

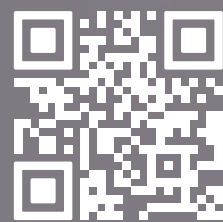


Riley's Way
foundation

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2027

LEARN MORE



RILEYSWAY.ORG

 @RileysWayFoundation

 @RileysWayFoundation

 Riley's Way Foundation

 Riley's Way Foundation

 @RileysWayFoundation



ABOUT US

LEADING TODAY FOR A KINDER TOMORROW

Riley's Way is a national nonprofit building a youth-led movement of kind leaders. We provide young people with the programs, support, and inclusive community they need to thrive as changemakers.

Our vision is to create a better world that values kindness, empathy, connection, and the voices of all youth. Riley's Way works with emerging leaders, ages 13-22, who are leading social impact projects in areas like food insecurity, homelessness, education equity, and environmental justice - all through the lens of kindness, empathy, and human connection.

We support these young leaders to envision change and achieve it. To date, we have invested in more than 3,000 young people across the country with over \$2 million in grants and programming, impacting hundreds of thousands worldwide.

Mackenzie and Ian Sandler established Riley's Way in 2014 in memory of their daughter Riley Hannah Sandler, whose kindness and friendship drive all that we do.



VISION, MISSION & VALUES

VISION

We envision a future where kind leaders build a better world.

MISSION

Riley's Way invests in and supports the next generation of kind leaders.



"Riley's Way has given me the opportunity to bridge the gap between wishing I could make the world a better place and actually doing so."

OUR VALUES

Our philosophy is built on the values of kindness, empathy, inclusive community, and youth leadership.

We believe the best leaders have these values at their core and that young people are the key to advancing social change. We see Riley's Way Alumni as future leaders in business, nonprofit, arts, education, STEM, public service, and their communities.

KINDNESS

Kindness is an active choice and the intentional practice of compassion, respect, extending oneself, and showing genuine care for others.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

An inclusive community values and celebrates everyone's unique voices and experiences. It provides a space that fosters belonging, where diverse voices are heard and amplified, intersectional identities are honored, and authentic relationships and meaningful friendships are cultivated.

EMPATHY

Empathy is the willingness to see, feel, listen, and learn beyond your own lived experiences. It requires actively listening and learning from others.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Young people are at the forefront of decision-making, creating change, mobilizing their peers, and contributing innovative solutions to pressing issues they care about most, with adult allyship and support from others.





SUMMARY

**OUR AMBITIONS ARE BIG –
AND WE ARE UP TO THE CHALLENGE.**

We are on a multi-decade mission to change the face and nature of leadership in the US.

The next five years will lay the foundation for this pivotal fundamental shift.

By 2027, we envision being at the heart of a national community of thousands of kind, connected, emerging leaders of social change. We hope to see Riley's Way Alumni continue in leadership positions as they build their careers and establish themselves in their communities and beyond. Riley's Way changemakers will demonstrate the power of a new type of leadership, which values kindness, empathy, and inclusive community as core strengths.

Over the next five years we want to go deeper and broader in our commitment to kind leadership.

Deeper in our adherence to a youth-led model that connects emerging changemakers as friends and helps them grow as leaders; and

Broader in our engagement of young people of every background across the country.

To do this we will clarify and codify our methods, strengthen our programming, as well as build the organizational infrastructure and community we need to scale.



"Riley's Way has been a home away from home since I started as a Council member in high school...The connections I made with staff and young leaders kept me grounded and led me to find my purpose."

THAIS SALAS, RILEY'S WAY PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND COUNCIL ALUM

OUR FOUR STRATEGIC GOALS TO GET THERE ARE:



**Deepen the impact
of our programming**



**Grow our presence
nationally**



**Strengthen the
Riley's Way community**



**Build the organizational
infrastructure for growth**

Our strategic plan articulates the problem that we are trying to solve and our theory of how it can be tackled. It details the central concept of our work, kind leadership, and articulates the values and principles by which we operate. Under each of our four strategic goals, we share the objectives and activities that undergird our mission to grow Riley's Way as an intentional community of kind leaders.





"When I started on the Council, I thought leadership was people in charge.
Now I think leadership is people taking charge to make a difference."

