

# EVERGREEN Exclamations!

Spring | 2020



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## Inside...

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND INCREASING INDEPENDENCE ONE SEED AT A TIME.....3

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.....4

BRIDGING THE GAP IN HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.....5

TAKING MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS TO PROVIDE PAYCHECKS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.....6

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2019 DONORS.....7

Dear Friend,

Looking back at 2019 we have seen so much progress being made in Evergreen Life Services' mission to serve, provide for and champion individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Evergreen works hard to enable every person it serves to reach his or her highest potential for independence, self-care and productivity. In our first 2020 edition of Evergreen Exclamations, you will learn how your generosity is changing people's lives, and how every day we use creative thinking and innovation to build better lives and create more opportunities for the more than 1,100 people we serve.

A copy of our fiscal year 2018-2019 annual report is enclosed, but these numbers only touch the surface of the depth and breadth of our expanding programs.

In this issue, you'll get a look inside our EvergreenGROWS horticulture program, where individuals are learning vocational skills, while reaping the health benefits of gardening. You will see how our Abundant Healthcare Clinic is doing after more than a year in operation, and learn how we are using Telehealth to provide equal and quality healthcare for more individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. And finally, you will learn

how we are providing paychecks and sense of purpose through our largest social enterprise, HEAVENDROPt.

2020 is just getting started. We look forward to sharing so much more with you in future issues. I hope you enjoy this special edition of Evergreen Exclamations.



Sincerely,

Stephen Holland,  
Chairman of Evergreen Life Services'  
Board of Directors

*Romans 12:7-8 "If it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."*



# BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND INCREASING INDEPENDENCE ONE SEED AT A TIME

**O**n a balmy Texas morning in 2017, members of Faithbridge Presbyterian Church had a special delivery for Evergreen's Dallas Division – six newly built raised garden beds. No one knew it then, but these garden beds would become so popular and loved by the nearly 70 individuals served at our Dallas Division, that they would lay the foundation for a horticulture program that is well on its way to becoming one of the best in the country for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Today, a towering greenhouse fills the back of Evergreen's Dallas Day Program. The sweet smells of lemon and orange trees waft through the air. Seasonal flowers like pansies in winter and begonias, marigolds and sunflowers in spring fill the garden beds with resplendent colors. Rescue chickens from the Dallas SPCA bob about. Cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, watermelon, pumpkins, brussels sprouts, cantaloupes, herbs and Swiss chard – all grow organically without any chemicals or pesticides.

All of this incredible bounty was planted, nurtured and harvested by people served by Evergreen.

There are proven health benefits to gardening, including lower stress levels, improving the immune system and exercise. But for people with



intellectual and developmental disabilities, who often struggle to carve out a place for themselves in a society that does not see their abilities, this horticulture program is life-changing.

Just ask David, who is blind, but fills soil in pots faster than his peers. Or Marcy, who uses a wheelchair and has very limited mobility but is able to push seeds into the soil at just the right angle. At Evergreen's Horticulture Program, everyone has a unique ability to contribute.



"In 2020 we will be expanding our horticulture program to our Sherman, Texas program thanks to a generous grant from CoServe," Karen Towery, Executive Director of North Central Texas says. "We are excited to begin selling our produce on a larger scale throughout the North Central Texas area. We will use our profits to fund our programs and provide paychecks for the people we serve."

"Also coming soon are jams and jellies and elderberry syrup, which many believe has medicinal properties," Karen adds.

Evergreen can't wait to share more about this innovative and mission-driven program with the community. If you are in the North Central Texas Area we would love to take you on a tour.

Contact Karen Towery at [ktowery@evergreens.org](mailto:ktowery@evergreens.org) or (817) 683 0424 to schedule your tour.



