

EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH STEM EDUCATION, MENTORSHIP & OPPORTUNITY

Dear Friends of Rise High,

The 2025-2026 Rise High year—our ninth in operation—marked our second year supporting seven student cohorts. Having achieved this original vision, we have truly found our rhythm. Thanks to the steady commitment of our supporters this past year, we delivered transformative STEM experiences to 126 active scholars and celebrated 18 ambitious graduates—all while keeping our program 100% free for every student.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support of local foundations, individuals, and technical corporations for the last nine years. To ensure long-term stability and meet public support requirements, we are actively broadening our funding base by expanding our local community partnerships. This strategic diversification ensures Rise High remains a resilient, permanent asset for our community's youth.

Our team of dedicated weekly staff and volunteers continues to grow, reaching 45 people last year. With nearly all of our team returning each year, our Saturday morning operations continue to run smoothly and we now have the capacity to enhance what we do with even more engagement and relationship building.

I am profoundly grateful to share this mission to inspire students toward rewarding STEM careers. I look forward to celebrating 10 years of the Rise High program in 2027 with all of you!

Thank you for empowering our students to dream big and reach high.

Gretchen R. Belanger

Gretchen Belanger, Executive Director



riseHIGH

**2025/2026
ANNUAL REPORT**

Our mission is to provide sustained exposure to diverse enrichment learning opportunities in STEM to under-resourced youth in our community via comprehensive approaches that address and overcome barriers to academic, personal, and wellness development.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mark Little, Board President & Co-Founder
Andrea Schmitz, Vice President
Shane Bargy, Treasurer
Terri Little, Secretary & Co-Founder
Jeannine Plis
Angela Trudell

KEY STAFF

Gretchen Belanger, Executive Director
Jennifer Jennings, Associate Director

CURRICULUM LEADS

Chris Andersen, 6th & 7th Grades
Jillian Baird, 8th & 9th Grades
Hilary Dee, 11th & 12th Grades
Cynthia Lee, 10th Grade



430 Franklin Street
 2nd Floor
 Schenectady, NY 12305

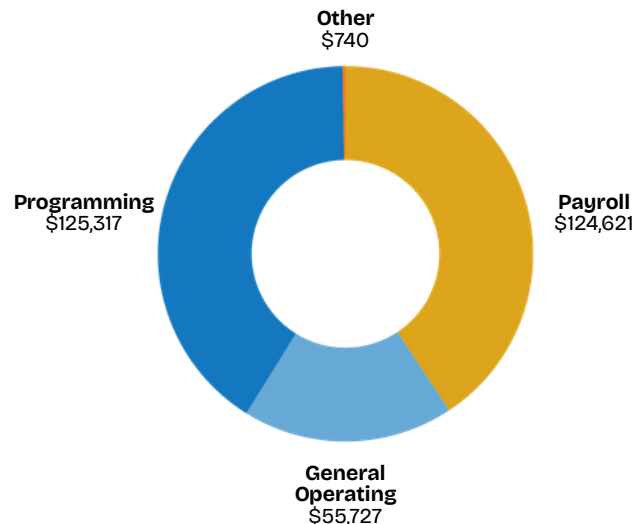
KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH RISE HIGH!



"Rise High has exceeded every expectation we had when we began this journey and we are continually inspired by our students, their families, and our dedicated staff and volunteers. Most of all, we are deeply grateful for the generosity of our community."

- Mark & Terri Little,
 Co-Founders of Rise High

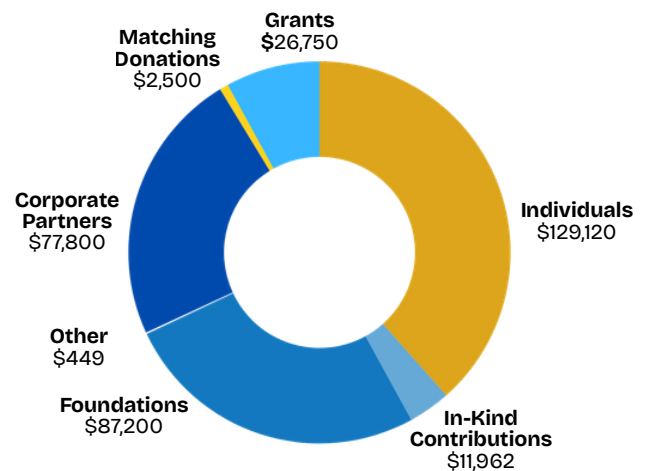
Where Our Money Goes



Expenses

Over the 2025/2026 fiscal year, Rise High spent roughly \$306,405. Our expenses cover the cost of staff, including Curriculum Leads and Classroom Managers, lesson supplies, student meals, renting the school building, bus services, and—most importantly—our programming.