COUNCIL MEMBER

empathy
is strength



WHY KIND LEADERSHIP?

At the root of our work is the concept of kind leadership. Kind leadership is the practice of leading a group by building friendships, embodying empathy, creating inclusive communities, and amplifying critical issues and voices around you. Kind leaders make for better leaders with happier, more successful teams, and innovative movements and organizations.

Riley's Way Executive Director, Dr. Christine O'Connell wrote in [*Psychology Today*](#):

"Being a kind leader means building community wherever you go. It isn't easy; it means practicing empathy every day, even with people with whom you don't agree. Kind leadership is being inclusive and building others up around you...[these values] foster a culture of collaboration, trust, and creativity, where teams feel respected, valued, and inspired to work together to make a positive impact."

Kind leaders work to understand others' needs and perspectives, encourage open communication, and help others succeed. They prioritize collaboration, inclusivity, and equity and motivate others to do the same. They promote a sense of belonging and trust, leading to more engaged, healthier, and happier communities.

Kind leaders reflect the full breadth of humanity. They mirror the diversity of our country's race and ethnicity, faith, gender, ability, age, & socio-economic background.

They care about social justice. Their work upholds human rights, democratic ideals and environmental justice. They do not discriminate or promote divisiveness.

Kind leaders are not only social in their ends, they are also social in their means. Their projects are about building community. The connections that kind leaders build through their work make us better able, as a community of friends, to continue in the pursuit of social change for the world and for our planet.

THE FEATURES OF KIND LEADERSHIP ARE:



Listening.

Kind leaders listen, make connections, and see the best in others. It is important to ask questions and listen actively and openly to best understand others' perspectives and values. Listening helps leaders better serve their communities and allows space for feedback and learning.



Community.

Kind leadership is not about being the best, it is about making everyone else better and building others up around you. Kind leaders pay it forward and backward; mentoring new leaders and giving back to their community. Together they create a flywheel effect that propagates evermore social good. Building community sustains us and helps fill our cup when we, as leaders, need it most.



Empathy.

Empathetic leaders proactively think about others and work to see things from another point of view. They prioritize compassion and genuine concern for the well-being of others. They are good friends who use their platform to elevate and advocate for marginalized voices and causes that promote social good.



Inclusivity.

Inclusive leadership means appreciating, respecting, and supporting the authenticity and humanity of others. Being an inclusive leader means making sure everyone feels seen and heard, but also asking "Whose voice isn't here that should be?" and making room at the table.



Trust.

Kind leaders are people we can trust, learn from, and lean on. Trust is a cornerstone of any relationship and is the foundation on which character is built; it requires courage, patience, and being authentic. Being your authentic self requires doing the work to make yourself whole by prioritizing self-care and the relationships that fulfill you. We do our best work when we value and support others to be their whole selves and create the space for authenticity in our own lives.

"Kind leaders allow themselves to simultaneously be a student and a teacher, to fully recognize, consider, and embrace the value others bring to a conversation. The best ideas can be found in the least expected places, and kind leaders are always cognizant of that."

ASHLEY, RETREAT ALUM. RILEY'S WAY IS MY WAY



empathy
is strength



HOW WE WORK

Riley's Way provides young people with seed funding for social impact projects, 1:1 coaching and project support, skill building sessions, Youth Leadership Retreats, networking opportunities, and a peer community of other young changemakers. We are committed to incorporating youth leadership into everything we do - from our Board and Youth Advisory Board to making key programmatic and organizational decisions.

We dream big. To inspire a lifetime of kind leadership, we believe that it takes deep commitment to social change work from an early age. Riley's Way students rise to the challenge of the injustices and issues they see in their communities and propose concrete solutions with lasting change. Our students run social impact projects with community members and complex budget plans.

We prioritize youth leadership. We take every opportunity to put our students in positions of leadership. We believe that this is the best preparation for the demands of leadership that await them as adults. We strive to be youth-led in all that we do, across our programs, operations, strategic planning, and governance. All of the big decisions about strategic direction, staffing, project funding, and the curriculum itself are done with youth involvement.

