



ROOTS  WINGS  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

---

**Emerging Stronger**  
**Redefining their Futures**

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Dear Friend,

Thank you so very much for your kind and generous support. Thanks to you we can continue our mission: providing safe housing, emotional support, life skills, and educational opportunities for youth aging out of foster care; empowering them to rise toward their greatest potential.

Our agency is unique in that we operate in a manner that most nonprofits do not. We do not hold any large state or federal contracts for the services we provide, nor do we work in a fee-for-service environment. We exist predominately because of your ongoing support. Without you, we would not be able to meet the vital needs of these incredibly vulnerable young people. You are the fabric of our agency.

The onset of the pandemic brought some serious challenges as our young people shifted from in-person to online classes, lost their jobs and social connections, and once again were faced with the all too familiar feelings associated with living with uncertainty. Given the traumatic life experiences, many of our young people have endured, deep-rooted pain and fears came flooding back. Our staff has worked tirelessly to reassure each young person that they are safe. We have also provided vital PPE, food, clothing, and resources to help them make ends meet as they searched for new employment.

The young people at Roots & Wings struggle with significant learning challenges due to the trauma and neglect they have endured. We have worked to help each young person adapt to a new virtual, educational environment. We provided practical tools and coping strategies allowing them to remain engaged and productive in their studies with exceptional outcomes. We stand in awe of their resilience and determination!

In the coming pages, you will read truly inspiring stories of how our young people are emerging even stronger and redefining their futures. With deep and sincere gratitude, we thank you for being in our corner during one of the most challenging years we have ever faced and hope that you will continue to support our young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shaun J. Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Shaun J. Adams, LCSW**  
Executive Director

# Rise Program



The RISE Program provides young adults between 18 and 24 who have aged out of the foster care system in New Jersey with a stable and nurturing environment so they can pursue an education with full concentration. The RISE young adults live in the community in 2 to 4-bedroom apartments, work part-time, and graduate within 2-3 years based on their individual educational plan.

The specific goal of the RISE program is to meet any immediate needs young people have regarding housing, food, transportation, while working with them on a longer-term basis to create and execute a plan for becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of the community.

The key to our success and what is truly innovative about Roots & Wings is the way in which our RISE program is aimed at the needs of the “whole individual.” We help our young people by providing emotional support, coping skills, and life skills, with an emphasis on education, job training, and building confidence. The program also teaches responsibility, direct focus on the client’s future and potential, and addresses emotional, behavioral, and mental health issues that could be holding them back.

# Meet Our Client

## Anthony



Anthony became connected to Roots & Wings through a partnership with Montclair State University.

Anthony spent much of his childhood in different foster homes and with his biological father before starting at Montclair State and dorming there.

Anthony signed up to work with Roots & Wings for case management services and for assistance with goal setting. He has worked hard to set and achieve his academic goals with his case manager and this year, he graduated with his B.A. in Psychology from Montclair State University.

In the two years that he has worked with his Roots & Wings case manager Allison, he has gotten accepted to graduate school, located an apartment in the new city that he will be living in, learned how to manage his finances and the importance of self-care.

Anthony continues to stay in touch with us as he pursues his dream career as an Art Therapist and Counselor so that he can help others with their mental health. We are so proud of all that he has accomplished!

# Meet Our Client

## Anisa



We at Roots & Wings would best describe Anisa as resilient. It is by way of this resiliency that Anisa has built the strength and ability to continue to achieve much success at this point in her life. The continuous strides she makes as she grows both personally and as a student has not gone unnoticed by her peers as they often turn to Anisa for advice and leadership.

Anisa has been able to go through periods of maintaining two jobs, become an entrepreneur, maintain a positive social life and sustain a B average at Kean University as she attempts to achieve her degree in Social Work.

Her educational goal is to obtain her Master's degree in Social Work where she will be able to show and teach young people coming up in the foster care system the same resiliency and resourcefulness that has afforded her much success.

# Meet Our Mentor

## Jerry



Several years ago, I knew I wanted to expand my volunteer efforts. I heard about Roots and Wings from a co-worker and when he shared the Roots & Wings mission, it immediately resonated with me.

I knew I wanted to give back to the community. I feel very blessed and I wanted to help others who are not as fortunate. In 2015, I reached out to the volunteer coordinator at Roots & Wings and, after a conversation about my strengths and the organization's needs, I began training as a mentor. The young men in the program need successful male role models, and I felt confident that I could help in that capacity.

I grew up in a family that struggled financially, but I had love and support to guide me and show me the way to find happiness and success. At Roots and Wings, I have an opportunity to give some of that emotional support and stability to someone in need.

At Roots and Wings, I have an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a young person. I love being around young adults; they have so much energy and potential. While I know I can offer the knowledge I've gained from life experience to these young people, I also feel so rewarded and energized from working with them. It sounds cliché, but I truly feel that I get more out of the mentoring relationship than I give.

**Jerry**

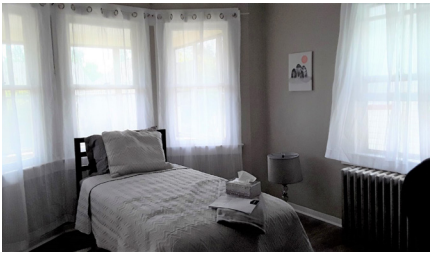
# 2020

## Program and Client Milestones



Our food pantry has helped our young people avoid food insecurity throughout the pandemic.

