISE in 2022 and 2023! This continued PFP partnership with the State of Minnesota has inspired many new donors within the community to lend their support and financial gifts, investing in our highly valued success model.

Looking forward we are planning for our annual Rise to the Occasion Gala this fall, which will transition back to a live event this year, with an online component as well for those unable to attend in person. We will be honoring long-time board members and TCR champions, Mike and Paige Bingham, for over 20 years of support and advocacy for the mission of Twin Cities RISE. Be sure to mark your calendars for October 3rd for our annual celebration and our single largest fundraising event of the year. The

evening will feature many inspiring and mission-filled stories from the past year and our exciting plans for expanding our services into the future.

Finally, I would like to share that we are officially reopening our offices to staff and participants on September 13, 2021. We are excited to welcome everyone back physically into our space and grow our mission and work in the community for many years to come.

Thank you to all our friends, donors, and supporters for your words of encouragement, your philanthropic support, and love over this long hopeful journey together.

Tom Streitz,
CEO and President



fair: Distribution Partner

Twin Cities RISE is proud to be a FAIR distribution partner, by offering FAIR products and services to its participants and program alumni.

The FAIR banking program is designed to bridge the financial inclusion gap, helping people move from high-cost financial products and services to bank accounts that protect and build wealth. FAIR is a first-of-its-kind, cross-sector collaboration to increase the financial health of Minnesotans. It's led by nonprofit, Prepare + Prosper, who is partnering with Sunrise Banks N.A., Member FDIC. Based on community input and need, the FAIR model consists of customer-focused products [checking, savings, credit builder], trusted distribution, digital access, and coaching.

FAIR's unique delivery model attempts to address barriers to entry and trust by integrating promotion and enrollment services into various community access points, namely nonprofit organizations and public systems. Customers meet with staff who are cross-trained enrollers at various community agencies who have integrated and embedded FAIR programming into their existing services.

Other distribution partners include: Build Wealth MN, LSS Financial Counseling, Neighborhood Hub, Tubman, Upper Northside Business Association, and HIRED.

Empowerment Institute + 180 Degrees



Twin Cities RISE's Empowerment Institute (EI) partners with businesses, schools, universities and other non-profit organizations to help them create an empowered culture, have more productive employees, and provide their clients or students with the skills they need to make transformative changes. Recently, the Empowerment Institute partnered with 180 Degrees at their Clifton House residence. Clifton House provides short-term affordable housing, structured programming, and case management to men that have recently been released from incarceration. Clients are supported to secure stable employment, maintain sobriety, and establish new living arrangements within 60 days of being released from incarceration.

Through a grant provided by the State of Minnesota, the EI team has trained over 30 residents in emotional intelligence and 21st century job skills. Empowerment Institute Training Manager Rick Thomas meets with cohorts almost daily for seven weeks of the eight weeks that residents are allowed to stay at Clifton House. The outcomes of this pilot program have been incredible, with 44% of the residents gaining and retaining employment. The goals for this program include increased confidence, reduced recidivism, and increased knowledge of employment skills.

Here are just a few of the quotes that we received from residents attending the emotional intelligence training:

"When I came to 180 Degrees, I had no hope. I didn't want to work and didn't want to visit my family. After attending this [emotional intelligence] class, I now see myself and the world differently."

"I was mad at everyone. I blamed everyone because of my experience in prison. What I failed to do was look at myself and question why I made the decisions I did that lead me to prison. My heart is a lot lighter now that I have released that anger."

"I never thought in a million years that my previous employer would rehire me. I went in and was honest with him. I told him that I am not the same person and that I'm attending an emotional intelligence class to learn more about me. He said he would give me a chance. I was rehired and now make more money an hour than I ever have in my life."



Our goal is to work together with 180 Degrees to acquire the funding necessary to extend this program for three to five years. If you would like learn more about how the Empowerment Institute can work with your business or organization, contact:

Jacquelyn Carpenter at
jcarpenter@twincitiesrise.org
or 612-666-8026.