We believe Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) are critical cornerstones of our programs. We want to see leadership that reflects the diversity of who we are, therefore the work of dismantling the barriers that systematically lock marginalized groups out of power starts with us.

We build lasting community. Riley's Way is focused on fostering a community that can nourish us all for years to come, not one-off trainings or grants. We know that our young leaders may only be active participants of our programs for a short period — but their connection to our community endures for a lifetime.

OUR MODEL

Project Support

1:1 staff support, expert coaching, peer mentoring

Skill Building

as well as leadership development opportunities

Community

a peer community of practice, alumni network, lifelong friendships, and community partners & ambassadors

Seed Funding

For social impact projects





WHAT WE DO

Our three programs support and connect young leaders who are building a kinder, better world. Through this work, we help students **envision change** and **achieve it**.

CALL FOR KINDNESS

Our flagship program gives young changemakers across the country the skills, connections, and funding they need to run social impact projects – tackling anything from big social or environmental justice issues, creating inclusive communities for teens and young adults to better manage their mental health, to ensuring no one sits alone at lunch.

Not only do Fellows deliver inspiring projects but they also grow as kind leaders who will go on to have even more impact. After the Fellowship, Fellows join an active Alumni community and can access **Continuation Grants of up to \$2,000**, ongoing support and training, and become peer mentors for the new class of Fellows.

The Call For Kindness comprises:

- * **Start up grant** of up to **\$3,000**
- * **12-month Leadership Development Fellowship**
- * In-person **Leadership Retreat**
- * Monthly virtual skill building or networking sessions
- * Staff support and expert coaching
- * Peer mentoring
- * Community of young people who care about kindness and are making a difference in the world
- * **Continuation Grants** of up to **\$2,000** are available to **Alumni Fellows**

COUNCILS & CHAPTERS

Riley's Way Councils connect students from public and private high schools to drive positive change in their schools and communities and practice leading with kindness. Through their work on a Riley's Way Council, young leaders create social justice projects based on issues significant to them and partner with community-based organizations to design and implement a service or activism project.

Riley's Way Chapters are based on the Council model and bring together young changemakers within one high school, college, or community group. Riley's Way Chapters are independently run and operated across the country, with the support of Riley's Way staff.



LEADERSHIP RETREATS

Riley's Way Youth Leadership Retreats and workshops bring diverse communities of young changemakers together from across the country to learn from each other and experts, build meaningful connections, and grow as leaders and friends.

Through our Retreats, in-person events and online community-building we build a dynamic community of young changemakers. The connections between our students will inspire their individual changemaking journeys for years to come.

Riley's Way Councils, Chapters, and Youth Leadership Retreats provide a space for programmatic learning and create a pipeline for future Call For Kindness Fellows. They also provide an inclusive space for a much larger number of students to discover kind leadership.

"I have learned that kindness is an integral, necessary basis of any social justice movement."

AMBER, COUNCIL + C4K ALUM, YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD CO-FOUNDER



"As a Gen-Z nonprofit leader, my goal is to show others that, regardless of age or background, anyone can make a positive impact on their communities through kindness and collaboration."

ESHA, CO-FOUNDER NEST4US
& C4K FELLOW

OUR IMPACT

Riley's Way has reached hundreds of thousands of people across the world and invested millions of dollars in social impact grants and leadership support for the next generation of kind leaders.

We shifted our focus in 2019 to high school and college students (previously 3rd-4th graders) and since then, have directly grown the leadership skills of 1,000+ high school and college students through our Councils and Chapters, Call For Kindness, and Youth Leadership Retreats.

300+

Call For Kindness Fellows
& Continuation Grants

350+

Council & Chapter
Members

500+

Youth Leadership
Participants

We are building a youth-led movement of kind leaders working to change the world; our Alumni community is strong and growing! The projects we support have had a positive and lasting impact on hundreds of thousands of people all around the world.

THE STUDENTS WE SUPPORT ARE HAVING A TANGIBLE, MEANINGFUL IMPACT:



Dylan & Ethan's Computers 4 People (2021 Fellows) has donated **628 refurbished computers** to over **1,300 individuals** in need in New York and New Jersey.



