

RISE UP Cooperative

An Interview with

Very Rev. David Carter, JCL, JV, Pastor and Rector of the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul
and
Sandy Pricer, President of the RISE UP Cooperative

February 5, 2021

Full Transcript of Interview

On Feb. 5, 2021, Fr. Carter interviewed Sandy Pricer, Basilica parishioner and President of the newly organized RISE UP Cooperative. The full interview can be found on the Basilica's website along with Fr. Carter's Pastor's Notes for Feb. 14 and Feb. 21, 2021, accessible at stspeterandpaulbasilica.com/pastors-notes.

Fr. David Carter

Welcome, Sandy Pricer with the RISE UP Cooperative. I'm grateful for your presence and your availability to talk to us a little bit about what you're doing. Should we begin with a little prayer?

Sandy Pricer

Sure. Thank you so much, Father.

Fr. David Carter

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Good and gracious Father, send your Holy Spirit to help us to know the good that we can do in this world, and by your grace to do it, so that we might glorify You in all things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. And so again, welcome, Sandy Pricer. What's your position? You're the co-founder?

Sandy Pricer

I am, with my husband, Joe. I am the President and the co-founder.

Fr. David Carter

The President and co-founder of the RISE UP Cooperative. What is the RISE UP Cooperative?

Sandy Pricer

Absolutely. And thank you so much for having me this morning and talking to me about this. This opportunity is wonderful for RISE UP, to be able to share about us. RISE UP is an organization that is bringing life and leadership skills to teens and at-risk youth. Because of the pandemic, we are all virtual right now, obviously, with hopes for that to change in the near future, or at least sometime this year. But we bring the workshops to them in order to help them have a better tomorrow; teaching them those skills that sometimes so many of them, even adults, many times lack, just to help them have a foot up.

Fr. David Carter

What inspired you to found the RISE UP Cooperative?

Sandy Pricer

I have always had a passion for teens. I'm not sure why. But my background is in social services, and I worked with them in group homes and foster homes before Joe and I started having our own children. And I really, really enjoyed it. But then we had our own children. And we decided to adopt from foster care. And we really were opened. Our eyes were opened to how much they can lack as far as what they've been taught, because they're going from home to home. They are in traumatic situations. Their brain connections aren't the same as a typical child. They have so many things going against them. And we knew that after we adopted, we wanted to do more. So the years went by, and I was like, let's start this. We're not getting any younger - what I said to him when we adopted, too, actually. I started doing the research, and I realized that there are a lot of service gaps, a lot of agencies that are trying to provide things like this to their clients, but they're overworked just like so many are. And they were burnt out, so they can only do so much. A fresh set of eyes, so to speak, or bodies - I felt could come in and fill those service gaps. And the encouragement and support so far has been outstanding and amazing. And we've been truly humbled by it in order to help reach these kids in those ways.

Fr. David Carter

What are some of those service gaps in particular that that inspire you to what the RISE UP Cooperative does?

Sandy Pricer

So many times, even as a young adult, I personally didn't know how to budget or finance or take care of my money. So that's one thing, and a service gap, so to speak, that we see that we're trying to fill. We just this week had a banking workshop where we had a former banker come on and just talk to the kids about how to look at their money, how to save their money, the hidden things that take our money away that we're not even aware of. Things that can just help us have that - like I said earlier - that foot up. Some other topics: dress for success. So many people don't understand how big of an importance your first impression is, specifically in an interview. Which is another topic: how to interview - the things that you need to come in, and your body language, and things you should or shouldn't say. So many people are just unaware of it just because they've never been taught it before, and it's not obviously something they teach in school. So it's a what-you-don't learn-in-school program. Time management, conflict resolution, different things like that, personal health.

Fr. David Carter

There are things that you would think that people would be getting in a normal ordinary family environment. But they're not having a normal ordinary family environment, due to their circumstances, and maybe you're bouncing from family to family, so there's not a continuity of care that normal families would be able to give to children. And is that the gap that you're filling?

Sandy Pricer

Absolutely, yes. For sure. With my biological children, from birth, we've been pouring into them these things, right? But when a foster kid comes into a home like that, you might only have six months, maybe a year, maybe less, to be able to pour into those children those things. And it's just not enough time to be able to do that, because you're fighting behaviors, you're fighting school, helping them with homework, because they're also missing things in schools, because they're bouncing from school to school. So those foster parents, and even adoptive parents, are doing other things. And this kind of gets put on the back burner.

Fr. David Carter

When did you start the RISE UP Cooperative?

Sandy Pricer

We officially started in September of 2020, five months ago.

Fr. David Carter

So it's a kind of a fledgling. And has it gone smoothly so far?

Sandy Pricer

It depends on your definition of smoothly. We very much have been blessed in in the support and the encouragement, like I mentioned earlier, and it's been a humbling experience for people to say, "I love what you're doing," and "Let me know how I can help you in any way." It has been a lot smoother than I had anticipated. It became a full-time job overnight, which I wasn't anticipating. I should have anticipated it. But it is what it is. And it's been a true blessing to be able to have this opportunity to pour into lives that otherwise I never would have been able to do.