How We Make Rise High Possible



Income

Rise High is only possible through the dedication and commitment of our community. Our volunteer mentors donate their time, talent, and expertise. Our corporate partners share instructors, staff, and monetary donations. Grants and donations from area foundations, families, and partners ensure that Rise High is able to continue impacting the lives and futures of our students. Thank You!

Our Students

During the 2025/2026 Program Year, we saw:

- 126 students enrolled
- 75% average attendance
- 95 students attend per week

Our Parents

100% of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with our program

90% have seen an improvement in their child's attitude

87% see increased interest in STEM

90% see interest in pursuing STEM careers

*39 responses

We celebrated the graduation of our Class of 2026 with 18 students.

Class of 2026

- 78% of the students are pursuing careers in STEM
- 100% graduated High School
- 89% are pursuing college/trade schools



Girls in STEM

During the 2025/2026 program year, Rise High partnered with RPI to conduct research about the barriers to STEM for girls and young women. 101 Rise High students were surveyed, of both genders and all grades, and a follow-up discussion was held with 11th and 12th grade female students.



237 Students have been impacted since the start of Rise High



Rise High has shown me how few women in STEM there are...This has helped push me to work towards being an architect so that one day I may be able to help inspire little girls to follow the STEM path too.

- Graduating Senior, Class of 2026

Thank You to our generous partners!

Rise High would not have the impact we do without the support of our partners, community members, and area businesses. We appreciate all that you do and the profound effect your giving has in the lives of our students.

Donor Information July 2025 to June 2026

\$50,000+

Mark and Terri Little
Wright Family Foundation

\$15,000+

Shirley Miller
GE Aerospace
GE Vernova
GlobalFoundries
Regeneron
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
- (Luce Foundation Subgrant)

\$5,000+

Chatter Foundation
Fenimore Asset Management
Stephen and Judith Pagano
RPI Engineering Ambassadors
Schenectady County Youth
Bureau

\$1,000+
Broadview Federal Credit Union
First Reformed Church
of Schenectady
GE Aerospace Foundation
Homestyle Pizza
Price Chopper - Market32
Schenectady Rotary Club Foundation
Andrea Schmitz
The Sookra Family
Gary Wood

Other Amounts

Shane Bargy
The Chance Family
Bob CuvIELLO
The DePhillips Family
Brian Flynn
Hannaford
IBM
Jolina Kerr
Niskayuna Rotary Club
Anna Phan
Jeannine Plis
Leonard Rowe
Jeanne Ryan
Orlando Castillo Scheren
The Shivrattan Family
Chris Snyder
Stewart's Foundation
Stewart's Shops
STS Steel
Mary Therriault
Angela Trudell
Adam Vetser



Our Corporate Partners play an essential role in advancing the mission of Rise High, and we are profoundly grateful for their commitment. Their investments help expand opportunities for our students, while their employees generously share their expertise as mentors, volunteers, and instructors throughout the year. Corporate Partners help shape the future, strengthen our community, and inspire the next generation of leaders.

Experience **riseHIGH** at our Open House

Saturday, November 7th
11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Rise High is more than a program - it's a community invested in helping students discover their strengths and reach their potential.

Join us for our Open House to meet the people who make Rise High possible, and hear from the students at the heart of our mission.

**Come see the difference
our community can make.**

RSVP by October 30th by using our
QR Code or emailing us at
info@risehighstem.org.



We have many ways to give!

Your donations have a direct impact on our program. We accept financial contributions and the purchase of supplies through our Amazon and Walmart wish lists.

Learn more at
RiseHighStem.org/give

