

# WE RISE INTERNATIONAL

## WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Empowering the World  
with Health and Hope

## Updates & Events

**Support Groups and individual counseling in Spanish** are underway after the holiday break. Partners who host the groups include a local high school, low-income housing for older adults and a Brethren church and community center. The **Churches Care online course** is educating and encouraging participants to make their congregations better able to support those facing mental health and substance abuse challenges.

### Open Streets Lancaster

May 9, 2026, Water Street, Lancaster, PA

We Rise is pleased to join in Lancaster Rec's 11<sup>th</sup> annual event. Open Streets "is part of a broad effort to encourage physical activity, re-imagine the City as a place to walk and bike for transportation, help people meet, and steward meaningful social connections."

### Interns for 2026-2027

**Contact We Rise if you are a bilingual Spanish/English counseling or social work student interested in a practicum in summer 2026 or the 2026-27 school year.**

**More information:**

**email: [Janelle@weriseinternational.org](mailto:Janelle@weriseinternational.org)**

**[weriseinternational.org/join-our-team](https://weriseinternational.org/join-our-team)**

### Get Involved

Volunteers welcome!

- remote or in person -

[weriseinternational.org/join-our-team](https://weriseinternational.org/join-our-team)

[coordinator@weriseinternational.org](mailto:coordinator@weriseinternational.org)

### Turn the page

Tiny Trees of Hope  
featured volunteer

### Read the article

in Authority magazine

*Raising Resilient Kids:*

*Janelle Bitikofer Of We Rise  
International on Strategies for  
Nurturing Emotional Strength  
in Children*

at this link

<https://tinyurl.com/478abt8k>

or scan the QR code





### Celebrating past Interns!

Rebecca Mohr, a Millersville University Bachelor of Social Work Practicum Student at We Rise for Summer 2022, has gone on to complete a Master's in Social Work from the University of Kentucky. She now works as a trauma therapist at Integrate Therapy and Wellness Collective. Janelle was glad to run into her at the Gifts That Give Hope fair and catch up.



Thank you...

to everyone supporting We Rise to strengthen communities' support for those responding to mental health and substance abuse challenges.

[weriseinternational.org/donate](https://weriseinternational.org/donate)

Thank you... ♥



**Much Gratitude to Linda Porter** whose volunteer efforts for We Rise allow us to be represented well in many ways!

Photos here are of Linda in action preparing trees of hope for the Gifts That Give Hope fair, for which she also created earrings and necklaces to sell, and interacting with young visitors, planting seeds and talking about mental health self-care at our table at Open Streets Lancaster.

Linda writes for the newsletter, helps with trainings, and reaches out to church leaders about the Churches Care online course.





