



Rise Together!

RISE SUPPORT CENTRE 2023 IMPACT REPORT



A group of women, seen from the back, are holding hands in a field of tall, golden-brown grass. They are wearing white short-sleeved shirts and long, flowing pink skirts. The scene is captured in a soft, natural light, suggesting an outdoor setting. The focus is on the hands and the lower bodies of the women, creating a sense of unity and support.

Our story

RISE exists to offer unwavering support to individuals facing the uncertainty of unintended pregnancy. We recognize that this is a pivotal moment in their lives, and our purpose is to be a beacon of support throughout their journey, regardless of the path they choose.

We aspire to bridge the gap between crisis and resolution, ensuring that no one walks this path alone. Our goal is simple: to empower individuals with the knowledge that help is readily accessible, and that fear or lack of support should never dictate their choices.

We are mindful of the profound impact that pregnancy decisions can have on individuals, now and in the future, encompassing their physical, emotional,

social, and spiritual well-being. We are committed to offering ongoing care tailored to each person's unique circumstances and goals.

Our journey is ongoing, and there is always room to grow. We are committed to doing better, to reaching more individuals in need, and to ensuring that no one feels abandoned or unsupported during life's most challenging moments.

Thank you for being an indispensable part of this endeavor. Your dedication ensures that our doors remain open, our staff remains trained, and our mission remains unwavering.

**Together, we make a difference.
Together, we RISE.**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

When RISE Support Centre was founded in May 1991, our mission was to *become known* in the community as a place where individuals could come for support. Fast forward 32+ years later to where we are now, and we can certainly say that we are accomplishing our mission statement! More and more clients are coming through our doors, and more and more families are being impacted positively through the work of RISE. Many have heard of us through word of mouth, our website, or by referral by other community agencies. We have *become known* as a safe and respectful place of help and healing.

As the needs are increasing in our community, our client base has grown to unprecedented numbers. Staff have made assessments and have realized that we need to do more. We have added new programs and initiatives to our pre-existing ones, including mental health support and the new car seat program. All of these initiatives, and more, are made possible through your support.

We are so appreciative of your donations of practical items and funds. These are what help us to continue to do what we do. Please consider continuing to donate items from our care package list. Please consider becoming a monthly donor. Please keep spreading the word about RISE. Please continue to pray for our clients, staff and volunteers.

Let's continue to work together to help RISE be known in our community! God bless you all.



Sarah Rytönen,
Chair of the Board



Cheryl Lindquist,
Executive Director

This year was an exciting one at RISE!

We were able to meet the growing needs of our clients in new and empowering ways. During 2022, we became increasingly aware of a growing need for maternal mental wellness support and that our clients' preference was to be supported in this way at RISE. Through the help of two generous grants, we were able to launch RISE Together, a program focusing on maternal mental wellness; and NEST Mentoring, to help clients set and achieve goals. Both programs have been transformative to our clients, and we are so inspired by them as they rise up and face the challenges in their lives.

Throughout 2023, we put considerable time, effort, and resources into improving our ongoing support programs. The reason for that is heartbreakingly simple, and comes from our post-abortion clients. One of my clients shared, "If I only knew how much support I could've had, I never would've gone through with the procedure. Instead of holding my child I'm left holding the broken pieces of my heart".

That motivates us to do better. To provide long term support. To get the word out that help is available.

It's not enough to only be there during a pregnancy test or decision making. We have to show up no matter the outcome of that pregnancy. We have to fill the gaps so clients can navigate the unexpected with support. We can do better. We need to do better.

You are such an important part of that. You make sure there is a safe place to go. You make sure there is trained staff to talk with clients in crisis. We can't care for clients without you. You make a difference and we are so thankful for you!

Our impact

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WHAT IS THE GROWING GOODNESS PROGRAM?

Growing Goodness is a comprehensive nutrition education and support program designed to nurture the health and well-being of pregnant women, new mothers, and their little ones.

Through this program, we provide essential prenatal and early childhood nutritional education, empowering mothers with the knowledge they need to make informed choices for their families. Participants can also enroll in our Practical Support Program and receive a carefully curated care package containing infant and toddler food items, ensuring access to nutritious meals from the beginning.

To alleviate financial strain, we can offer grocery gift cards, easing the burden of food insecurity and enabling families to purchase fresh, wholesome ingredients without worry.

