



RISE TOGETHER —
Stories Save Lives

Impact Report

- Empowering Students
- Building Resilience
- Ending Stigma

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OUR MISSION

RISE TOGETHER exists to ignite a movement of change — saving lives by offering youth and communities safe spaces for healing, connection, and hope.

Founded in 2013 by Anthony Alvarado (Founder & Board Chair) and Nadine Machkovech (Founding Member & Executive Director) with one belief:



Stories save lives.



For 12 years, RISE TOGETHER has equipped youth with:

- courage to speak
- awareness to recognize risk
- compassion to support peers
- hope to seek help

This work has grown from one school gym to a multi-state movement.

WWW.WEALLRISETOGETHER.ORG

THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE

During the 2024/2025 school year:

- 13,000+ students reached
- 1,100+ educators engaged
- 800+ parents & community members
- 1st RISEhangout piloted in Appleton
- 150 students reached per \$1 donated

"I FINALLY DON'T FEEL ALONE."

EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMMING

When we speak honestly about struggle and recovery, we remind others that they are not alone.

SEE PROGRAMS

1

Peer-Led Youth Seminars & Workshops — school-based presentations and assemblies that break stigma and spark honest conversations about mental health, substance use, recovery, and resilience.

2

Peer Coaching & Storytelling Workshops — empowering students to own and share their stories, build emotional intelligence, and lead through their lived experience.

3

RISE Hangouts & Youth-Led Projects — a space for youth to connect, lead peer-driven initiatives, support one another, and shift school or community culture.

4

Adult & Community Training — RISEconnection — healing-centered professional development for educators, counselors, youth advocates, and parents, equipping them to support youth mental health, prevention, and recovery.

5

WI WINS Tobacco Prevention & Control- in 2 counties, and in partnership with WI-DHS



2024–2025

SURVEY RESULTS

- 206 — “Recovery is possible”
- 207 — “I can support others”
- 151 — “Stigma prevents people from asking for help”

Over 50% of students say their less likely to use substances after a RISE TOGETHER Presentation.

Students reported increased awareness of substance use risk and improved emotional wellbeing.



Program Spotlight

RISE Connection: 5 module course for adult stakeholders & youth leaders.

Register Today

Areas for growth:

- Empowering youth to use their voice
- Encouraging personal mental-health action



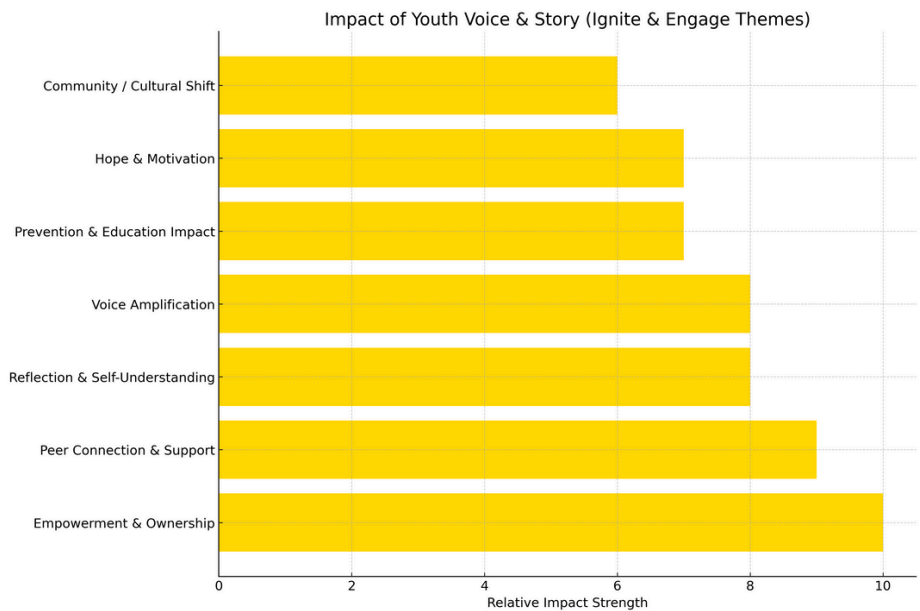
STUDENT VOICES

BACK 2 BASICS TOUR

“I asked for help for the first time.”

“Hearing real stories changed me.”

“No one rises alone.”



