CASE STUDY

RISE for Youth

How RISE for Youth Rose to the Challenge to Empower Virginia’s Youth
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Started with Network for Good: January 2020

THE CHALLENGE

RISE for Youth is an advocacy-focused organization based in Richmond, VA, that is committed to dismantling Virginia’s youth prison model by promoting the creation of community-based alternatives to youth incarceration.

Prior to serving as RISE’s first Executive Director, Valerie Slater was a Juvenile Justice Attorney with Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC). She coordinated RISE’s initial efforts while it was housed in the JustChildren Program of LAJC, before recognizing a need to spin off the mission into a separate organization.

A lifelong advocate for justice, Valerie brought an unwavering commitment to strengthening youth and communities to her newly established nonprofit organization. She had a vision for change, knew ‘the system’ very well, but as an attorney by trade and novice fundraiser, she needed to build fundraising capacity. She didn’t know where to start in wading through the “foreign language” of donor engagement, share the need for RISE’s services and, ultimately, raise unrestricted funds from a broader community, to realize that change.

Such capacity improvements were critical to sustaining and growing her budding organization, while centering the voices of impacted youth and communities and challenging systemic racial injustice in Virginia.

"The idea that someone who has never done individual fundraising could learn these skills and reach their goals is wonderful. Whenever I draft something, I know I can send it to my coach, Frank. I know I have a whole team of people at Network for Good who are ready and willing to help. How amazing is that? This is incredible for nonprofits like ours.”

Valerie Slater
Executive Director
THE STRATEGY

In late 2019, Valerie applied for and received a micro-grant from the Robins Foundation to enroll in Jumpstart, a fundraising capacity building program managed by Network for Good, that provides nonprofit grantees with technology and a Personal Fundraising Coach to strengthen fundraising capacities.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Valerie set two goals:

1) To distribute nutritious food to support the immune systems of 75 families of color who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and;

2) To raise funds for Rise for Youth’s inaugural Youth Development Academy.

In working with her Personal Fundraising Coach, Frank, and leveraging the technology afforded by the Jumpstart Program, Valerie has gained the confidence and technical acumen to use her natural skills and translate them into fundraising assets – “Network for Good has been life changing for me and my novice fundraising skills!”

In order to reach these goals, and in working with Frank, Valerie engaged her advisory council and staff in a peer-to-peer campaign in July – the Virtual Justice Parade.

“When the pandemic hit, we focused on developing kits for people in our community to learn how to keep their immune systems strong, including healthy food and recipes. We set out to raise $2,000 – my very first attempt at individual fundraising – and were thrilled when we reached that goal.”

Her increased confidence has helped Rise for Youth build significant fundraising capacity in just six months (see below for her accomplishments). She is now looking to build out her text-to-give program and is exploring a virtual event before year-end.

“We are currently launching a new monthly communication for our supporters. This fall will be my first year-end fundraising campaign and I am so glad I have the opportunity to work with my fundraising coach as we prepare. I cannot say enough about what an amazing help [Frank] is to me and how he jump-started my fundraising!”

Well done, Valerie! We look forward to seeing your accomplishments in the rest of your Jumpstart experience and are humbled to be supporting your work in promoting equity and racial justice in Virginia.

RESULTS

Starting from scratch, Valerie raised over $4,000 in the first two months of Jumpstart

Surpassed their #GivingTuesdayNow (May 5th, 2020) goal by 33%

Far exceeded their $10,000 goal for the Virtual Justice Parade, raising $56,000 from 238 individual donors and one foundation