

## A Successful Summer Benefit!



RISING TREETOPS held its 18th annual Summer Benefit on Saturday, July 20, at the home of Danielle and Eric Cohen in Rumson, New Jersey. We are grateful to all supporters of the Benefit, which raised \$130,524 in donations, the most ever.

At the Benefit, we had the opportunity to educate more friends and neighbors about the extraordinary work taking place at Rising Treetops and to celebrate our successes of the past year. The premiere of our new video was also shown, beautifully illustrating our 15-acre facility, as well as our clients, families, employees, and volunteers.

We would like to thank Bethanie Metz and her team from HunterPark and Mastershot Films for their time and expertise to produce this amazing video. Please take a moment to view the video by going to [risingtreetops.org](https://risingtreetops.org) and clicking on the Donate button.

We wish to especially thank our hosts, Danielle and Eric Cohen, for helping us inspire joy at their beautiful home and for their continued generosity. We would also like to

thank the vendors and business sponsors who donated toward the success of the evening, including: Ansell Grimm & Aaron, Daisy Chocolates, Designs by Darryn, Erbach Communications Group, et al Fine Foods, Family First Urgent Care, French & Parello Associates, Geico Oakhurst, HunterPark, Ink. Papery, Little Silver Bottle Shop, Mastershot Films, Merrick Construction Co., New Jersey Natural Gas, OceanFirst Foundation, Rayco Eatontown, Sperry Tents New Jersey, Summit Realty Services, and The Matus Law Group.

During the event, guests also purchased \$4,100 worth of raffle tickets for the annual Shore Friends raffle and donated \$74,775 to our New Bus Campaign.

## A New 14-Passenger Bus



IN ADDITION TO RAISING FUNDS for our services, we continue to raise money to help fund Rising Treetops' new 14-passenger, wheelchair-accessible bus. The bus will allow us to safely transport clients to and from our campus for care as well as bring our clients to more experiences in the community throughout the year. This new bus is essential and vital to our mission.

To date we have raised \$109,775 from 28 generous donors toward the bus, with \$32,115 still to be raised to fund the \$141,890 total cost of the bus. If you would like to support our New Bus Campaign, visit [risingtreetops.org](https://risingtreetops.org) to donate and select New Bus Campaign.

## A Newly Renovated Gym and a Beautiful New Garden



THANKS TO A GENEROUS ANONYMOUS DONOR who contributed \$160,000 to help underwrite the cost of renovating and re-equipping our gymnasium, we completed the renovations in early spring. The project included installing new floors in the main gym, adjoining multi-purpose room, hallways, showers and bathrooms, and installing central air conditioning in all of the gymnasium rooms as well as our adjoining sensory room.

In addition, a divider and two new basketball backboards were installed in the main gym. The renovations to our nearly 30-year-old Peter's Gym were much-needed and have transformed one of the most important and popular buildings on our campus!



IN LATE SPRING, thanks to the support of our board member Stan Arno and BDL Landscaping, we transformed the front of our Main House with a beautiful new garden. The creation of this garden has been funded by our Charles A. and Mary De Bare Endowment Fund, and is created in memory of our longtime board member Charles De Bare.

## Shore Friends Raffle

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS to our Shore Friends volunteers, board member Adelle Rathe and Caroline Ansell, for their dedication and tireless efforts toward another successful summer raffle, raising \$46,201 this year! Thank you also to all our hundreds of loyal raffle ticket buyers. Prizes this year included a 3-night stay at La Samanna, St. Martin, four tickets to a regular season 2024-25 Knicks game, a \$1,000 Amazon gift card, 2 nights at Loews Regency Hotel, New York, an Apple iPad Air, a \$350 gift certificate to Peter Luger Steak House, two 2025 subscriptions to Axelrod Performing Arts Center, and one classic massage at Wave Resort Spa.

## Overnight Respite in Full Swing!

RISING TREETOPS began its 2024-25 respite season on September 23. Over 36 weeks, there are 20 seven-night and 3 five-night overnight respite sessions scheduled through early June 2025. All ages, genders and special needs will be considered for placement. Most sessions have either theme days, holiday parties or off-camp trips. Respite sessions are filling up so please email [respite@risingtreetops.org](mailto:respite@risingtreetops.org) or call 732-531-0215 for more information. Please know we are now able to accept both New York OPWDD and New Jersey DDD funding year-round for eligible individuals for out-of-home respite care as a family support service in both states.

## Summer Camp 2024



RISING TREETOPS OPENED ITS 2024 SUMMER CAMP on June 14, and by the last day of camp on August 30 we held seven camp sessions with 297 campers attending the camp! The children and adult campers had an engaging and fun summer, joyfully taking part in our swimming,

sports, arts and crafts, music, drama, iPad media arts, nature/gardening, cooking, and puzzle and games therapeutic activities.

In addition to running the first full summer of our Life Experiences and Practical Skills (LEAPS) Program in all seven camp sessions, this summer was also noteworthy in that we hired 60 dedicated and dynamic summer camp staff from 19 countries, including: Poland, Australia, Colombia, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa, Jamaica, England, Scotland, Wales, Turkey, Hungary, Jordan, Guatemala, Ireland, Isle of Man, Czech Republic, India, and of course the United States.

A highlight this summer was Francois Mobasser, back for a second summer as an amazing and dedicated volunteer in our therapeutic music program, who helped lead our music activity with the LEAPS Program participants nearly every day during the first half of the summer.