Our commitment to holistic wellness doesn't stop there. We believe in the power of community and connection. That's why we invite moms and tots to participate in our Take Root farm program, where they have the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities like tending to a community garden and harvesting fresh, organic produce each week. Not only does this foster a deeper connection to food and nature, but it also cultivates a sense of belonging and support among participants.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Ensuring food security for pregnant women and new babies is not just essential; it's a fundamental necessity for their health and well-being. The critical period of pregnancy and early childhood lays the foundation for a lifetime of health, making proper nutrition paramount.

By prioritizing food security for this group, we invest in the future generation's health and potential. It's more than just a program; it's a commitment to ensuring every child has the best possible start in life, laying the groundwork for a healthier, happier community.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

What did you like about the farm program?

"Being outdoors -socializing :) - having [the] opportunity to pick from the garden/orchard and provide for my children and seeing goats and chickens."

"I like that I can speak to other moms and relate to them but also [my child] gets interaction and stimulation."

"Being outdoors/Fresh air. Being with other moms getting produce."

WHAT IS PREGNANCY DECISION-MAKING SUPPORT?

Pregnancy decision-making support encompasses various resources, guidance, and assistance provided to individuals who are facing decisions related to their pregnancy, primarily whether to carry to term or terminate. RISE Client Advocates offer non-judgmental, empathetic support and share information and resources to help individuals make informed decisions about their pregnancies, navigate the associated challenges and provide on-going support for all pregnancy outcomes. Pregnancy decision-making support aims to empower individuals to make informed decisions that are right for them, while also providing emotional and practical support throughout the process.

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Pregnancy decision-making support is essential because it provides individuals facing complex choices about their pregnancies with emotional support, accurate information, and access to resources. The decisions surrounding pregnancy can be emotionally challenging and overwhelming. Having a supportive network can offer reassurance, reduce feelings of isolation, and help individuals navigate their options with clarity and confidence. Additionally, this support aims to combat stigma and judgment, creating safe spaces where individuals feel accepted and understood. By offering access to reliable information, education, and practical resources, this support ensures that individuals can make informed decisions.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

*Mia's Story

Name changed for privacy.

Like many, the pandemic exposed a painful reality for Mia. The busy social life that glossed over the fracture lines in her marriage was gone, and Mia suddenly found herself alone: separated from her husband, distant from her church community, and feeling abandoned by God.

Vulnerable and wrestling with God over the outcome of her marriage, Mia began to make uncharacteristic life choices, hoping to find community and emotional support. "Looking back, I thought I was ok. But I was really broken and isolated. I felt very rejected," she says.

An unexpected pregnancy with a man who wasn't her husband was her wake-up call. A baby this way wasn't in her life plan – *none of this was.*

Panic set in and Mia struggled to find compassionate support. Her mother, more concerned about the shame her pregnancy brought on the family, suggested an abortion. And she wasn't the only one. Mia was shocked at how many women suggested this was the solution, often quietly sharing their own experiences.

She didn't feel there were a lot of options and thought the right thing to do was to make it work with her baby's father. But the relationship was so toxic. He became emotionally abusive, restricting her activities and friendships. "He was using my brokenness to control me," Mia says. "I wanted out."

It all seemed dark and overwhelming, and yet, there was a bright spot. Her Christian employers at her new job noticed her distress. When she shared her circumstances, they supported her with compassion, speaking life and truth over her. "They really received me with a lot of grace and a lot of love," says Mia. "It was a beautiful environment to be in. I believe getting that job was God preparing me...walking me into safe pastures for what was to come."

"When I found out I was pregnant, I was in a really dark place," Mia shares. "How did I get here? I felt so much condemnation and guilt. I just wanted to be in hiding. But it was never God's voice condemning me."

Her boss' wife tried to connect Mia with Rise Support Centre. "She even offered to go with me," says Mia. "But I didn't want to face their judgement. I found out later, it was completely the opposite experience. I just didn't know it then."

Mia wrestled with her options. "Over the weeks, I had started to fall in love with my child," she says. "I wasn't ready to let the baby go."

But Mia's body was changing, and she was exhausted – physically, emotionally, and mentally. She had so many questions. How would she afford a baby? Her separation wasn't final ... how would her husband react? The questions hung heavy in the air and one day her doubts won out.

She told her doctor she wanted an abortion and was given the information needed to move forward.

Alone, she entered the clinic. The lights were bright, and she could see there was effort to make the room look welcoming. Yet, to Mia, it didn't feel welcoming. "I found it was very scary. It felt dark. To me, it was like a glimpse of hell on earth," shares Mia quietly.

Sitting in the waiting room, surrounded by other women who were visibly pregnant, Mia felt very uncomfortable. "I believe it was the conviction of the Holy Spirit," she says.

