

## EVERGREEN'S MISSION IS TO SERVE, PROVIDE FOR AND CHAMPION INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



Evergreen Life Services is a charitable, non-profit organization that provides a full range of professional services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Evergreen Life Services was started in 1959 as a Presbyterian ministry to provide community-based services to local people with disabilities in Northwest Louisiana. Before that time, people with severe IDD were usually sent to state institutions. Since its beginning, Evergreen Life Services has expanded into eight states and now serves more than 1,100 people with disabilities.

### EMPHASIZING ABILITIES

As a nationally recognized leader in serving people with IDD, Evergreen focuses on the abilities of the people we serve. People with IDD can greatly improve their level of functioning with the right professional support and training. With decades of experience and modern best practices, Evergreen strives to enable every person it serves to reach his or her highest potential for independence, self-care, and productivity.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Evergreen operates a wide variety of programs and services, day work centers, supportive living and employment services, art centers, and social enterprise projects. Evergreen community homes are designed to help those we serve to live as a part of the community in which they live, rather than apart from the community. Evergreen residential services keep people safe and comfortable in a normal community home while learning basic life skills to become as independent as possible.

### UNDERSTANDING DISABILITIES

Evergreen serves people with many different types of disabilities. In almost all cases, these are severe and irreversible impairment of the brain, often present from birth or arising during childhood. These disabilities may be caused by genetic abnormalities, diseases, infections, or injury. Generally, people with these disabilities face lifelong challenges and usually need some level of professional support throughout their lifespan. With the right support and training, they can lead productive and fulfilling lives.

## TEXARKANA EVERGREEN

Evergreen believes that all people could and should be served in the community and strives to incorporate a person-centered planning and service delivery approach, supporting each person to reach their full potential. Services were expanded to the Texarkana area in 1989. Community homes were opened to prepare persons to participate as fully as possible in available community activities. These homes are located in typical middle-class neighborhoods and are virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding residences. Texarkana now provides services to 54 individuals ranging in age from 22 to 89 in a variety of settings including day programs, job training, senior citizen programs, and community homes.

*“For years, it has been our dream to expand our program services to enrich the lives of others. This move is a result of several years of pursuing dreams which will allow us to do just that and positively affect the lives of so many.” -Linda Bailey, State Executive Director, Texas*

There are extremely limited opportunities for employment training and employment for individuals with disabilities in the greater Texarkana area. Only 40% of adults with disabilities in their prime working years (ages 25-54) have a job, compared to 79% of all prime-age adults. Employment is central to the goals set forth by the ADA—equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency—but there is more work to do on that front.

The percentage of persons with a disability under 65 in Bowie County is 9.2% and Cass County is 11.7%, well above the national average of 8.6%. The poverty rate in Bowie County is 19.1% and Cass County is 20.4%; both of those almost double that of the national average of 11.8%. That means that based on population data, there are 12,091 persons with disabilities and approximately 7,255 are unemployed in Bowie and Cass Counties. Vocational training for this population is essential to increase the employment rate for persons with disabilities that want to obtain meaningful employment.

The current Evergreen Life Services facility in Texarkana has many limitations to expanding program offerings and does not meet accessibility requirements. In 2020, Evergreen Life Services’ dream became a reality with the purchase of a 12,534 square foot building that perfectly aligned with plans to expand programs and services in the Texarkana area.

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The agency's board of directors is committed to the building renovation and program expansion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in East Texas and the greater Texarkana area.

In order to make this dream a reality, renovations are underway on the newly purchased building. The total project amount of \$1 million includes \$450,000 purchase of the building, \$324,000 renovations including required HVAC and Fire Alarm upgrades, \$36,500 equipment/furnishing to expand programming, and moving expenses. Renovations, landscaping, and outdoor structures are estimated to cost \$175,000 to incorporate outdoor programming that will include a walking path, basketball area, gazebos, greenhouse, raised garden beds, and fencing for one city block. The new facility will allow Evergreen to provide a state of the art ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant building and to greatly expand programs and services to include:

- **Pre-vocational Skill Development and Vocational Training**
- **Art Studio and Gallery**
- **Computer & Technology Center**
- **Kitchen for Cooking & Nutrition Education**
- **Indoor Fitness Center and Outdoor Sports Area**
- **Supported Employment Services**
- **Independent Living Skills and Functional Academics**
- **Social Skill Development and Personal Growth Opportunities**
- **Music Room**
- **Library**
- **Multi-sensory Room**
- **Horticulture Program**
- **HEAVENDROPt, a Social Enterprise**
- **On-Site Social/Recreational/Leisure Activities**
- **Civic and Community Partnerships and Engagement**
- **Service Learning in the Community and Volunteerism**

All people with intellectual and developmental disabilities should have the opportunity to be contributing members of their communities; to make real choices; to have the confidence to strive; to have the freedom to excel; to have supports to achieve individual goals; to influence policy; to determine services that affect their lives; and to recognize that they have the same rights, privileges, and power to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others. The new building will enable Evergreen to provide opportunities for those we serve to make these worthy ideals a reality.

Evergreen's board of directors, administration, and those served are asking individuals, foundations, and corporations in the community to join us in this important expansion of services. We welcome your feedback on this new endeavor and hope you will consider supporting the project. For more information, contact Amber Keith, Director of Donor Relations at (903) 824-0095.