Data Source: 2023–2024 mixed-methods evaluation (PMC12337543). Insights derived from student surveys, qualitative reflections, and youth feedback identifying the most frequent and meaningful outcomes of peer-led storytelling programs.

Wisconsin (Schools & Summits)

- Ripon High School
- Seymour Community Schools
- Grantsburg / Webster / Siren (Burnett County)
- Black River Falls MS & HS – Late Night Party at the Middle
- CESA 5 Youth Leadership Summit
- HER Day Youth Summit
- UW–Superior Youth Wellness Summit
- RISE 12 Anniversary Celebration
- Stories That Save Lives – RISExORN Community Healing Summit

- Wisconsin NAMI Mental Health Conference
- Wisconsin Substance Use Prevention Conference
- 29th Annual Wisconsin Crisis Intervention Conference
- Wisconsin Peer Recovery Conference
- 21st Annual Mental Health & Substance Use Prevention Conference

Florida:

- Seminole County — 8 high schools, ~4,500 students
- Parent & community events
- Treatment-center workshops
- Polk County Summit

Pennsylvania:

- Rise 4 Recovery Summit with Braeburn Rx — Advocacy Convening

Hundreds of follow-up conversations and support connections initiated.

LEGACY RESEARCH DATA

RISE TOGETHER never applied for or received this research grant — funding supported scientific review only in partnership with Penn State College of Medicine and researchers at the University of Wisconsin

- 10,438 students surveyed (2014–2020)
- 27.3% reported lifetime alcohol or substance use
- Mean age of first use: 13.9 years
- 29.2% initiated use before age 14

Among substance-using students after a RISE presentation:

- 51.2% felt less likely to use substances afterward
- Middle school youth reported stronger impact (60.3%)

Overall program satisfaction:

- 71.3% “liked” or “liked very much”
- 76.3% said personal recovery stories were the most impactful part

VIEW @ NIH: “IGNITE & ENGAGE:”

A MIXED METHODS EVALUATION OF A PEER-LED, SCHOOL-BASED SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION PROGRAM

RISE TOGETHER is one of the only youth prevention organizations in the nation with a published, NIH-indexed, peer-reviewed scientific study validating its impact.

Independent evaluation showed peer-led storytelling:

- increases substance use awareness
- reduces stigma
- increases help-seeking
- strengthens intentions to avoid alcohol and drugs
- builds emotional connectedness and resilience

RESEARCH CITATION -

Verbos KW II, Agolli A, Sandelich S, Alvarado A, Jusufagic A, Croes KD, Zgierska AE. “Ignite & Engage: A mixed methods evaluation of a peer-led, school-based substance use prevention program.”

Addiction Science & Clinical Practice. 2025.

PMCID: PMC12337543

PMID: 40790232

Note: Supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an **award totaling \$599,371 with 22% financed with non-governmental resources**. The contents are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

RISE TOGETHER IMPACT REPORT 2024/2025



In 2020, after the impacts of COVID-19 and the loss of our son to fentanyl, RISE TOGETHER came close to closing its doors. Instead, we rebuilt.

According to our GuideStar filings, RISE TOGETHER has operated on an average annual revenue of ~\$140,000 since its founding, with year-to-year totals ranging from \$50,000 to over \$200,000, reflecting our lean, community-driven approach.

