

EVERGREEN Exclamations!

Spring | 2021



everyone matters.

evergreen

LIFE SERVICES



**SERVE
PROVIDE
CHAMPION**

FROM THE CHAIR OF OUR BOARD

Dear Friends,

Evergreen's Board of Directors last met in person in February of 2020. The mood was optimistic. With only a handful of COVID-19 cases on the West Coast, the COVID-19 emergency plans we discussed seemed like an added precaution.

Evergreen was starting the decade in a financially good place. We were focused on expanding our program offerings to help more people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), increasing wages for Direct Support Professionals, and improving our existing programs and services. Nothing seemed out of reach.

But within a few weeks of that happy February meeting, all of our lives would change. Despite closely following CDC guidelines in social distancing, hand washing and assuring all staff members and persons served wore masks, Evergreen's programs were soon closing, family visitations were canceled, stay-at-home guidelines were issued to all of the people we serve, and community home quarantines were enacted as residents and staff members started to test positive for COVID-19.

By now, close to 300 staff and persons served at Evergreen have battled and recovered from the virus. The grimmer numbers are the ones that stick with us. Seven people we serve and two staff members died from COVID-19.

As Chairman of Evergreen's Board during one of the most challenging years the organization has ever had, I am humbled by the daily acts of heroism and resilience among our staff members and persons served. What our people have endured this year has been incredibly difficult. As a parent of an adult child with Down Syndrome, I can relate to the anxiety of keeping a vulnerable loved one safe from

COVID-19. Evergreen's staff members are working tirelessly to keep more than 1,100 vulnerable individuals safe.

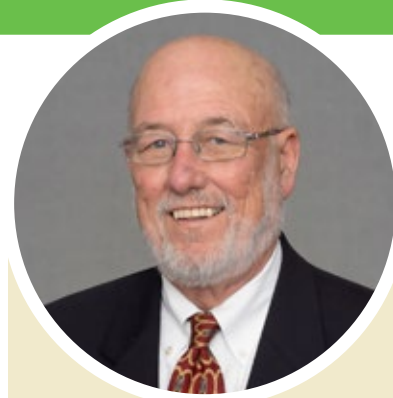
I want to highlight Evergreen's financial position. The enclosed annual report reflects Evergreen's 2019-20 fiscal year. The financial section presents financial activity for the fiscal year of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. For the fiscal year, gross revenues amounted to \$74,958,116, with expenses incurred of \$72,735,777. The resulting net surplus of \$2,222,339 represents a modest 2.96% percentage of gross revenues. The surplus enables Evergreen to accommodate capital improvements, maintain debt service and sustain valuable services. For the upcoming fiscal year, Evergreen will recognize revenues from participation in the federal CARES Act legislation that provided for COVID-19 related expenditures.

In other words, Evergreen was blessed to stay afloat when so many nonprofits and businesses were not so fortunate. However, our margins are thin, and the big plans we had at the start of 2020 cannot move forward without your support. If you are in a position to give, I ask you to please consider a donation today. COVID-19 has reminded all of us in the disability community how important it is that people with I/DD have advocates and extra support.

Sincerely,



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



Stephen Holland

*Chairman of Evergreen Life Services'
Board of Directors*

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Remembering Adele Larose

OCTOBER 14, 1955 - JULY 31, 2020

In the mid-1980s, the lively Ms. Adele Larose came to live with Evergreen in Louisiana. For more than 30 years, Adele would call Evergreen her home. When she passed away on July 31, 2020, she left behind many people who loved her dearly.

The devotion and care Adele received from Evergreen staff members enabled her to live as independently as possible. At Evergreen, she was encouraged to make her own choices and choose the life she wanted to live. For Adele, life meant daily cups of coffee, a strong faith, a love of Snoopy and the Peanuts Gang, and meeting new friends. It meant never judging anyone and giving the shirt off her back to a stranger in need.

"Physically she was dealt a hand that might have made a weaker person give up," Adele's sister, Beth, explains. "She never ever did."

