

ARISE

A Regional Initiative
Supporting Empowerment

Faith-Based Community Organizing in the Capital Region

ARISE MISSION:

Our mission is to build a power organization made up of congregations and other community groups, enabling them both to revitalize their own membership and to revive communities in the Capital Region.

Community happens when people in partnership with one another seek to do what is best for the entire community with love and self-discipline. Our task is to broaden our understanding of what it means to be people in community. Our task is to teach ourselves to think regionally, because, like it or not, our destinies are intertwined.” —Juan A. Rodriguez

What is ARISE?

ARISE (A Regional Initiative Supporting Empowerment) is a faith-based community organizing project covering four counties: Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, and Saratoga. Our purpose is to bring together congregations and other membership organizations in the Capital Region as a strong coalition so that we can locate areas of shared community concern, define solutions and develop a powerful voice for positive change, especially in distressed neighborhoods. ARISE currently has over 40 member organizations with a combined strength of 12,000 people.

How does it work?

In 2001, ARISE trained leaders in its member groups to conduct over 1,500 listening interviews with a diverse range of people from all over the region. On the basis of this extensive democratic survey, we selected our top three organizing priorities, and organized task forces for each of them: Youth, Education, and Employment. On November 13, ARISE organized a meeting of 1,000 people to announce our first set of issues for public action.

What is ARISE doing?

ARISE's task forces are working on four projects in 2002. Anyone interested is invited to attend task force meetings:

Youth Centers. ARISE is seeking state funding for new buildings for the Albany Boys and Girls Club and for Schenectady's Carver Community Center. The extra space will allow these outstanding programs to more than double the numbers of kids they can serve.

Gang Prevention . The regional Youth Council is a committee of the tri-county Workforce Investment Board charged with helping kids stay in school and get into the job market. ARISE is seeking to make this body more diverse and more active in seeking state and federal support, especially for gang prevention.

After School Programs . ARISE has worked with State Senator Joseph Bruno and secured increased support for Project Lift in Saratoga and for the Troy Boys and Girls Club. These are programs serving low-income children with outstanding after school learning and development opportunities..

Welfare to Work & Daycare. ARISE successfully brought about citizen involvement in the search process for a new DSS Commissioner. in Schenectady Co. This position affects the crucial area of job and training opportunities for those transitioning from welfare to work. ARISE is now investigating improvements in the daycare system, another key component in this transition.

What's next? A Regional Approach

ARISE, as a regional initiative, promotes a regional understanding of our economy and our development as the way to create greater equity and opportunity for all people. As long as acute imbalances remain between cities and suburbs, and between different racial groups, we cannot build sustainable, just, and vital communities.

On July 19, 2002, ARISE partnered with a diverse set of other partners to sponsor A Regional Summit on Revitalization and Smart Growth. This forum has begun a new kind of discussion between decision-makers in economic development and faith community leaders about the kind of future we envision for our region. ARISE exists to empower people to study and to shape the fundamental systems and decisions that determine our shared destiny as a diverse regional community.

A new Regionalism Task Force was created as a result of this summit.

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ARISE Officers 2002

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Member Groups

In Albany County

Albany Friends Society
Albany Lutheran Cluster
Albany United Methodist Society
Altamont Reformed Church
Artists' All-Faith Center
Christ the King RCC
Evangelical Protestant United Church of Christ
First Unitarian-Universalist Society of Albany
Interdenominational Ministers Conference
Interfaith Alliance
Labor-Religion Coalition (Capital District)
Mansion Neighborhood Association
Our Lady of Angels RCC
Park South Neighborhood Association
St. Patrick's RCC
South End Interfaith Corporation
Ten Broeck Triangle
Trinity United Methodist Church
Westminster Presbyterian

In Schenectady County

Emmanuel Baptist-Friedens United Church of Christ
First Unitarian Society, Schenectady
First United Methodist Church
Friendship Baptist Church
Iglesia de Dios

Mt. Olivet Missionary Baptist Church
Mt. Pleasant Reformed Church
Refreshing Spring Church of God in Christ
Sacred Heart/St. Columba's RCC
St. Joseph's RCC
Sisters of St. Joseph
State Street Presbyterian Church
Vale Community Organization

In Rensselaer County
Sacred Heart/St. William's RCC

In Saratoga County
St. Joseph's RCC, Greenfield Center
Temple Shabbat Shalom

<http://www.uumin.org/arise-2002.htm>