*Above: More images from Evergreen's Dallas Day Program's Greenhouse*

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

In 2019, tremendous strides were made in Evergreen Life Service's mission to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live as independently as possible by providing loving homes, job training, educational resources and opportunities to connect with their faith. Victories large and small add up to create a world of inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Evergreen plays an important role in this work, and it couldn't happen without you. You write to lawmakers to ask for better funding; you hire people with disabilities; you purchase products made by people with disabilities; you attend our events; you educate family, friends and total strangers about what each of us can do to build better lives for people with disabilities; and you fuel this work with your donations. Please take a minute to view the included annual report about what we've been able to accomplish together.

Thanks to you, we are starting the new year with high hopes. Please consider continuing your support for Evergreen's

work to keep our programs and services strong and moving forward. Here are some giving options that are popular with Evergreen supporters.

- Make a gift online at [evergreenls.org/give](http://evergreenls.org/give)
- Monthly giving: Join our monthly giving program at [evergreenls.org/give](http://evergreenls.org/give)
- Bequests: When you leave a gift in your will or trust, you have full access to your money for as long as you live. Your gift goes to Evergreen only if you do not need it during your life
- Beneficiary Designations: You can name Evergreen as a beneficiary of your life insurance, your IRA, your retirement plan, a bank account, or a deferred annuity. You may designate any amount you choose, from 1% to 100%
- Stocks, bonds and mutual funds: Pay no capital gains on gifts of securities
- Charitable Gift Annuity: Evergreen will pay you annuity income for life

We'll be happy to assist you with your plans and provide details for any of these giving options. Contact our office at 318-949-5500 to explore various ways to support our work.

With your help, we are looking forward to expanding what we can do to create a better future for people of all abilities.



**Sue Buchholtz, President / CEO,  
MBA, EDDBA Candidate**

# BRIDGING THE GAP IN HEALTHCARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

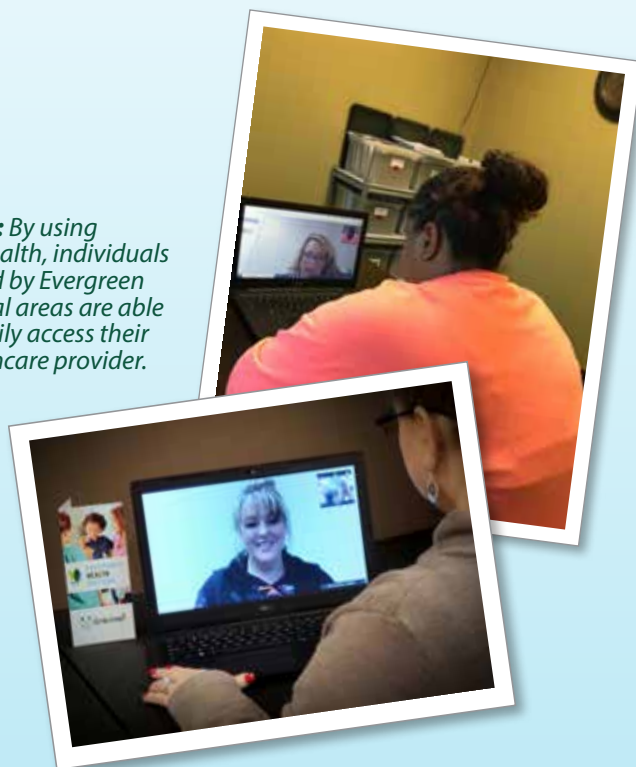


It's 2020 and Americans with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) are still living significantly shorter lives than their peers without disabilities. They have higher rates of death from heart disease, cancer, asthma, emphysema and bronchitis. They receive less preventive care and visit the hospital and emergency department more often. Although their health outcomes are much worse than the general population, their healthcare spending is much higher.

**The individuals served by Evergreen cannot reach his or her highest potential if they do not have equal access to quality healthcare.**

Greeneville, Tennessee is the home of Evergreen's Upper East Tennessee Division and was chosen as the location of the first Abundant Healthcare Clinic because of the limited access to healthcare in rural areas.

**Right:** By using telehealth, individuals served by Evergreen in rural areas are able to easily access their healthcare provider.