"If a staff member was having a bad day, Adele had a way of making them feel better with her smile and her infectious laugh," remembered Sharon Gomez, who used to enjoy daily coffee breaks with Adele when she was the Director of the Evergreen Division where Adele was served. "She had a genuine concern for people and their well-being."

When Adele passed, her siblings, Beth, Michael and Buddy, wanted to ensure that Adele's legacy lived on. To them, the best way to honor their sister was by recognizing the Evergreen staff members Adele loved so much. They made a generous gift to Evergreen's Staff Benevolence Fund and committed to future gifts.

In recognition of Adele's love for her Evergreen staff, we are proud to rename Evergreen's Staff Benevolence Fund the *Adele Larose Evergreen Staff Fund*. The fund is used to assist employees who



have experienced a life-altering crisis. In Southeast Louisiana, the division where Adele was served, it was used to help a staff member get back on her feet after losing her belongings in a house fire. In another recent example, this fund came to the rescue after a staff member received a devastating diagnosis of congenital cystic lung disease.

The *Adele Larose Evergreen Staff Fund* is a perfect way to honor Adele, who would have wanted nothing more than for staff members to be cared for in the same way that they cared for her – like family. You can support this fund at evergreenls.org/give. Choose "Give Where Needed Most" and be sure to type "Adele" in the Special Notes section.

Evergreen staff members at the Colonel Allen Community Home and Ponchatoula Day Program, who worked closely with Adele, still catch themselves wondering out loud what Adele would say whenever something exciting or funny happens. Staff members attended to Adele's daily needs for decades, but Adele took care of them through her concern and generosity. They miss her. Adele's infectious laugh could make the biggest of problems a little smaller and the darkest of days a little brighter.

Rest in Peace, Adele Larose
October 14, 1955 - July 31, 2020



CAMP GILMONT SAVES THE DAY

On a muggy day in late August, weary and anxious staff members boarded up their homes and said goodbye to their families. Then they went to work, where they secured Evergreen's community homes as best as they could, and packed medications and a few sets of clothing for each person served. They rented a U-Haul and filled it with breathing machines, wheelchairs, and other life-sustaining medical equipment used by the Evergreen residents entrusted in their care.

As the vans full of the people served by Evergreen's Southwest Louisiana and West Calcasieu Divisions pulled out of the driveways of their community homes, everyone prayed they would be back soon. Nobody knew it then, but many wouldn't return for months.

The adage "when it rains, it pours" perfectly describes Louisiana's 2020 hurricane season. The Bayou State was pummeled by five landfall storms last year, which broke the state's record for the most storms in a single season. When Hurricane Laura slammed into Southwest Louisiana at the end of August, it was the strongest storm to make landfall in the state in more than 150 years.

Evacuating entire divisions ahead of a hurricane is a massive undertaking that Evergreen prepares for every

year. However, this year was extra challenging, with COVID-19 spreading throughout the country. Evacuation plans also had to account for social distancing whenever possible.

Hurricane Laura ravaged Louisiana's southwest coast and made its way up the state. As it barreled toward the central part of the state, it knocked out the power to the hotel where dozens of evacuated Evergreen residents and staff members were riding out the storm.



As soon as the storm passed over, there was no question that they needed a new plan and fast. The real-fee temperature had sweltered to the triple digits. Evergreen needed multiple hotel rooms to accommodate a large group, a near impossibility with the power out in much of the state.

The Presbyterian ministry of Camp Gilmont in Gilmer, Texas was Evergreen's saving grace in a difficult situation. Their team cleared their reservations after hearing our troubles, and welcomed several vans full of Evergreen's worn-out evacuees into their wooded retreat.

After months of sheltering at home due to COVID-19 and enduring a stressful hurricane evacuation, Evergreen residents ended up at summer camp. Even though there were many difficulties with the evacuation, travel, extraordinary expenses, and being separated from friends and family for weeks, the Camp Gilmont setting provided opportunities for some fun activities like camp songs, roasting marshmallows, archery, fishing, crafts, and zip-lining. For a little while, being at Camp Gilmont made the devastation left by Hurricane Laura seem far away.