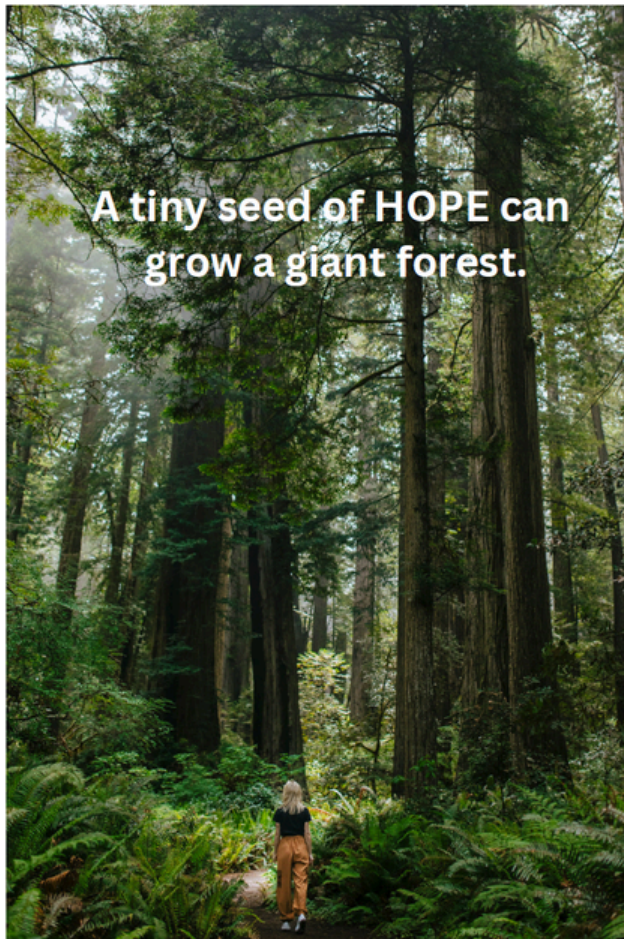
# Tiny Trees of Hope

by Janelle Bitikofer

Growing up in Oregon on the U.S. west coast, I was always inspired walking through the towering evergreen forests not far from my home. Miles of ancient evergreens, hundreds of feet tall, march across the mountains and valleys of Oregon, Washington, and California and down to the shores of the wild Pacific Ocean. Amongst those ancient forests you'll find hundred-year-old fir, hemlock and spruce trees, and the giant coast redwoods and sequoias – the largest trees in the world.

Standing among those enormous trees provides clear perspective. No matter how big or powerful we humans may be, in those forests we are tiny. Miniscule. Like ants passing through a forest of grass. Beneath the canopy of the trees, ferns and other green plants grow in abundance. Humans can't help but feel the enormity of life all around them there. In those forests, people don't walk looking at the ground. Even first-time visitors walk looking up.

I have always been inspired by how these giant trees, some of the biggest living things on earth, start their life. They grow from a tiny seed that falls from a pinecone and it sprouts at the base of the mother tree as a tiny sapling, no bigger than a small child's finger with an itty-bitty sprig of green on top. That sapling grows, several feet per year, year after year, sometimes for centuries. It becomes one of the tallest, strongest, oldest, most invincible, most beautiful living things on earth.



## Planting seeds of hope

*Hope* is like those evergreen saplings. It starts out small but, if watered, it grows.

In our world today where loneliness, sadness, anxiety, and grief affect millions of people; where more than 44,000 Americans each year end their lives by suicide; where many people struggle to find love and light in the dark and cold of winter... Here - a tiny seed of *Hope* can go a long way and begin to change a life.

So, this past Christmas holiday season, We Rise added *Tiny Trees of Hope* to our holiday Christmas fair sale offerings. They were tiny live Christmas tree saplings – some rather “Charlie Brown-ish,” that our team planted in pots and decorated with tiny Christmas lights. A gift of Hope (cont.)



## Tiny Trees of Hope (cont.)

for people who needed a little love and cheer this winter or a reminder that *Hope* starts small, but grows.

They were a hit at the Christmas fair!

“Give one to your loved one at the retirement community; one to your friend who lives alone;

one to someone you know who’s in the hospital; or your colleague who has to work during the holidays...” the list of people who might need a tiny tree of hope, seemed endless.

Whether it was the spruce saplings or the foot-tall baby redwood tree, people understood the message. Like the giant evergreens of the Pacific Northwest that grow from the smallest of pinecone seeds.... just a tiny seed of hope can grow into a forest.

Just one tiny tree, decorated with lights and given in love, can make a difference in someone’s life during the dark and cold of winter.

Next holiday season, we hope you’ll share a *We Rise International Tiny Tree of Hope* with someone you love!

But for now, as winter presses on, let’s remember that *big hope grows from a tiny seed*. Think of ways you can let more hope grow in your own life and what small actions you can use to plant seeds of hope in the lives of those around you. People you know may be sad, lonely, anxious, or grieving. They would welcome an hour chat over coffee, a phone call or a note, a pizza or a casserole dropped off during an overwhelming week.

With little effort we can each plant a few seeds of *Hope* that can grow into a giant forest.