Before the procedure, she spoke to a counsellor who tried to ensure she wasn't being forced unwillingly to have an abortion. The counsellor sensed her hesitation and suggested another scan of the baby. "I don't know why it was different this time," says Mia. "I had heard her heartbeat before, but this time was different; I told the counsellor that I couldn't go through with the abortion and quickly left."

"It feels like I had to go there and have that scan so I would never have any regrets about not going through with the abortion," shares Mia. "And I don't."

Remembering the other women sitting in that room, Mia says softly, "My heart felt so heavy for those women. Every single child is so special and so uniquely created no matter how they came to be."

After the clinic visit, Mia moved forward without looking back. After her daughter was born, she finally connected with Rise Support Centre. "I wish I had gone earlier," she says. "I experienced nothing but grace and love there. I met a beautiful community through the Centre."

Throughout the summer, Mia and her daughter attended the Centre's Moms & Tots at the farm – a day they both looked forward to! It has provided Mia with care packages and one-on-one support. "I have talked with my Client Advocate so much," says Mia. "They really walk with us through it all and are available any time. I'm so grateful for how they support the mothers."

As for being a single mom, Mia has zero regrets about life with her daughter. "No one hugs me the way my daughter hugs me. No one rushes toward me like my daughter does," says Mia. "No one wants me the way my daughter does. I love being a mom!"

"I want to tell others walking similar journeys that it's ok to feel scared and alone. It's heavy," says Mia. "I felt a lot of fear. A lot of shame and guilt. I didn't want to tell anyone. But you don't need to be ashamed. And you are not in this alone. It might look different than you expected, but there are resources to support single moms and families."

As Mia looks back, she can see God's redemptive thread throughout her story. "Today I feel joyful with intense gratitude for life," she says with a smile. "He's still writing my story!"



WHAT IS THE PRECIOUS CARGO PROGRAM?

We understand that transporting infants and young children safely is paramount for every parent, which is why we developed the Precious Cargo program dedicated to keeping our youngest passengers safe on the road. Through our program, new parents receive comprehensive car seat safety education, and a brand-new car seat for their child for those families struggling financially, as available.

We also partner with community organizations to host car seat clinics, offering hands-on assistance from certified technicians to ensure that car seats are installed correctly and securely.

We believe that every child deserves a secure and properly installed car seat. We want to protect the most precious cargo of all – our children – and ensure that every journey is a safe and secure one!

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

"I would like to thank you so much for helping me during this time of need! After finding out I was having triplets with my partner across the world I was worried about a few things. There were so many things I was thinking about and one of them was the cost of having to buy three car seats and strollers. What you have done for the babies and I is something I will be grateful for forever. The stroller is expensive and a big purchase that I would have had difficulty making. Thank you for taking that burden from me and being so generous to provide it for us. We love the stroller and we use it daily. It is so easy for me to take them on walks and go places. It definitely makes our lives a lot easier and has been with them everywhere they go. Thank you for helping us when we needed it the most!"

~ First-ever Precious Cargo Client

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

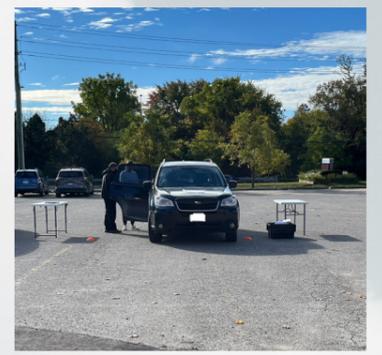
Precious Cargo is indispensable for RISE clients, especially those who are low-income or newcomers to Canada, as it addresses financial barriers by providing new car seats to those clients with difficult financial circumstances. Additionally, it addresses the knowledge gap surrounding safety regulations and best practices through comprehensive car seat safety education, empowering parents to safeguard their children on the road. This program's hands-on assistance and culturally sensitive approach at car seat clinics bridge language and cultural barriers, ensuring that all parents receive the support they need to properly install and use car seats. Precious Cargo plays a vital role in promoting child safety during travel, particularly for vulnerable populations such as low-income and newcomer families in Canada.



STEP 1:
Car Seat Safety
Presentation



STEP 2:
FREE new car seat
(as available)



STEP 3:
Attend a car
seat clinic

WHAT IS THE RISE TOGETHER PROGRAM?

RISE Together is a pilot program committed to nurturing maternal mental wellness through comprehensive support and resources.

Through therapy groups led by licensed professionals, mental wellness check-ins, and parent mentorship, we provide mothers with the tools and support they need to navigate the challenges of parenthood with resilience and strength.