Budget Snapshot

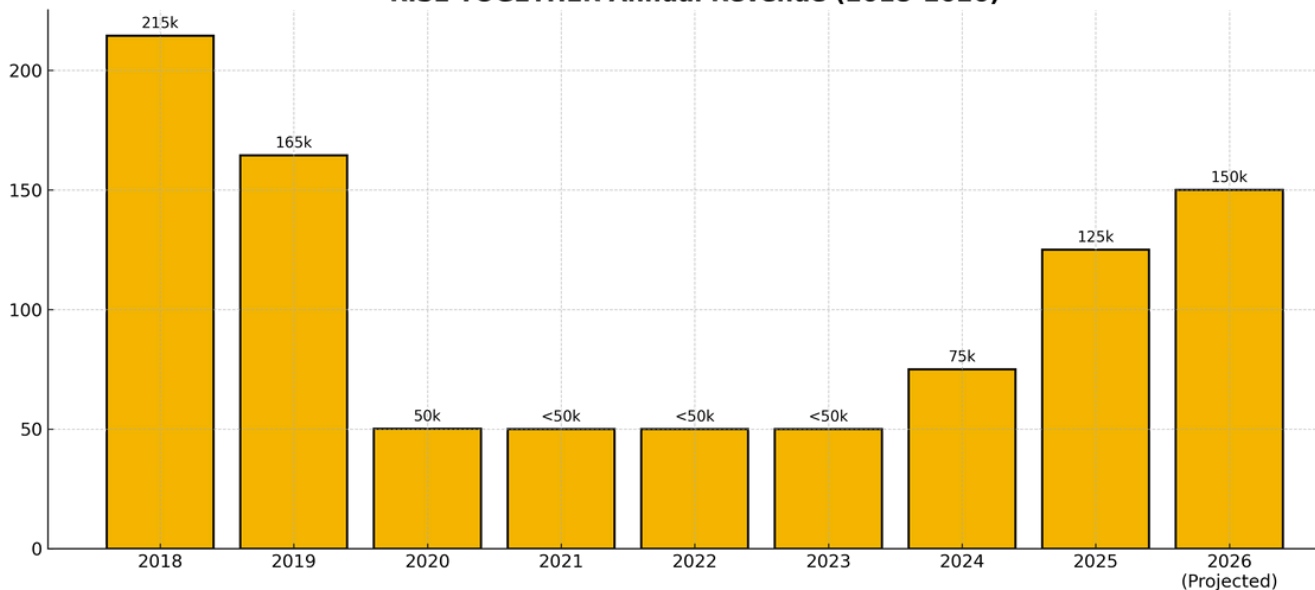
- 2020–2023: < \$50,000/year
- 2024: \$75,000
- 2025: \$125,000+
- 2026 (Projected): \$150,000+

Despite minimal resources, we continued to:

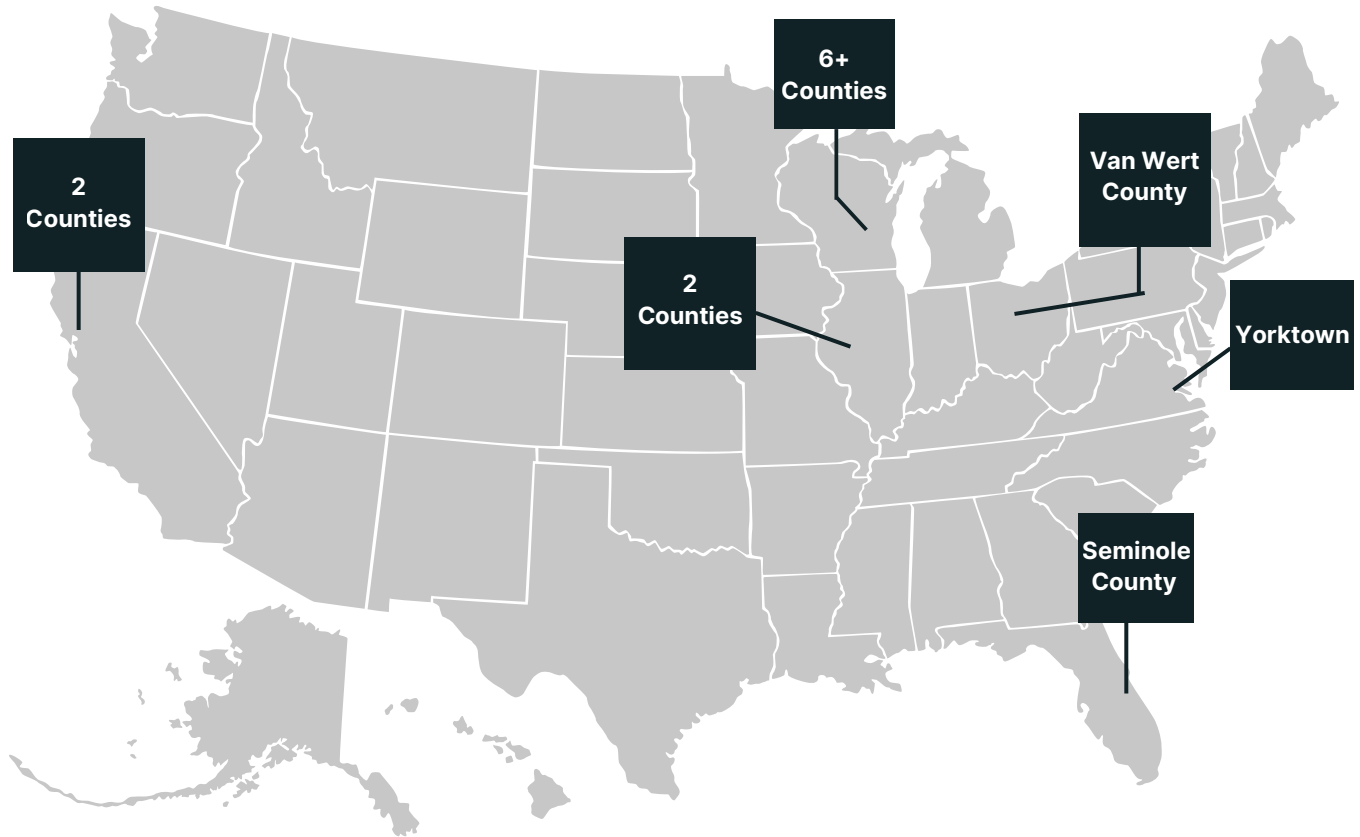
- Reach thousands of students
- Hold hundreds of direct support conversations
- Expand key partnerships
- Strengthen and validate our model through peer-reviewed research