More than 7,500 hours of counseling and case management support helped clients maintain emotional stability.



6,050 bed nights provided by our housing program.

5 Young People graduated with their bachelor's degrees.



3 associates degrees within 1-2 semesters of completion.





3 clients graduated from the Roots & Wings program.

12 workshops provided to youth on financial literacy, nutrition, health and more.



7 clients will graduate from the program in 2021!

The FLY Program provides up to 18 months of follow along service after graduation!



Roots & Wings won Morris County Chamber of Commerce Community Impact Award in August of 2020.

# Overall Program Accomplishments



- Tara graduated with a bachelor's degree from William Paterson University with a double major in Psychology & Disability Studies while also working 2-3 jobs and maintaining a 3.9 GPA.
- Quay graduated from Montclair State University with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.
- Melony graduated from Kean University with a bachelor's degree in Psychology and is now pursuing work in her field.
- Willie graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from Montclair State University and is now working and saving for his graduation from our program.
- Sam completed her Ethician Certification and has decided to go on to pursue her associate's degree in nursing.
- Pete has maintained his employment at Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital for over a year and a half. He works on a unit with COVID-19 patients, he loves his work and has maintained his health by taking all of the necessary COVID-19 precautions. He will be continuing his studies at Fairleigh Dickenson University.

### **Some of our workshops include:**

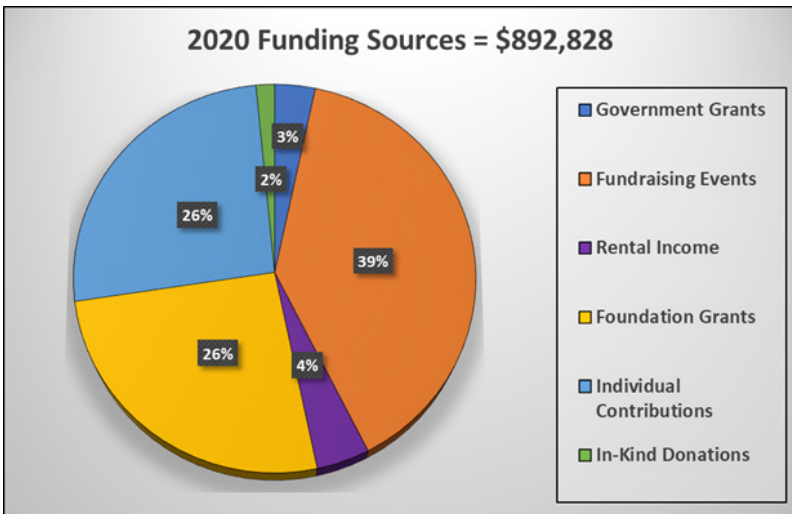
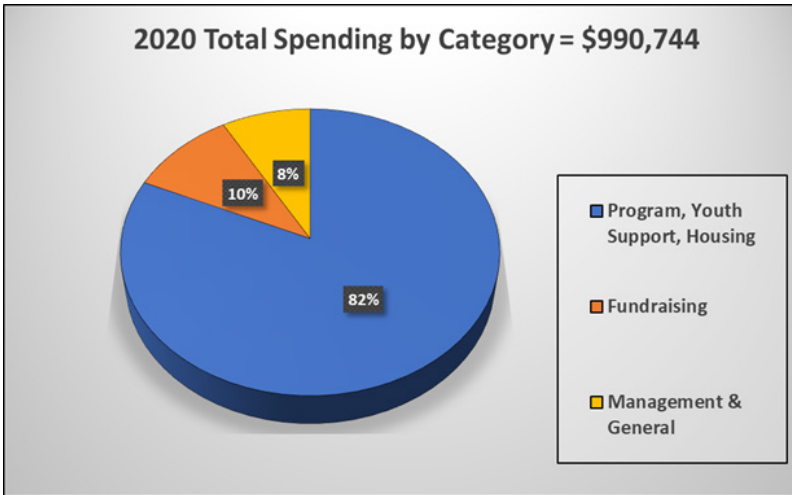
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Sound Healing
- Study, organizational & time management workshops,
- 4-part financial literacy workshop series taught by experts in the fields of finance and wealth management.
- 8-part series on holistic health, wellbeing, and self-care offered by the Morris County Chamber of Commerce “Food Fighters” initiative. The group was comprised of health and wellness professionals from various backgrounds donating their time from around the county.

### **Overall Educational Statistics:**

- 5 completed bachelor’s degrees with 2 more expected in the next year
- 3 clients enrolled in 4-year colleges with degrees expected in next two years
- 3 SORA Certificates (Security Supervisor Certificate)
- 1 Real Estate course completed
- 3 associates degrees within 1-2 semesters of completion
- 1 young person enrolled in nursing school
- 1 finishing Medical Assistant cert.
- 1 CDL near completion
- 2 Cosmetology Licenses near completion
- Graduates of our program include union carpenters, mechanics, teachers, retail managers, cosmetologists, business leaders, vet techs, real estate agents, social workers, psychologists, news correspondents, personal trainers and so much more.

# 2020

## Financial Highlights



Due to cost-cutting measures and aggressive fundraising, Roots & Wings has been able to make it through the pandemic without cutting back on services to our young people. Roots & Wings has been able to maintain a modest amount in reserve funds to protect and ensure the success of our multi-year commitment to our young adults.

# Thank you to Our Donors

Because of your dedication to our mission, we were able to serve 25 aged out foster youth this year.

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ROOTS & WINGS

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