Our program places a strong emphasis on education, providing workshops and resources to equip and empower mothers with the knowledge and skills they need to prioritize their mental well-being. From stress management techniques to self-care strategies, our goal is to empower mothers to thrive, both personally and as caregivers.

We believe that every mother deserves access to the support and resources necessary to thrive.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

What is one thing you will do differently because of this course?

"Have a different perspective in difficult moments and behave in ways that help me and others around me feel better."

* Funded in part by: 

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

This program is essential because it addresses the often-overlooked issue of maternal mental wellness. Pregnancy and motherhood bring significant changes and challenges, including postpartum depression and anxiety, yet there's a lack of accessible support.

RISE Together helps fill this gap. These services provide mothers with the tools and support they need to navigate parenthood and prioritize their mental well-being.

This program also creates a supportive community where mothers can connect, share experiences, and combat feelings of isolation. By fostering resilience and strength, RISE Together ensures that every mother receives the support necessary to thrive emotionally during this transformative period.

CENTRE & DONOR IMPACTS

4

New client support programs

956

Client appointments

137

Individuals & families supported

145

Children supported

PRACTICAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

135

Children aged 0-3 years are currently enrolled in support programs and receiving a monthly care package of essential items needed for their basic care (i.e., diapers, wipes, clothing, food, formula, etc.)

14,709

Essential items given out

~50

Care packages handed out per month, averaging \$100 per care package

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OUR 2023 INCOME

General	\$ 9,562
Other Charities	\$ 40,473
Campaigns	\$ 61,318
Grants	\$ 62,310
Interest Income	\$ 1,529
Monthly PAD	\$ 7,320
Misc. Income	\$ 471

Total **\$ 182,983**

2022 VS. 2023 COMPARISON

	2022	2023
Income	\$ 212,128	\$ 182,982
Expenditures	\$ 153,624	\$ 201,099

Net Income/ (deficiency) for the period **\$ 58,504** **(\$ 18,117)**

TOP 3 ON-GOING SUPPORT PROGRAMS (based on participation)



Practical Support



Moms & Tots



Growing Goodness - Take Root at the Farm

OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES

All support services and programs are free, confidential, and provided without judgment. Available services and programs include:

PREGNANCY SUPPORT



Pregnancy Tests: Free, high quality, self administered urine test. A Client Advocate will explain the test, support you in interpreting your results, and talk to you about your pregnancy rights, options, and next steps. *Test results should be confirmed medically to confirm pregnancy location, fetal heart tones and gestational age.



Pregnancy Decision-Making Support: This service provides timely care, medically accurate information, resources, and support, so you can make an informed decision about your pregnancy.



Growing Together Prenatal Support & Education: Our prenatal course will help you prepare for childbirth and your postpartum experience. You will also learn how to prepare for and transition to parenthood.

PREGNANCY LOSS SUPPORT



Perinatal Loss Support: Support is available if you self-identify as grieving a perinatal loss — from adoption, miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss. Program content, tailored to your type of loss, empowers you to understand and identify the different stages of grief and loss in a supportive environment.



Post-Abortion Support: Support is available if you self-identify as grieving a loss from abortion recently or in the past. Program content, tailored to your needs, empowers you to understand and identify the different stages of grief and loss in a supportive environment.

PARENTING SUPPORT



Moms & Tots: Join us weekly to enjoy a time of talking with other moms and learning through play with your little one. This program is free and perfect for little ones aged 0-4 years.



MPower: This summer's moms and tots program combines fitness, friends, and fresh air to boost social connection and mental health so you can feel empowered to tackle your day! Join us for stroller fit, nature walks, special guests and more!



Flourishing Family: Parenting Education & Support: Be supported as you learn and grow as a parent so your whole family flourishes! Topics covered include infant care, infant milestones, toddler care, toddler milestones, health, and safety, and more! This free program is for expectant parents and parents of little ones aged 0-4 years.



Growing & Thriving: Life Skills Education & Support: Be supported as you learn and improve essential life skills. Workshops are delivered by a trained staff member or by community leaders. Topics include hygiene, finance, nutrition, relationships, and more.

MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORT



RISE Together: This program is all about supporting prenatal and maternal mental health. You can join an on-site Cognitive Behaviour Therapy group led by a licensed psychotherapist or be supported with mental wellness check ins, parent mentors and more!

MATERIAL SUPPORT



Practical Support Program (PSP): Support is available if you are experiencing a financial hardship which is impacting your ability to afford essential maternal and baby items. This program exists to ease the additional expenses of pregnancy, as well as parenting children aged 0-3 years. You will need to be approved to participate in this program.