Anya & Kathryn's Colorization Collective (2020 & 2021 Fellows) has supported over **260 teen and adult artists of color** from **16 states and 4 countries**.



Esha & Shreyaa's Nest4Us (2021 Fellows) has mobilized over **4,000 volunteers** in **28 countries** worldwide to advance progress on societal issues.



Jean's Leaders Across the World (2022 Fellow) has connected **450+ youth** from **45+ countries** through their six-week virtual exchanges, which provide participants with leadership and entrepreneurship training, a foundational understanding of the world, & the opportunity to develop a strong international network.



Neal's Codology (2023 Fellow) offers free hands-on computer science courses, research programs, and resources that help guide students along their journey to becoming tech industry leaders. Neal and his team have worked with over **10,000 students** in **15 countries** to date.



Benjamin's Whiskey Bravo (2023 Fellow) teaches youth the importance of the military through hands-on service projects, while improving the lives of servicemen, women, and their families. They've worked with **1,200 students** in **4 states**, and impacted **700 military personnel**.



Isabella's I Matter (2021 Fellow) received art and poetry submissions from **650 students** in **42 states** and **30 countries** for their book centered on Black Lives Matter.

WE'LL CONTINUE TO ELEVATE THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALL THAT WE DO – FROM PUTTING YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS ON OUR BOARD, TO INCLUDING THEM IN HIRING AND ORGANIZATIONAL DECISIONS.

We are creating a peer-mentoring program where prior Fellows are coming back and mentoring new projects, as well as bringing in expert coaches. We are continuing to deepen our programs, especially for our Alumni.

We want to be able to support our growing community of young changemakers as they grow in their careers, no matter what industry they go into, because they are the key to advancing much-needed social change in our world, for a kinder tomorrow.



THE PROBLEM WE AIM TO SOLVE

Today, more than ever, the world needs kind and empathetic leaders to address the complex challenges facing society. Empathy and kindness are often overlooked as critical leadership qualities — and systemic inequality and barriers continue to lock many out of positions of influence.

At Riley's Way, we are changing that. We believe that effective leadership is defined by being a kind, empathetic, and community-focused changemaker.

AT RILEY'S WAY, WE KNOW THAT EVERY
YOUNG PERSON HAS THE CAPACITY TO LEAD

We know that every young person has the capacity to lead, yet their ideas are often overlooked in society. Their voices can be diminished or even completely disregarded in important decisions and conversations. Young people (under 35) are underrepresented in legislatures and are disadvantaged in politics^{1,2}. Even in the nonprofit world, only 6% of leaders are 18-24 years old and 15.6% under the age of 40³. However, we believe young people have the ideas, drive and passion to make a difference in the world, they just need the tools, resources, opportunity, and community to do it.

Riley's Way's young changemakers are leading in communities across the country, combating many of the significant challenges facing our world today, including the climate crisis, racial injustice, food insecurity, and homelessness. We know firsthand that kind young leaders bring unique qualities and perspectives and are finding solutions to drive positive change.

Here are some reasons why the leadership of young changemakers is vital:

TECH SAVVINESS:

Growing up in the digital age, young leaders are often well-versed in technology and can harness its potential for addressing various challenges, while also building a sense of community and engagement. They can leverage digital tools, data analytics, and communication platforms to drive innovation, improve efficiency, enhance collaboration, and build connections.

An illustration of this is our Call For Kindness program, where Fellows often lean on digital strategies in their projects to connect with new peers and communicate safely and effectively across state lines, such as 2022 C4K Fellow Grayson (T.R.A.N.S.) or 2023 C4K Fellow Neal (Codology), to name a few.

FUTURE-FOCUSED VISION & SUSTAINABILITY:

Young changemakers have a vested interest in the long-term future as they will inherit the consequences of the decisions we make today. They are more likely to prioritize sustainability, environmental stewardship, and social progress, working toward creating a better world for future generations.

An example of this is the selected topic for the 2023 Call For Kindness: Environmental Justice.

FRESH PERSPECTIVES & INNOVATIVE THINKING:

Young leaders often have new insights into ways to effectively tackle both "big" and "small" problems. Their ability to think outside the box and challenge conventional wisdom often leads to creative solutions and approaches.

