

WE RISE INTERNATIONAL

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER



**Empowering the world
with health and hope.**

Updates & Events

Gifts That Give Hope: We Rise is again participating in the annual gift fair, now in its 19th year of creating a unique shopping event built by the community, for the community. This year, during Fair Trade Month!

Support We Rise by shopping at the We Rise table!

giftsthatgivehopelancaster.org/pages/giftfair

Saturday, Oct 10 - 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Farm & Home Center, 1383 Arcadia Rd, Lancaster, PA

We Rise Initiative Creative Connections Initiative is under way, inviting all who want to create in company and countering the loneliness epidemic. Bring an art project and join other creative adults on the third Thursday of the month in the community room at James Street Mennonite Church. . See We Rise Spring 2026 newsletter for more on Creative Connections. **The next gathering is October 15, 6:30-8:30 p.m. - 323 West James Street, Lancaster, PA**



National Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates the cultural diversity and history of Hispanic Americans whose heritage is rooted in 20 countries and territories. With a focus on the strengths and challenges of this community, **We Rise is offering a webinar *Beyond Cultural Competence in 2026: Current and Emerging Considerations for Clinicians Working with Hispanic/Latinx Clients.***

CEUs available. More information and registration:

weriseinternational.thinkific.com/products/live_events/new-event



This summer, we welcomed Barbara Maldonado to the role of Mental Health Coordinator on the We Rise team. With more than 20 years of experience in education and human services, she has dedicated her career to supporting the emotional well-being and personal growth of children, adolescents, and adults. Her professional interests include mental health counseling, trauma recovery, substance use treatment, and family support services. In addition to her clinical work, she has a strong interest in education, resilience, trauma recovery, and the empowerment of Latina women. She aspires to write and share her personal and professional experiences to inspire others and contribute to meaningful conversations about healing and personal transformation. Barbara's mission is to promote emotional well-being, strengthen families, and contribute to healthier, more equitable, and compassionate communities.

Mark your calendar: The Churches Care online course will run from January 17 through February 27, 2027.

Broader and deeper than 'Mental Health First Aid,' the Churches Care program will help you and your church support individuals and families with knowledge and understanding, reduced stigma, and hands-on strategies to promote improved long-term positive mental health and sobriety.



Thank you!

to everyone supporting We Rise to strengthen communities' response to mental health and substance abuse challenges.

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

Plan now to support We Rise in your year-end giving.

Your support changes lives.



Celebrating Every Story

by Jasmine Ramos

In July, along with Independence Day, we noted **Disability Pride Month** and **Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority (BIPOC) Mental Health Awareness Month**. These two observances are an opportunity to recognize the richness of our diverse communities while considering the unique challenges many people face at the intersection of disability, race, culture, and mental health.

Disability Pride reminds us that disability is a natural and valuable part of human diversity. It also encourages people with disabilities to be proud of who they are, challenge ableism, and speak up for a more accessible and inclusive society. Disability Pride Month honors the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990, a landmark civil rights law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination. Similarly, the BIPOC National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month was created to raise awareness about the mental health needs of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC). It focuses on reducing stigma, improving access to mental health care that respects different cultures, and making sure every community gets fair support.

These observances are connected through intersectionality, an idea introduced by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality means that people can have more than one identity that affects their lives. For example, a person may be disabled and Black, autistic and Latino, or living with a mental health condition while belonging to a marginalized community. These overlapping identities can affect access to health care, jobs, education, and community support in connected ways.

Research shows why this matters. Adults with disabilities experience mental distress much more often than adults without disabilities. Many BIPOC communities also face systemic barriers to quality mental health care. These barriers include stigma, discrimination, language differences, cost, and too few providers who understand different cultures. When someone is both disabled and part of a racial or ethnic group that faces discrimination, these barriers can be even harder to overcome.

Building inclusive communities takes more than awareness. It takes action. We can help people feel they belong by creating accessible spaces, using respectful, person-centered language, supporting fair policies, and listening to people whose voices have historically been left out. Accessible and culturally respectful mental health services help people with disabilities and strengthen families, organizations, and communities.



Judy Heumann was denied a teaching license because she used a wheelchair and challenged unfair rules instead of accepting exclusion. She became a leader in the disability rights movement, helping the historic 1977 Section 504 Sit-in. Disabled activists stayed in a federal building for nearly a month to demand that the government enforce civil rights protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The activists did not give up and people with many different disabilities worked together and showed the power of communities working together.

The protest helped prepare the way for later disability rights laws, including the ADA. Heumann encouraged people to stop seeing disability as a tragedy or a limitation; it is a natural part of human diversity. She also believed that people with disabilities should be included in decisions that affect their lives. Her work reminds us that true inclusion starts with listening to the people most affected, valuing their experiences, and working together to remove barriers.

Heumann's legacy shows that lasting change happens when communities help people feel they belong, listen to voices that have often been ignored, and understand that accessibility and fairness benefit everyone.

By observing Disability Pride Month and BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month, we celebrate resilience and continue working for equity and inclusion. We understand that people can have many parts to their identity at the same time and we move closer to a future where every person is valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Jasmine Ramos is completing her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work at Millersville University with a practicum at We Rise International and a commitment to disability justice that comes from her lived experience. She is facilitating an inclusive mental health peer support group for adults with disabilities and developing advocacy initiatives that promote accessibility, belonging, and equitable access to mental health resources.



Mental Health Moment: Every single cell inside my body is happy and well!



This short video shows an example of the counseling skill of EFT Tapping which is an effective trauma reduction strategy. She's tapping specific spots of the face that are proven to help in stress reduction – even singing the song in your head and visualizing tapping these places on the body can be helpful! Tapping is an effective stress reduction technique. video link: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/qYMCKyFYvWI>

More information at The Tapping Solution channel on YouTube.

Note: We Rise International is not associated with the Tapping Solution Channel, their content or apps. We offer their videos as a helpful learning opportunity for ways EFT tapping has been proven to help reduce stress and increase wellbeing.