Growing Goodness-Nutrition Support: The Growing Goodness program provides education and resources to help you to provide nutritious food for yourself and your family. You will need to apply for the Practical Support Program to receive food items in your care package. Education is available in person or online.



Precious Cargo: This program provides car seat safety education so your little one can be safe on the road! New car seats can be provided to clients who have completed the safety education as supplies allow.

PEER MENTORING SUPPORT



NEST Mentoring (Nurture, Empower, Support, Transform): This program is perfect for you if you would benefit from mentoring in parenting or life skills. You will work with a mentor to set goals and write action plans that take into consideration all aspects of your holistic wellness to empower you to move your family from surviving to self-sustaining.



Spiritual Support & Mentoring: Learn, grow, and thrive in your faith. This client-led mentoring program provides spiritual education, resources, and support in the Christian faith. This is perfect for you if you would like one-on-one spiritual support. Mentors provide guidance, help with setting and reaching spiritual goals, resources, and referrals.

\$15,000

A month is the minimum we need in order to keep our doors open. Your donation ensures that vulnerable women, men and children in our community can continue to access quality services and programs during their crisis and beyond.

Vision

FOR THE FUTURE



Way back in the fall of 2019 the board was presented with a five-year strategic vision plan for growth that they decided to pursue. Starting in January of 2020, the centre has been diligently working towards some big growth goals. As we close out the fourth year of that plan, we have had the opportunity to reflect on the past four years and see how God has been faithful through challenges, including a pandemic! Yet, through all of that the RISE team has continued to work to fulfill the vision God has for this season of His ministry. As we now enter the fifth and final year of this vision plan we are excited to see how God will bring it to fruition! There are some BIG goals set for 2024!

Throughout this past year we have been gently reminded that God's timing is always best and when we wait for Him to move He always gives more than we expect! So as we enter 2024 please pray for our team, that we have both patience to wait on His timing and the courage to move when God says "go"!

I would love for you to be a part of the amazing thing God is doing in our community through RISE. Please pray for us faithfully and boldly, join our team of amazing volunteers, run a donation drive to help keep our cupboards stocked with items for our smallest clients or provide much needed financial support.

Join us as we stand alongside women navigating the complexities of unintended pregnancy, offering compassionate support through loss, after abortion, or the challenges of early parenting. With empathy and understanding, we provide a safe space for healing, empowerment, and growth. Let's rise together, fostering resilience and embracing every woman's journey with love, dignity and hope.

Together we RISE!

BE INVOLVED

Donate

Join us in supporting women and families, ensuring they have the resources, care, and community they need to thrive!

RISE Support Centre runs on the generous financial gifts of individuals, churches, local groups and businesses within the community. All services and programs are provided to clients completely free of charge.

Individual and Group Donations

Become a monthly donor

For more donation information, please visit our website at www.risesupportcentre.ca/2-donate

Scan to support us!



Partner Churches/Businesses

Wondering how your church or business can support RISE? Contact Cheryl, our Executive Director at exec.director@risesupportcentre.ca

Sponsor

- Client Programs
- Client Workshops or Events (grocery gift cards, Mother's Day or Christmas gifts, etc.)
- Fundraising Events
 - Flower Power - Spring event
 - Hand to Hands - Fall campaign
 - Dessert Night

Volunteer

At the centre, behind the scenes, or on our board of directors! Contact the centre to see how you can be involved and make a difference!

- Client Programs
- Fundraising Events
- Board of Directors

Thank you

OUR CHURCH PARTNERS

- Blessed Frederic Ozanam Church
- The Bridge
- Cornerstone Christian Community Church
- Eastridge Evangelical Missionary Church
- Ebenezer United Church
- Hillside Evangelical Missionary Church
- Hope Bible Church Markham
- In2one Community Church
- Langstaff Assembly
- Markham Baptist Church
- Markham Chinese Alliance Church
- Milliken Wesleyan Methodist Church
- Springvale Church
- St. Andrew's United Church
- Unionville Alliance Church

OUR SUPPORTERS

- Prayer warriors
- Financial donors
- Volunteers

OUR COMMUNITY SPONSORS

Grants:

- Alectra
- Bell Let's Talk
- Red Cross
- Telus Friendly Futures Foundation
- York Region

Local Business Partners:

- Peter and Suzie's No Frills
- Willowgrove Farm

Event Sponsors:

- Dessert Night
 - Super Swimmer Squad: Backyard Aquatics
 - Rogers Uptown Communications

Community Groups Who Organized Donation Drives:

- Markham Guild of Village Crafts
- Casting Off the Cold
- CWB Maxium Financial
- Desjardins (local group)
- Venngo