One great example of this is a Riley's Way Council, where members drive positive change in their schools and communities, by partnering with community-based organizations to design and implement a service or activism project. Councils have tackled and led projects focused on food insecurity, period poverty, education inequality, mental health, environmental justice, and reproductive rights. Through Riley's Way Councils, teens practice leading with kindness and building bridges across barriers in their communities.

PASSION, ENERGY, AND INCLUSIVITY:

Young people have the passion, energy, and idealism needed to envision change and achieve it. Young people live in the possibility of what can be, not just what is. We need this idealism to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems. Young people often lead in spaces where open-mindedness and accepting differences are prioritized.

1. D. Stockemer, H. Thompson, and A. Sundström. 2023. Young adults' under-representation in elections to the U.S. House of Representatives. *Electoral Studies*. (81)102554. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S026137942200110X>

2. A. Sundström and D. Stockemer, Politicians are getting older — shutting young people out of decision-making around the world. *The Conversation*; January 5, 2023. https://phys.org/news/2023-01-politicians-oldershutting-young-people-decision-making.html#google_vignette

3. D. Norris-Tirrell, et. al. Who Is at the Top in the Social Sector? Examining Career Paths of Nonprofit Executive Leaders. *Nonprofit Leadership Alliance*; April 17, 2017. <https://www.nonprofitleadershipalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CEO-Research-Initial-Release-2.pdf>

According to the US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, there is a mental health crisis facing our young people today due in part to loneliness and isolation, online bullying, and a largely fear-driven 24/7 online environment.

“It’s also being driven by the fact that young people, when they think about the future, see the profound threats that we are facing today, like violence and racism and climate change, but they don’t see effective solutions...**But with more choices, the anchoring values that guide you in your definition of success become all the more important. Moments like this are ones where we have to ask, ‘what are the values that are guiding us as a society?’**”

US SURGEON GENERAL VIVEK MURTHY

This is where Riley’s Way comes in, our philosophy is built on the values of kindness, empathy, inclusive community, and youth leadership. We provide young people with funding and support to make a tangible impact on issues important to them, and, most importantly, a community of other young leaders who care about kindness and social change.



The Riley's Way community of changemakers will be there to support each other as they grow in their careers and their leadership journeys.

While the world's challenges require a collective effort from leaders of all ages and backgrounds, young changemakers' unique qualities and perspectives are essential.

What we know to be true is this:

Riley's Way young leaders are key drivers for advancing social progress, embracing new ideas, and creating a better, kinder, more just future for us all.

We see Riley's Way Alumni as future leaders in influential roles in society — business, nonprofit, public service, or at the community level, all leading with kindness at their core.

OUR PHILOSOPHY IS BUILT ON THE VALUES OF KINDNESS,
EMPATHY, INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY, AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

ACTIVITIES

→
OUTPUTS

→
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

→
LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

→
IMPACT

The foremost leadership pathways in North America currently don't prioritize empathy and kind leadership.

If changed, this could fundamentally change the leaders we get. We could create a virtuous cycle where the impact and visibility of kind leaders could inspire the public to demand more from their leaders and institutions.

We believe young people are the key to unlocking and advancing social change, and that the best leaders are built on kindness and empathy. We know that young people have the ideas and passion to make a difference in the world, they just need the tools, resources, and community to do it. That is where we come in.

We invest in emerging leaders who have an idea to make their community a better, kinder place. Each project we fund centers around a social impact issue or a drive to strengthen communities and create meaningful connections, and of course - they all demonstrate our values of kindness, empathy, inclusive community, and youth leadership.

The high school and college students we support are diverse in many characteristics — including their race, gender and social background — but united in their propensity to build friendships and lead with empathy. With our funding and support, they deliver social impact projects across the country.

These young changemakers have different levels of confidence and capacity, and are leading projects at varying stages and with distinct focuses. Together they create a community founded on kindness. This long-term sense of community fuels each other's leadership for years to come.