“Twin Cities R!SE, through its mission and vision aligns with my personal passion, purpose, and talents. When I heard about this organization, I could see the connection instantly.”

TWIN CITIES R!SE

Welcomes Alex Merritt

In June, Alex Merritt joined Twin Cities R!SE as our new Vice President of Program Operations. Alex has had an award-winning career as a Supply Chain Professional with General Mills. During her 18 years with General Mills, she has held roles of increasing responsibility in manufacturing, quality and regulatory operations, continuous improvement, & sourcing.

We spoke with Alex about her career change and what brought her to make the move from a corporate to non-profit career. “Twin Cities R!SE, through its mission and vision aligns with my personal passion, purpose, and talents. When I heard about this organization, I could see the connection instantly,” shares Alex.

Though she has achieved a notable corporate career as an engineer, Alex is able to identify and relate with some of the barriers that many people who come to Twin Cities R!SE looking for meaningful employment are facing.

What do you think are some of the biggest barriers that people with low incomes face regarding employment and financial stability?

“I think that one barrier is knowing that it is possible to have something different. I grew up in the hood. I grew up on food stamps. I grew up where getting a Section Eight housing voucher was the goal. And so, I think that one of the barriers is just not knowing that there is something else that could be possible. When where you are is all that you know, and all that you have ever done, you tend to think that that is all that you can do. You do not necessarily have a vision for what else is possible for your life. I think that this is probably one of the biggest barriers. It is not having a vision for what else is possible, and no clarity or path for how you get there. This is where Twin Cities R!SE comes in.”

How do you feel about Twin Cities R!SE’s core belief that everyone is lovable, important, and valuable?

“I love it. It goes back to one of my personal mottos, which is to treat everyone right. I believe that everyone has humanity, and that everyone has divinity. It doesn’t matter if they are in a C suite executive position or sleeping on the streets. Their humanity and divinity makes them worthy, period.”

Describe your role and vision for Twin Cities R!SE

“In my role as VP of Program Operations, my vision is to ensure that we work together as a team, operate in excellence and ensure that the “secret sauce” of TCR is captured effectively through a combination of repeatable processes and clear metrics that allow us to trend, track and deliver outstanding results for participants and all who invest in TCR.”

Alex is also an entrepreneur who is affectionately known as ‘The Love Engineer’, her company Dessert & Discussion® specializes in relationship development, strengthening gender relations and equipping people with tools and skills to build amazing relationships. She’s a highly sought after speaker, trainer and facilitator. She has been engaged by a myriad of companies, colleges, universities and associations as a keynote speaker and workshop leader.

Beyond her professional pursuits, she is an inventor, author, community servant, philanthropist and mentor. She formerly served on the Board of Directors for the Jungle Theater, the Annex Teen Clinic in Minnesota and People Reaching Out in Sacramento.

Alex is a dynamic leader who will bring many strengths and incredible experience to her new role in overseeing the participant lifecycle at TCR.

Alex can be reached at amerritt@twincitiesrise.org or 612-279-5861



Financial Literacy for All

Twin Cities RISE (TCR) participants now receive financial literacy training from an award winning, certified financial trainer, as a part of their career readiness training. Tonia Brinston, who has also served as a Career Coach with Twin Cities RISE for the past two years, leads bimonthly financial workshops for participants and program alumni. Topics for the workshops include: credit repair, budgeting, home buying, and entrepreneurship. Tonia was introduced to TCR through her former employer, Lutheran Social Services (LSS). During her time employed with LSS, Tonia occasionally taught the “Four Cornerstones of Financial Literacy” to participants of TCR and other non-profits.

Tell us about your position as a Career Coach.

As a Coach, I assist participants in overcoming barriers that may hinder them from employment. We coach them through interview prep, whether that’s elevator speech, Star stories, clothing for interviews, childcare; we talk about internships, and whatever is needed to help them obtain meaningful employment. We, as coaches, are a part of their journey.

What prompted you to create your consulting business?

Well, I’ve walked my own walk, in creating personal debt and eliminating it. The knowledge I obtained in going through that process, as well as the process of becoming a homeowner, was very valuable to me and greatly needed in my community.