Fr. David Carter

I've always been inspired by your go-get, can-do, make-it-happen attitude. And it's really serving not only your family, but it's going to serve so many more people. In your five months of doing this, do you have any stories of people who have already been affected by your work?

Sandy Pricer

Not specifically, because we are so new. However, I do have a couple teens that keep coming back every week. So I feel like that's a testimony in and of itself. They're obviously gaining something from it and they're enjoying it, for them to keep coming back and spending that hour of their week, bettering themselves.

Fr. David Carter

Awesome. Now you started this nonprofit, cooperative in the middle of a pandemic. What kind of things have you had to do to adapt yourself to this environment?

Sandy Pricer

I am very thankful for technology and things like Zoom like we're doing right now. Because of the pandemic, we have not been able to get in-person with these workshops. And that is definitely something that I want to do very soon. However, I have been able to reach teens across the country. We've had, over the last couple of weeks, teens from Colorado and teens from Ohio. I have an organization somewhere in the Midwest that advertises for us. They get all the things around the country, for teens, that are available for them, and they share it with their clients. Being able to reach farther and wider, and virtual, even when we get in person, will be something we will continue to do, so we can continue to reach those teens that can't come in person when we find a location.

Fr. David Carter

So maybe there is a silver lining behind the pandemic that it made a wider reach than you otherwise would have shot for.

Sandy Pricer

Absolutely. It opened my eyes to things that I never thought were possible. I never thought it would be a country-wide endeavor, for sure.

Fr. David Carter

What is your vision for the next five years, and what impact do you hope to have?

Sandy Pricer

I'm really good at saying, "This is so awesome. Let's get this started," and getting people on board. It starts off with me, but other people join on. But I would really love when we have a location to make it a drop-in center, to have people available when teens are. Because everyone's schedule is different. They might not be able to make it to a workshop, but they can drop in and get some one-on-one, like a teen mentor program. Transitional living has a huge deficit in our city - I'm sure across the country - but I know here in Chattanooga. As the kids transition out of foster care, there are programs available, but they're for the most part left on their own and, again, lacking some of these things that they haven't gotten that that RISE UP is striving to incorporate, but they haven't gotten it yet. To be able to help in that arena, so that they don't become homeless, because around 50% of teens become emancipated from foster care end up homeless.... The transitional living programs here in town are working to prevent that from happening, but they need more hands, and they need more programs, aiding in that. I would love to be able to help in that. We also have a RISE UP adventures and center program, that as soon as we can get in person, I want to take advantage of, with places like Lookout Conservatory. And there's another one that just went out of my mind. But they do a lot of free outdoor things for kids, and the outdoors is so healing and helpful. They come to workshops. To be able to go rock climb, to be able to go canoeing with a group and do things that they maybe wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

Fr. David Carter

Awesome. If somebody's listening to this interview, what action can they take to assist your work? How can people get involved to support your work?

Sandy Pricer

Well, with our workshops on Tuesday evenings, I have been so excited. And we've been blessed to be able to have a different leader from the community, every single week, come and present those. And I'm always looking for people that have a passion in helping teens. In their job or career, if they have a niche that they are really passionate about, come lead one of these workshops right now. I'm thankfully booked through May with a different teacher each week. But after May I need to build those Tuesday evenings. Additionally, financial contributions to help these upcoming programs that I mentioned, to help us rent or buy a place to be able to meet these teens in person. We're always looking for that financial donation help in order to reach these things. Because everything that we do is free. And again, once we get in person where we will offer snacks and different things like that. And of course, that costs money on our end.

I forgot to mention our parent workshop, too, that I'm super excited about. We started this month, and actually the first one is on February 15. The parents can't help their kids or pour into their kids, if they're struggling with things themselves. The first one is on Internet safety, because that's a huge one. There are so many things out there that can hurt them on the internet. And so many times parents have no idea how to protect their

kids. We have a former police chief coming in who is an internationally renowned speaker to speak on this topic for us in February. Each month we're going to offer a parent workshop so that we can help parents help their teens, making that cycle better.

Fr. David Carter

There are some awesome things that you have cooking with this RISE UP Cooperative. Do you mind if I share your website on the screen share? If you're looking for more information, I'm guessing that's why you have the website up there, for engagement: It's riseupcooperative.org, a very well-done website, that's been put on. And, very prominently, there is a great way to support them right here (a Donate button). If you can donate, I'm sure that would be a great help to the work of the RISE UP Cooperative. And it can tell you how exactly you can help and be involved, more information about who you serve, what motivates you, and then you can stay up to date with the blog that they keep up to date in in this cooperative. I am just very impressed by the work that you all do, happy to highlight it here in the in the parish, impart ways that our parishioners can get involved in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and to know that we're all in this together and each one of us has a part to play in in the common good.

Sandy Pricer

Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me and letting me share the information on RISE UP.

Fr. David Carter

You bet. And thank you for all you're doing. Keep inspiring so many more of our young people to RISE UP and to grasp life and all that's out there for us! Thank you for your inspiration and following through.

Sandy Pricer

You're welcome. Thank you, Father.

Fr. David Carter

God bless.

Sandy Pricer

God bless.