We believe that the seeds of leadership are sown at a much younger age than received wisdom would suggest. As such, a central tenet of our theory of change is that Riley's Way students must be in the driving seat — both in their own projects and within the Riley's Way community. Every aspect of our programming, curriculum, operations, and strategy is truly youth-led.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE:



OUR STRATEGIC GOALS



#1. DEEPEN THE IMPACT OF OUR PROGRAMMING

We will redouble our focus on youth leadership and make young people's experience of Riley's Way even more transformative, and will better define our theory of change, curriculum, and programming.

#2. STRENGTHEN THE RILEY'S WAY COMMUNITY

We will become more intentional about fostering friendship among Riley's Way community members, including our growing and supporting our Alumni network.

#3. GROW OUR PRESENCE NATIONALLY

Our communications and programs will reach new audiences in new localities, as well as reaching out to more people of different genders and ages.

#4. BUILD THE ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GROWTH

As we mature as an organization, we will ensure we have the systems and resources we need to run efficiently.

Under each goal we have a set of objectives to fulfill and activities to complete by the end of 2027.

Goal #1. Deepen the impact of our programming

Codify and refine our methodology to ensure consistent & sustained impact across the organization (as the org grows)

- * Define our 'kind leadership' philosophy & create a Theory of Change.
- * Establish and document a robust overarching 'kind leadership' curriculum.
- * Develop a network of subject-matter experts, advocates, and mentors.
- * Expand leadership development offerings and networking opportunities within existing programs and initiatives.
- * Recruit new mentors and speakers that students can relate to.
- * Survey emerging leaders on important leadership skills.

Make Call For Kindness a preeminent youth leadership fellowship nationally, changing the face of "good leadership" and what it constitutes while driving impact

- * Grow the number of applications to Call For Kindness.
- * Plan and provide a more structured and branded Call For Kindness fellowship experience.
- * Curate 1-2 in-person trainings for each Call For Kindness cohort to compliment online learning.
- * Build out mentorship component for the Call For Kindness fellowship.
- * Clarify staff roles as subject area experts and mentors for our Call For Kindness Fellows.
- * Build out the Call For Kindness continuation grant program.

Refine Riley's Way Councils and implement across the country through a chapter-based model

- * Finalize model and curriculum for New York-based Riley's Way Councils.
- * Document different Riley's Way Council models and create evidence-based curriculum guides for students and teachers.
- * Evaluate impact and document lessons learned from the NYC Chapter model pilot.
- * Prototype a replicable Chapter model in cities across the country.

Create a more inclusive and diverse community across all of our programs

- * Create a DEIA Task Force, bringing together our Board, student DEIA committee and others.
- * Develop a diversity statement and values for the organization.
- * Build a DEIA focus into all of our programs and operations (staff, Board, policies).
- * Curate resources, speakers, and workshops on DEIA for our students and community.
- * Create systems to engage underrepresented groups of young people in Riley's Way programs.
- * Pilot a gender-inclusive approach within the pilot Councils Chapter model & produce gender-inclusive youth leadership Retreats.

Include youth voice & leadership throughout organizational (operational + strategic) decision making to ensure maximal impact

- * Build capacity and engagement of Youth Advisory Board and student participation on the Riley's Way Foundation Board.
- * Create and operationalize systems for youth feedback to staff and Board.
- * Create a student committee for Riley's Way communications.
- * Operationalize youth-led components into all of our programs (planning committees, etc.).
- * Develop systems for gathering programmatic feedback from Riley's Way students.

Provide more [specialist] resources to help all Riley's Way students grow further as kind leaders

- * Provide access to 1:1 coaching from subject-matter experts.
- * Create opportunities to connect Riley's Way students with subject matter experts.
- * Develop an online library of resources about kind leadership for students.
- * Facilitate a faculty community to share best practices in supporting Riley's Way students.
- * Develop skill building sessions led by peers and Alumni.
- * Provide access to peer coaching.

Create more opportunities for youth to get leadership experience

- * Curate leadership opportunities for students & Alumni including mentoring, facilitating meetings, organizing events, or public speaking.
- * Continue to develop the Youth Advisory Board model and experience.
- * Pilot new initiatives with like-minded partners.
- * Connect youth to appropriate partner programs and experiences.

