

# WE RISE INTERNATIONAL

## SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



Empowering the World  
with Health and Hope

## Updates & Events

As Open Streets Lancaster began under light rain, Janelle, Linda H and Linda P prepared for passersby to plant marigold seeds in cups to carry home. **May is Mental Health Awareness Month and the invitation was to tend the seeds to rise from the dark soil and bloom!** (photos above & on page 2)

### 2026-2027 Internship Openings

We Rise has **practicum placements for bilingual Spanish / English counseling or social work students** available in the 2026-2027 school year.

More information:

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

### Get Involved

Volunteers welcome!

- remote or in person -

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

join-our-team

email: coordinator

@weriseinternational.org

### Turn the page

- Learn about the new Creative Connections Initiative to counter loneliness
- Meet Jasmine Ramos, Summer Intern with We Rise
- More photos from Open Streets

## Thank you!

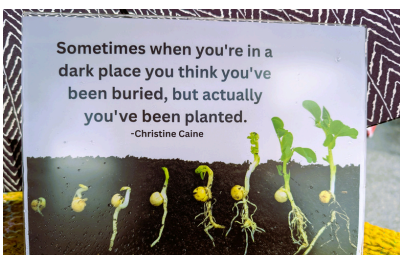
to everyone supporting We Rise to strengthen communities' support for those responding to mental health and substance abuse challenges.

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



**We welcome Jasmine “Jazzy” Ramos**, a recent Bachelor of Social Work graduate from Millersville University, to her summer practicum with We Rise. She is passionate about disability advocacy, mental health awareness, community building, and creating spaces where people feel seen, valued, and supported. In addition to her work in social services and volunteer leadership, she is a writer, podcast host, and community organizer who loves using storytelling and honest conversations to inspire growth and connection. Jasmine says she is “excited to be part of We Rise International and look(s) forward to connecting with others who are committed to making a positive impact in the world.”

Jasmine’s encouraging, informational posts will be appearing on the We Rise International Facebook page.



**Open Streets Lancaster** 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.

# Countering Loneliness: Creative Connections Initiative

by Linda Porter

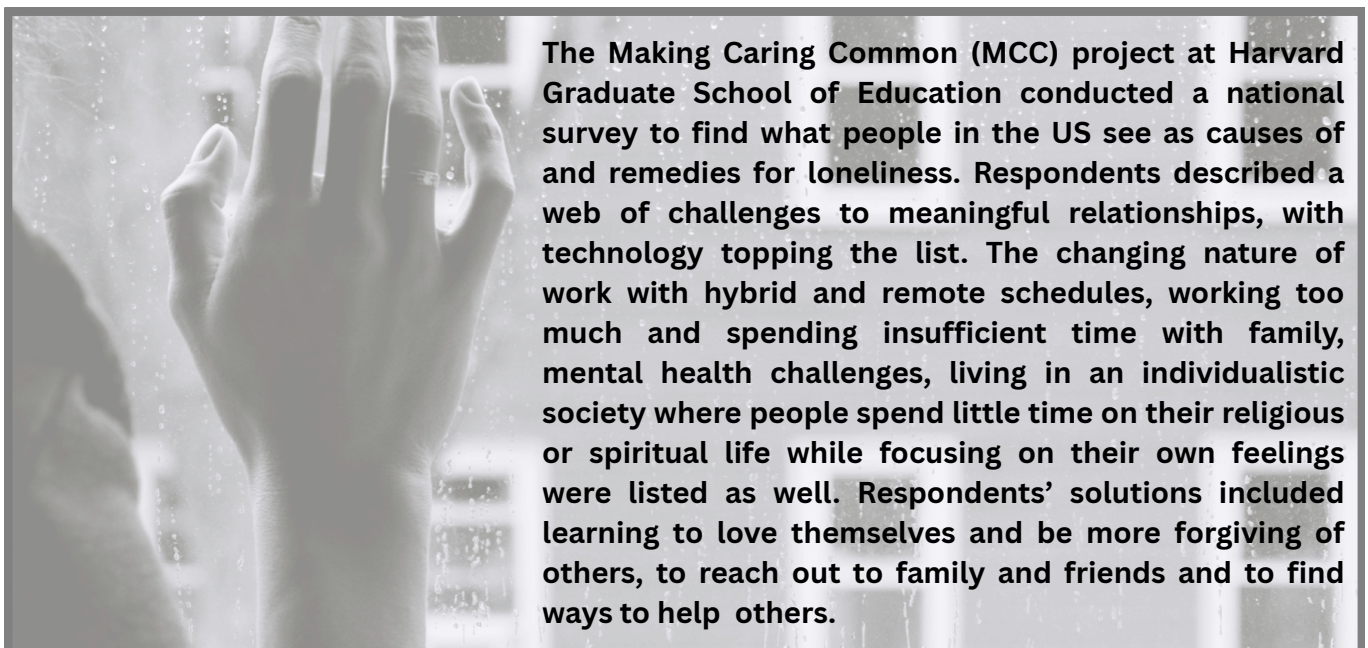
Loneliness touches nearly all of us at some point in our life. We know the feeling – but what is it? Do we always recognize it in ourselves? Can we even admit to feeling it?