As we enter year 13, RISE TOGETHER is stable, growing, and positioned for deeper community impact.

RISE TOGETHER Annual Revenue (2018-2026)

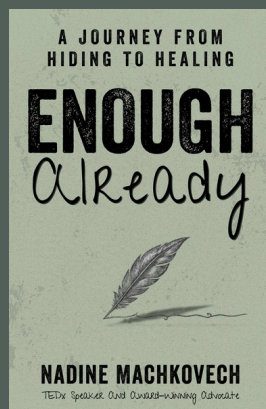


RISE TOGETHER began its work in 2013 and became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2018; only nonprofit-year revenue is shown.



Over the past couple school years (from 2023 to 2025), traveling the country has reminded us that healing happens through vulnerability, connection happens through story, and hope spreads through courage.

EXTENDED IMPACT BEYOND RISE TOGETHER



Enough Already: A Journey From Hiding to Healing — by Nadine Machkovech

Nadine's book ENOUGH Already is a raw, healing exploration of identity, self-worth, and survival.

It has opened deeper dialogue, reached thousands, and helped readers feel seen and validated.

More: www.nadinespeaks.com

The Unbroken Project — by Anthony Alvarado

The Unbroken Project honors lives lost to overdose through large-scale portraiture and storytelling — giving dignity, memory, and awareness back to those lost.

It supports grieving families, reframes loss, raises empathy and public attention.

More: www.anthonyalvarado.com

RISE TOGETHER'S 12 year Anniversary



GRATITUDE

To every student who trusted us.
To every volunteer and board member for believing in this mission.
To every educator who opened their doors.
To every donor who supported us.
To every family who reached out.
To every community that stood with us.
Thank you.
No one rises alone.
We rise, together.



RISE TOGETHER 12 YEAR CELEBRATION AT GIBSON



Nadine Machkovech,
Executive Director



Anthony Alvarado,
Founder



Meghyn Scheffler,
Program Director

2023–2024 DATA REPORT COMING

- 13,000+ students
- 26 schools
- 2,000 parents/educators
- 2,000+ pre/post-assessment responses

This next report will not just tell stories — it will show the data behind them.



Alex Schotten,
Storyteller



Brooklyn Goodlet,
Storyteller



Jessica Geschke,
Storyteller

Work With Us

“Each time we step on a stage,
open a conversation, create a safe
space, or share a story we are not
just delivering a presentation.

We are planting a seed of hope.

In a world where youth too often
feel alone, unheard, or broken —

**RISE TOGETHER stands as a
reminder: you are seen, you
matter, and there is power in your
story.**

This report shows **numbers**. But
behind each number is a **life**.

A heart. A decision to hope.

Thank you to every student,
educator, parent, community
partner, and supporter who
believed in this mission. **We rise
because you rose with us.**

And together, we will keep rising.”

— Nadine Machkovech,
Executive Director

RISE TOGETHER

Instagram: @risetogether_official

Facebook: /weallrisetogether

LinkedIn: RISE TOGETHER

YouTube: RISE TOGETHER

TikTok: RISE TOGETHER

Support our gear & mission:

www.weallrisetogether.org/shop

www.weallrisetogether.org/donate



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