Strengthen students' communications capacity so they grow as leaders and get their stories out

- * Create new opportunities for Riley's Way students to take part in communications including podcasts, documentaries and short films.
- * Elevate the voice of our students in Riley's Way communications.
- * Teach and coach young leaders how to be effective communicators, engage with the press, and tell their impact stories.

Goal #2. Strengthen the Riley's Way community

Create an active community that helps [current] participants grow as kind leaders while building meaningful connection

- * Build a Riley's Way student contact database.
- * Create connections between Riley's Way students.
- * Create affinity groups in Riley's Way programs.
- * Curate peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities.
- * Create new communication systems and opportunities to better connect students in various Riley's Way programs.

Build an engaged Alumni network and additional supports to continue to build their kind leadership skills and foster community to ensure impact as they expand their careers [+ create flywheel back into org]

- * Offer seed grants to Riley's Way Alumni for social impact projects
- * Develop grant and stipend opportunities for Riley's Way Alumni (including C4K continuation grants).
- * Spotlight Alumni in Riley's Way communications.
- * Source professional development opportunities for Alumni.
- * Create enrichment and engagement opportunities for Riley's Way Alumni.
- * Pilot mentorship opportunities for Riley's Way Alumni and current students.
- * Increase Riley's Way Alumni engagement with new Fellows.
- * Develop programs, resources, and staff to support continued growth of Alumni as kind leaders.
- * Develop systems and staff to connect and engage Alumni (newsletter, groupme, contact database, etc.).



#3. Grow our presence nationally

Forge strategic partnerships to grow our reach to young people and their leadership development, and strengthen our programs

- * Build ongoing relationships with school and nonprofit partners to elevate our programs.
- * Build strategic partnerships with potential Call For Kindness mentors.
- * Create a 'Friends of Riley's Way' group to act as advisors and advocates for Riley's Way and our mission.

Build out communications to tell the Riley's Way story and the importance of kind leadership more broadly (Building the movement)

- * Develop a Communications Strategy, timeline, and goals in line with Strategic Plan.
- * Create social media and marketing campaigns to expand our name recognition and programs opportunities.
- * Build out communications resources and opportunities.
- * Create more communications content and build a library for Riley's Way to better tell its story.
- * Produce videos to tell the story of Riley's Way program impact.
- * Build our social media presence.
- * Redesign or refresh website.
- * Support national social justice campaigns.
- * Garner national and local media attention and speaking opportunities.
- * Refresh branding, logo and color scheme.

Host Riley's Way events [online + offline] throughout the year to build leadership skills for youth and help develop an ongoing, engaged community (Run a year-round calendar of events)

- * Ensure diversity of speakers at Riley's Way events and elevate underrepresented and marginalized voices.
- * Curate dialogues, workshops, and ongoing learning opportunities.
- * Develop and expand our virtual programming opportunities to connect with individuals around the country.
- * Provide more geographically-widespread programs to foster community through workshops and connection-making events.

Begin working with college age students to ensure support of kind leadership in their organizations/projects & careers

- * Establish an 18-22 year old category for the Call For Kindness fellowship.
- * Develop opportunities specific to college students within Call For Kindness programming.
- * Explore other areas for college involvement in Riley's Way programs.

"I continue coming back to Riley's Way not only because of the wonderful professional opportunities they've provided me with, but for the community they've built that all share the common goal of changing the world for the better."

**CHRISTINA, FORMER RILEY'S WAY INTERN &
NOW, RILEY'S WAY COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

#4. Build organizational infrastructure for sustained impact & growth

Build a diverse funder base so we can grow in a sustainable way

- * Broaden fundraising efforts to include foundation funding and other grant opportunities.
- * Create opportunities for our community to support fundraising efforts.
- * Craft new grant funding propositions for high-net worth donors and corporate sponsorships.
- * Grow operating budget in line with growth goals (~20-25% each year).
- * Continue to build a long-term endowment and investment plan.

Grow the staff team to continue to provide adequate support for our students and organization

- * Create staff expansion plan in line with growth goals.
- * Operationalize and expand the internship program at Riley's Way.
- * Streamline staff job descriptions in line with strategic plan and growth goals.
- * Create a priority list of staff hires including development and new program staff to expand Call For Kindness and Alumni initiatives.
- * Develop new job descriptions and hiring timeline.
- * Develop systems to operationalize hiring process.

