

# 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

## PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### AGE

2% 18-24  
32% 25-44  
41% 45-59  
26% 60+

### GENDER

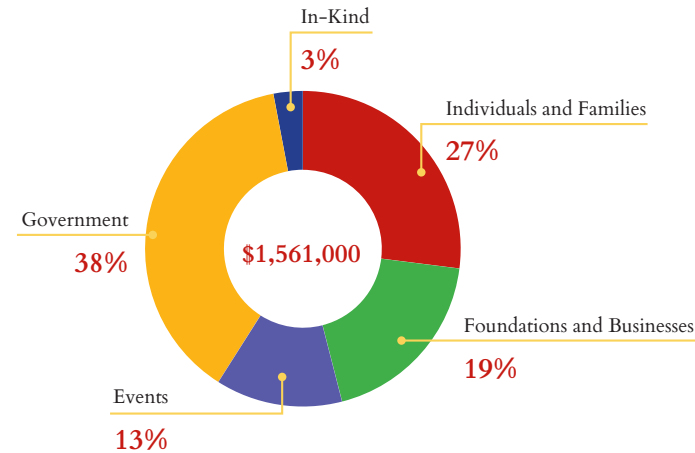
422 Women  
19 Transgender/Nonbinary  
5 Unknown/Undisclosed  
2 Other Specific Identities

### RACE/ETHNICITY

42% White  
34% Black  
15% Other/unknown  
9% Latina/o

## REVENUE

(UNAUDITED)



EXPENDITURES: \$1,418,000 | 73% Personnel Cost



## ON THE RISE

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### Executive Director

Martha Sandler

### Director of Programs

Charyti Reiter

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Dear Friends:

It's painful to reflect on the year behind us. Over 530,000 dead in the US from the pandemic. Outrages of racial injustice compounded by the killing, by police, of George Floyd and others. A bitterly divided presidential election, followed by a violent attack by our own citizens on the seat of government. Weary months still ahead, of separation and masks, with many risks still unknown, even as vaccines roll out. What lessons can we take from all this suffering and loss? What can we glean from these dark days, to make a better future?

The lessons aren't new, but they have been brought home to us at On The Rise, like never before:

**Generosity.** Even as your own pandemic crisis unfolded - loneliness and exhaustion, jobs and businesses at risk, children's education disrupted, illness and death, friends and family cut off - you, our community of support, gave generously to continue On The Rise's essential work. Your generosity let us: raise a tent in our parking lot and meet program participants outdoors - rent an additional indoor space in fall and winter - add full time cleaning resources to our Safe Haven spaces - and send out financial aid to hundreds of individuals when we could not give out food, clothes, and toiletries in person. Most of all, you let our staff keep working safely: from their homes and in-person, throwing out lifeline after lifeline of support and advocacy, to 448 program participants. We heard from many of you that your own struggles exposed the gaping cracks in our systems, and gave you a fresh perspective on our program participants' struggles. As we move forward, we'll remember how generosity to those with the fewest options helps all of us have more options.

**Relationships.** The signature of the pandemic year was: separation. Everyone was affected - when trouble came and there was no one to console and help us - when there was something to celebrate and we couldn't be together - when we couldn't be with loved ones in sorrow and need. Authentic, caring, constructive relationships have always been at the core of On The Rise's programming, and 2020 was the year that "why we do what we do, the way we do it" resonated more forcefully than ever. It was On The Rise's relationships that made it possible to reconnect with so many program participants, when the congregate setting of the Safe Haven was suddenly no longer a gathering place, after 25 years of being the fundamental jumping-off point for our support and advocacy. It's these relationships that will be the seeds of reconnection and renewal of community in the days to come.

**Community.** The On The Rise community was created to be the "mortar between the bricks," cementing together services and programs, for homeless women who had fallen through the cracks. In 2020, we saw the cracks in our systems gaping - not only shelters and housing - but schools, employment, healthcare, law enforcement, elections, and more - systems that call for a large sense of community and common purpose to hold them together. Building community is what we do at On The Rise, and last year was a lesson in how much more is needed.