## Rising Treetops Volunteers

VOLUNTEERS ARE INTEGRAL to Rising Treetops' success by generously donating their time, goods and services to help improve the quality of our buildings, grounds and activities for our summer campers and respite clients. This past year, our volunteer activities grew significantly, led by our board member Caitlin Bovo, helping us establish closer ties to the Monmouth County community.



One volunteer this summer, Keshav, really stood out. Keshav came to Rising Treetops after hearing about volunteer opportunities at his high school, Christian Brothers Academy, where he graduated in May 2024.

Prior to coming to Rising Treetops, Keshav had volunteered at other organizations in limited ways, but as he put it:

*"I wanted to work longer hours and be more part of an organization. At RTO I actually actively did work and was involved in a hands-on way that felt like I was making a difference. All the people I worked with were nice and friendly, it was like a family. There's a lot of flexibility in the volunteer options to help out. There's really something for everyone."* Keshav was such a dedicated volunteer, he volunteered 276 hours this summer, nearly every day

camp was in session, and when he had to miss a day or leave early, he would let us know and make up the missed time.

We are so grateful to have had Keshav join the Rising Treetops family this summer. Keshav is currently a freshman at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, majoring in Biology and is hoping to practice as a doctor in pediatric medicine.

## Client Stories

Rising Treetops in 2024 has returned to pre-pandemic levels of attendance in our camp and overnight respite services for adults and children with a wide range of special needs. The following provide a few examples of the need and impact our services have on our families:



### Boston, Age 13

Boston lives in Brooklyn, is diagnosed with autism and lives with his family. He first came to Rising Treetops for a summer camp session in 2023, and has now been back for several respite and two more summer sessions. According to his mother,

Boston has had life-changing experiences at Rising Treetops. He has started to discover more and make friends, which is helping him to improve his communication skills. Boston has also demonstrated improvements in his social skills, being more talkative, and explaining himself more clearly.

When he returned home from camp after his first stay at Rising Treetops, Boston's mother reported he spoke about how he interacted with other campers and staff members, and how much he enjoyed the time and activities. She also said he is now more active in school, and more relaxed. Boston's experience at RTO is a great example of how we nurture growth, and inspire confidence and joy.

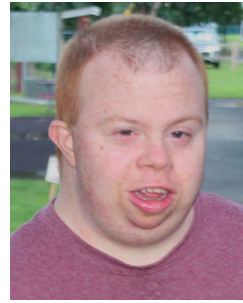


### Christine, Age 56

Christine lives in Seaford, New York, is diagnosed with cerebral palsy and has been coming to Rising Treetops for services since 1980. Year after year, Chris returns with excitement to Rising Treetops, which for her is not just a camp; it's a second home where she has made life-long friendships.

Chris was 11 when she first came to RTO and her bond with the camp runs deep. With each passing year, she eagerly embraces new experiences, and is always so happy to have the opportunity to connect with fellow campers and forge lasting bonds. Whether she's wearing costumes and bringing characters to life on stage in our drama activity, or participating in creating treats in our cooking classroom, Chris's enthusiasm is well-known to all staff and fellow campers.

Her counselor this summer commented, "Chris was always positive and chatting with everyone. She loved going swimming and to drama class". She is especially known for wanting to spend as much time as possible in our library, which also serves as a games and puzzles room. Chris has many favorite activities at RTO, and she is excited by the joy of just being at the camp.



## Matthew, Age 28

Matthew lives with his family in our community, in Oakhurst, and is diagnosed with Down syndrome. Matt has been coming to RTO since summer 2017. His parents are always close by when Matt is in our care, as he is many months of the year. His father frequently expresses

his gratitude and heartfelt words about how important RTO has become to their family, and has told our staff that our services offer not just a break but a lifeline, granting them precious moments of rejuvenation.

Matt's laugh can often be heard when he is at the camp. He is known to love our nature trails, the sensory room, iPad media arts activities, and especially being in the pool. Whenever Matt hears music, he laughs and dances. Our staff have become close to Matt and his family, and he is always welcomed back with open arms.

## From the Desks of the President and Executive Director

It has been a great year so far for Rising Treetops. As this newsletter details, at the start of 2024, our Peter's Gym was under extensive renovations and we launched a New Bus Campaign to raise funds to purchase a new \$140,000 14 passenger wheelchair-accessible bus. It was also the first full year since 2019 we had all our services fully re-opened after the COVID-19 pandemic.

We again this year remain incredibly grateful to the dedicated team of direct support professionals who live on our campus to provide care for our clients in a safe and nurturing environment, as well as all of our other full-time and part-time staff, and our dedicated volunteers, including our 19-person board of directors who make our important work possible.

With all our services growing each season, donations are needed now more than ever. Costs continue to rise for staffing, meals, transportation, equipment and materials for therapeutic recreational activities, utilities, and upkeep and cleaning of all 12 buildings at the facility. Many of our families continue to need scholarships to be able to access our services.

The New Bus Campaign and the Peter's Gym renovations cost over \$300,000, nearly all of which that has been raised to date was covered through private donations. We could not have completed this critical work without the generous support of our dedicated community of supporters.

Over the coming year Rising Treetops will need to renovate our Peter's Cabin, purchase a new client transit van, and improve and expand housing for live-in staff, as well as expand staffing to help the organization grow with the continued high quality of our services and facilities as our main priority.

If you are able to support Rising Treetops' critical services this fall and holiday season, please use the enclosed reply card or visit [www.risingtreetops.org/donate](http://www.risingtreetops.org/donate).

Thank you for your commitment and generosity.

**Marilyn Friedman, President**  
**Robert Pacenza, Executive Director**



Inspiring confidence and joy  
in those with special needs

For more information, please contact:

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