Strengthen governance policies and processes to build a more sustainable and equitable organization

- * Diversify the Board to include more subject matter experts (for example in communications/marketing, education or nonprofit fields).
- * Cultivate an inclusive environment for students on the Board and Board committees.
- * Institutionalize annual board member goal-setting and self-assessments.
- * Curate organizational values and community guidelines that are applicable for all staff, board members, and students.
- * Operationalize board committee structures, meetings, and goals.
- * Organize an annual Board Retreat.
- * Diversify Board to be more inclusive of different identities, better representing the diversity of the students we serve.

Build out HR systems and processes to build a more sustainable and equitable organization

- * Develop systems for staff promotion and development.
- * Plan an annual program of professional development for staff team members.
- * Offer annual DEIA refreshers for Staff and Board.
- * Institutionalize staff feedback mechanisms and 360 reviews.
- * Provide an annual staff Retreat, including team building and professional development elements.
- * Produce a staff handbook of HR policies and procedures.
- * Curate opportunities for staff to be active ambassadors for Riley's Way through public speaking, affinity groups, and professional memberships and committees.

Upgrade our systems to better communicate with & track donors, Alumni & partners

- * Build out and operationalize our CRM system to be more effective.
- * Build capacity of CRM system to track Alumni.
- * Create knowledge management and tracking systems for programs and events.

Develop impact measurement and reporting systems

- * Develop an impact measurement plan with robust evaluation metrics (quantitative and qualitative) and means of verification.
- * Pilot and launch structured evaluations for the Councils and Call For Kindness.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS



Alumni Initiative

Riley's Way continues to build our Alumni Initiative which provides ongoing professional development and networking opportunities, and fosters a lifelong community of kind leaders. The first Alumni meet-up was held in Orlando, FL (and more are in the works!) and we launched the Alumni Mission Award in 2023.

A Leadership Development Fund is planned for the future that will enable Alumni to apply for funding to advance their leadership (e.g., pay for a course or workshop, cover travel expenses to present or attend conferences, etc.).



Visionaries Initiative

We are growing the **Riley's Way Visionaries** initiative — influential changemakers who help bring increased visibility to our work and mission. TK Wonder and Cipriana Quann are identical twin sisters, writers, artists, influencers, and models — and our first-ever Visionaries. New Visionaries include: Sophie Beren, founder and CEO of The Conversationalist; Anya Dillard, a 19-year-old activist and social entrepreneur and founder of The Next Gen Come Up; and Khloe Thompson, 2020 C4K Fellow, social entrepreneur, influencer and founder of Khloe Cares.



Expanding the Chapter Model

We piloted our first all-boys Chapter at The Browning School in 2022/23. The Chapters are a way to create a scalable Riley's Way program that models our Councils and can be replicated at schools across the country with Riley's Way support. We look forward to piloting a College Chapters and expanding to high schools across the country.



Youth Leadership Retreats

The 2023 annual **Riley's Way Youth Leadership Retreat** is our first gender-inclusive Retreat that brings together 100 young changemakers from across the country to learn about identity and kind leadership. The Retreat will challenge participants to consider how the different aspects of their identity impact and support their leadership while building life-long connections and having fun.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who contributed to creating this strategic plan to lead the growth, sustainability, and impact of Riley's Way into the future.

With our youth-led model, we wanted to especially thank the Riley's Way Youth Advisory Board and the community of young leaders that came together to shape this plan from the beginning. They participated in multiple workshops and focus groups to "dream big" and envision what they wanted Riley's Way to be. In addition, thank you to the Board and staff of Riley's Way for your input and commitment to our mission and vision, which is evident in all aspects of this plan.

"Riley's Way has already made such a huge difference in so many lives across the country and I believe that the Youth Advisory Board has the potential to engage more youth not only across the United States, but the world."

AGHA HAIDER, YAB CO-CHAIR

NOTES



30 Third Avenue, Room 203
Brooklyn, NY 11217

RileysWay.org

 @RileysWayFoundation

 @RileysWayFoundation

 Riley's Way Foundation

 Riley's Way Foundation

 @RileysWayFoundation