**Above:** Abundant Healthcare Clinic's providers all have training and experience in treating individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Today, the clinic is staffed with a physician and nurses who are trained in providing healthcare for individuals with disabilities, specifically with I/DD. Since its inception, there have been nearly 400 patient appointments.

"Despite a high level of need, many healthcare practitioners receive little training in how to take care of people living with disabilities," Sue Buchholtz, CEO of Evergreen explains. "Abundant is providing a much-needed healthcare option."

In January of 2020, Evergreen took a step closer to reaching its goal of providing equal access to healthcare for people with disabilities by offering Telehealth appointments, expanding its reach to patients outside of the Greeneville area. Telehealth is an important tool to deliver comprehensive care to people in rural areas, especially people with disabilities who often do not have access to a vehicle to get to and from appointments.

"We are focused on improving healthcare outcomes for individuals who are underserved, and Telehealth is an exciting way to help accomplish this," Maxine Michael, Executive Vice President of Operations for Evergreen says. "People with disabilities deserve the same quality and consistency in their healthcare as you and me."

# TAKING MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS TO PROVIDE PAYCHECKS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



**D**espite the near record-low unemployment, people with disabilities remain largely underemployed or unemployed. Nearly a third of people with disabilities live below the poverty line.

Evergreen works hard to educate local business owners about the value that the people we serve can offer as an employee, but there is still a shortage of businesses willing to hire individuals with disabilities in some of the areas where Evergreen is located.

HEAVENDROpt, Evergreen's largest social enterprise, provided more paychecks to people with disabilities in 2019 than ever before. HEAVENDROpt is now one of the nation's largest private owners of used military parachutes, with more than 350,000 pounds of parachutes currently stored in our Largo, Florida warehouse. Some of our parachutes even date back to World War II.

When parachutes are retired from the U.S. military they are often destroyed. HEAVENDROpt acquires them before they are destroyed. We then repurpose them into products, allowing us to provide paychecks to the people we serve as well as veterans with disabilities.



**Above:** Individuals served by Evergreen earn paychecks for their work creating HEAVENDROpt products.

HEAVENDROpt employs veterans with disabilities out of our Florida facility, where they cut the parachutes into the parts needed to make specific products and ship them to Evergreen's divisions in kits. The people served by Evergreen, who want to work, assemble the products using the instructions and pieces provided in each kit. Each person earns a paycheck for his or her work.

HEAVENDROpt is creating steps toward removing barriers, such as poverty and unemployment, for people with disabilities. To date, HEAVENDROpt has provided paychecks to 30 people with disabilities and sold more than 30,000 products to individuals and retailers around the country.

To shop our HEAVENDROpt products, visit [heavendropt.org](http://heavendropt.org).



**Left:** Piled near the ceiling, our Florida facility is home to one of the largest private supplies of U.S. military parachutes in the world.



# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR 2019 DONORS

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*Space limitations prevent us from listing all our dear friends who donated \$1 - \$199.*

*We deeply appreciate your contribution which provided programs to over 1,160 people with disabilities.*

*\* If you have not been properly recognized for your contribution, please contact Susan Salih, at [susan.salih@evergreens.org](mailto:susan.salih@evergreens.org) or 318-949-5500.*



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Sue Buchholtz, MBA, EDDBA Candidate

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Friday, February 28, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

Banquet Masters

13355 49th St North, Clearwater, FL 33762

For More Info: [robby.groover@evergreenls.org](mailto:robby.groover@evergreenls.org)



Thursday, April 23, 2020 from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m

East Ridge Country Club

1000 Stewart Dr, Shreveport, LA 71106

For More Info: [cathey.crow@evergreenls.org](mailto:cathey.crow@evergreenls.org)



Friday, October 23, 2020

Dallas Area

More Details Coming Soon

For More Info: [michael.lawson@evergreenls.org](mailto:michael.lawson@evergreenls.org)