At its most basic, loneliness is the lack of a sense of connection and community that causes us to feel isolated and alone. Loneliness is not solitude, the choice to spend time alone for personal pursuits or to rest and reset. Loneliness can feel draining, distracting and upsetting while solitude can feel peaceful, creative and restorative. Loneliness can be a quiet ache of feeling unseen, even in a crowd or with family members.

Jeremy Nobel, MD describes the uncomfortable feeling of a gap between the connections we want with others and the connections we have as a universal human emotion, an experience that crosses age, gender, income, or cultural differences. The sense of inadequate meaningful connections is a distressing experience. Yet, loneliness is more than a bad feeling. In his book, *Project Unlonely*, Nobel claims loneliness is now at the level of public health crisis.

Loneliness has been linked to physical, social, emotional, and mental health, as a contributing factor to stroke, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and dementia. People struggling with loneliness may have an increase in depression and anxiety and a lack of meaning or purpose. Recent research focuses on changes in brain chemistry in lonely individuals and its impact on overall health and day-to-day functioning. Loneliness represents a major health risk for society as well as for individuals. In 2023, the US Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, declared it a national epidemic.

There is too much at stake to ignore the experience of loneliness. But where do we start?  
(cont.)





### Creative Connections Initiative (cont.)

If feeling unseen and a missing sense of connection and community are at the root of a sense of isolation, then the remedies involve developing meaningful relationships. Becoming aware of and admitting to loneliness are first steps toward change. Professionals can help navigate current stresses. Change may also involve finding a group where people are interested in

being authentic and sharing some aspect of their life with others. Nobel's *Project Unlonely* looks at ways for groups of people to engage in creative self-expression as a way to form meaningful relationships.

We Rise is working on a Creative Connections Initiative as a step to reduce loneliness in the Lancaster, PA community. *Project Unlonely* and a local artist's open studio night inspired the project, still in the development stages. Staff are in the process of sharing the vision for building connections through creative and artistic endeavors with potential hosts. A primary focus is bringing people together in a monthly gathering to share their talents and build community with each other. If you are interested in learning more about the Creative Community Initiative or being involved in the Lancaster group, be in touch with Linda at [Coordinator@WeRiseInternational.org](mailto:Coordinator@WeRiseInternational.org).



Nobel, J. M. (2023). *Project Unlonely, Healing our Crisis of Disconnection*. New York: Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.  
Ross, E. M. (2024, October 25). What is Causing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and How Can We Fix It? from Harvard Graduate School of Education: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/24/10/what-causing-our-epidemic-loneliness-and-how-can-we-fix-it>

### Mental Health Moment: Shake It Off!



“Did you know that one minute of shaking releases more stress than a 30-minute walk?? Sounds ridiculous. But your body stores stress physically – not just mentally. Animals shake it off instinctively after danger. Watch a deer after a near miss. Watch a dog after a confrontation.

“Their nervous system discharges the tension and moves on. We don't. We hold it. In our jaw, our shoulders, our chest. For hours. Days. Years.

“This is what polyvagal theory calls an incomplete stress response – the threat ended, but your system never got the memo. 60 seconds of shaking sends that memo.

“Muscle tension drops. Cortisol clears. Your vagus nerve signals safety. Your breathwork hits deeper afterward.”  
-Mark Hughes Breathwork on Facebook