With these renewed lessons of **generosity, relationships, and community** - and with great gratitude for your support - we celebrate survival, starting 2021 strong, and looking ahead to building our future together.



## THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT FROM GENEROUS CORPORATE SPONSORS



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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

**Martha Sandler**  
Executive Director

Two words: No job. I work in culinary – cooking and prepping, everything but washing dishes. I came out as transgender and they started cutting my hours back and back. I would train somebody and they would give that person my hours. It was employment discrimination, but what could I do? I lost my Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) card.

I've been coming to On The Rise since about 2016. I spoke to someone at Fenway Health and they recommended it here. I came for a few months, then took a few months off. When I came back I was surprised everyone remembered me.

During COVID I was out in Western Massachusetts staying with someone, and it was a complicated situation, it was abuse. On The Rise got me a ticket for the bus and an Uber and got me back to Boston. I feel better here. I am a spring chicken, so the problem now is the cold.

This year and for many years, On The Rise has given me gift cards to help me buy food, came to court with me, advocated for me and made sure people use the correct pronouns when talking about me, and helped me get clothing that's right for me. On The Rise and Fernanda have helped me keep my sanity intact. If she wasn't here, I would most likely be dead.

I'm staying in the shelter this week; I received a letter that I am on top of the waitlist for housing. Recently I've gotten into a good relationship. I was interviewed for my LPR card replacements, and I won't be charged to replace it, but it won't come for almost a year. It's beneficial in a whole bunch of ways – insurance, name and gender transition, food stamps, and employment.

In 2020, 12% of On The Rise program participants identified as LGBTQ+

17% identified as immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers

On The Rise intentionally cultivates long relationships, to match the timeline of program participants' challenges

Length of Relationship	% of Program Participants
0-5 Years	48%
6-10 Years	25%
11-15 Years	15%
6-25 Years	12%

With participants' transportation options limited by the pandemic, in 2020 On The Rise spent \$10,652 for 500 instances of travel assistance

The pandemic disrupted food pantries, and reduced capacity to collect and distribute tangible goods; On The Rise distributed \$21,815 in gift cards for food and essentials

On The Rise provided court and other legal-related advocacy to 85 participants in 2020

On The Rise seeks to work with individuals with the fewest options. Among 2020's participants:

83% Reported a disability

80% Were the victim of a crime

74% Disclosed trauma

72% Had issues with mental health

42% Had past or present substance use struggles

35% Shared physical health challenges

21% Had been incarcerated

Of 2020's 448 program participants, 125 were in emergency shelter for most of the year, 207 were housed, 24 were unsheltered, 19 were marginally housed, and housing status was unknown for 73 participants

The first few weeks of the pandemic were the most frustrating, because everything that was happening with Sapphire, domestic violence, her being out in Western Massachusetts, was the later part of March and the early part of April. Every day I was calling domestic violence shelters, calling the state-wide hotline SafeLink to try to find a shelter for her, and just kept hearing the same thing, "we aren't accepting anyone." When I finally did find a shelter opening, we couldn't get her there. In the area where she was, it was hard to even find an Uber that would pick her up.

Sapphire is more tech savvy, but for some of our participants it is very challenging. They can answer a phone but otherwise nothing. We spent a lot of the year trying to get participants on conference calls and into Zoom meetings so we could advocate for them and support them.

Everything about COVID made things more challenging for advocacy. Agencies and organizations that we usually work with weren't open or open limited hours. We were used to going everywhere with participants and suddenly we couldn't go to the doctor's appointment, the meeting with another organization, because only one person at a time could be there. We are at a better point now, but for a lot of 2020, we all had to make big adjustments; we just kept trying to figure out how to support our program participants.

When you think of someone like Sapphire, going through what she is still going through – no money, no job, no way to get a job, going through her transition – the challenges she has – imagine if she hadn't had On The Rise to help with resources and support.