What do you see in terms of the financial literacy of participants at Twin Cities RISE?

There is a lot of engagement around improving credit scores. Most participants are not yet very knowledgeable in that area. I teach them budgeting and how to close their money leaks (those unconscious money spending habits). This is where I get those aha moments from participants, because when we do the math, and I show them the numbers, it becomes real to them. They realize that stopping to get a cup of coffee every day on the way to work or class or eating out every day for lunch is costing them a lot of money annually. When you show them realistic numbers, it opens their eyes.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

There is this myth that people in our community are poor because of work ethics and spending habits, but in fact, we are in that state of financial wellbeing due to the systems that have been in place and at work for generations, to keep us disadvantaged. It is time to make changes to those systems.



In December of 2020, Tonia started her business, SLAP (Sounds Like A Plan) Consulting, to cultivate financial capabilities, create lasting financial wellness, build generational wealth, and grow social capital in youth ages 16-24. Tonia is a North Minneapolis resident and has worked with the Black Women’s Wealth Alliance for several years as an educator, coach, and advisory committee member. Her business is also contracted with the University of Minnesota. This part of Tonia’s work is focusing on the economic disparities facing African American families on the north side of Minneapolis and addressing historical trauma and ambiguous loss as it relates to financial wellness.

GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

FROM SUBWAY TO CEO



Zada started at Twin Cities RISE almost seven years ago as a participant. In her words, she was in a “sunken place”. Having recently given birth to her daughter, Zada was battling post-partum depression and feeling lost on what was next for her.

“I was working at Subway part-time and thinking of all of the things, like going to school, that now I figured I would not be able to do. I had no idea how I was going to provide for myself and my baby.”

“I found out about Twin Cities RISE at a Rondo Days event. At first, I was like this sounds too good to be true. I didn’t believe that they would help me find not just a job, but a career, for free. And they eliminated all my excuses, because they provided bus tokens, so that I would have transportation, and even helped with paying sitter fees for my daughter while I attended classes. Even when I was on the verge of homelessness, Twin Cities RISE helped me out. I made sure that I was on time every day. It was such a nice family environment at TCR. I loved it. I can’t say enough good things about it.”

After completing training at TCR, Zada’s first position was a supervisor with the YWCA.

“It was my first time applying or being hired for a supervisor role. I always thought that I didn’t qualify for something like that. But the courses at TCR definitely empowered me, and I went for it. I have only held management and upper level positions since then.”

Zada is currently employed as a teacher at the Harambee Elementary School in Robbinsdale. She also owns her own business.

How has the Personal Empowerment that you received at TCR helped you in your journey?

“I was always a shy person, and would not go for things. I would let people get over on me. Empowerment helped with parenting, family, relationships, and in my career. I still go back to my book at times and revisit what I was taught. It has really helped me in my own business with customer service and everything.”

Tell us about your business.

“I started a business, Zada’s Vault, last year. I initially started it by creating sensory boxes and lesson plans for teachers, then I expanded into creating personalized gifts. This included everything from chess sets to shoes. I wanted to make customizable and personalized gifts affordable for everyone.”



In March of 2020, a social media post that Zada made displaying her excellent customer service skills went viral, with celebrities reposting it. She has able to turn that situation using the skills that she learned at Twin Cities RISE into more sales and greater awareness of her business. Since then, her business has taken off!

And, her daughter, who recently turned seven years old, has just started her own business called Free to Be You, which features a monthly subscription box for girls filled with fun educational items and Barbie dolls that celebrates their uniqueness (natural hair, curvy, vitiligo, prosthetic body parts, and more).

Learn more about Zada’s and her daughter’s businesses at zadasvault.com.



1301 Bryant Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55411

SAVE THE DATE

R!SE TO THE
OCCASION
2021 ANNUAL GALA

Sunday, October 3, 2021

IN-PERSON EVENT:

The Minikahda Club

5:30-9:00pm
(limited capacity)

VIRTUAL EVENT:

7:30pm