The damage Hurricane Laura left behind was tremendous. Some Evergreen residents lost nearly everything they owned. Over 30 Evergreen community homes were damaged, and some staff members' homes were a total loss. Many people were not able to return home until November. We will always be grateful to Camp Gilmont for providing some of our most vulnerable residents with a safe place to go and some of their best memories of 2020.



THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING EVERGREEN'S HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF FUND

Your generosity raised more than **\$120,000** for **Evergreen's Hurricane Disaster Relief Fund**. The impact you have made in the lives of the people we serve, who lost everything from a terrible hurricane season, cannot be put into words. Your financial support provided new clothes, furniture, electronics, bedding, books and more. But most importantly, you have reminded them how much you care.

THANK YOU!

Learn more at evergreenls.org/hurricanelaura.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

Dear Friends,

2020 started as a year full of promise. We had plans to expand our programming in Georgia and Florida, host exciting fundraisers in Dallas, Shreveport, Alexandria, New Orleans and Texarkana, enhance offerings in our cultural arts programs and open new horticulture programs across many of our divisions.

We all know what happened next. As COVID-19 spread throughout our country, the narrative quickly changed. Pretty soon, our communications to you, our board members and staff members were full of phrases like “unprecedented,” “challenging” and “difficult.”

This new year, we look ahead to the next chapter. Because Evergreen serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, who are in a high-risk population, they were among the first to be offered the vaccine. Our frontline staff members are also in the first wave of people to have the opportunity to be vaccinated. We hope that most residents and staff members will choose to be vaccinated, allowing us to resume our full programming and services sooner, rather than later.

But even with our programs’ full opening, the people we support will still face many challenges. For example, Evergreen serves dozens of individuals in our supportive employment program who worked at off-site jobs and were forced to give up their positions as the pandemic spread throughout their communities.

Now they are eager to return to the workforce, but many of the businesses they worked for have either gone out of business or replaced their position. Even in periods of economic growth, people with disabilities struggle to secure full-time and

lasting employment. During economic downturns, this is even harder.

We understand the importance of our mission and how hard we must work this year to ensure that the people we serve are not left behind. In 2020, our primary focus was on keeping those we serve healthy and safe. In 2021, it is our hope that we will be able to safely open back up, but some predictions are showing that may not happen until fall or even later. Whether we are fully open or not, we are committed to fighting for equal opportunities for those we support. And we can’t do it without you.

Please consider continuing your support for Evergreen’s mission by helping us restore our pre-pandemic programs and services. Here are several options of how you can provide support:

- Make a gift online at evergreenls.org/give
- Monthly giving: Join our monthly giving program at 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 or securities
- Charitable Gift Annuity: Evergreen will pay you annuity income for life



Sue Buchholtz

President / CEO, MBA, EDBA Candidate

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.





HELP HEAVENDROPT RECOVER FROM FINANCIAL HIT

HEAVENDROPT, Evergreen's largest social enterprise, provides meaningful work for people with disabilities who turn recycled parachutes into one-of-kind gifts. A lot of HEAVENDROPT's profits come from tradeshows that we participate in around the country. In 2020, we were not able to participate in any tradeshows due to COVID-19. This resulted in a substantial financial loss. Please help us keep HEAVENDROPT, and the opportunity it provides for people we serve to earn a paycheck, by shopping at our online store at heavendropt.org.

YOUR NEXT VINTAGE FIND AWAITS AT POSSIBILITIES ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES

If you've ever taken a drive down Main Street in Minden, Louisiana, you may have noticed a quaint wood-framed building with a "Possibilities" sign. Thousands of antiques and collectibles await customers who drive from all over the state to shop. As a social enterprise of Evergreen, the profits from the sale of new and vintage items support our programs and provide employment opportunities for individuals we serve with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

We invite you to stop by for a fun shopping experience that supports our mission!

Visit us Monday – Saturday from 9 am – 5 pm at 101 Main Street, Minden LA, 71055



EVERGREEN'S HORTICULTURE PROGRAM PROVIDES FUNCTIONAL LIFE SKILLS



A dults with disabilities are three times more likely to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer than adults without disabilities. The health benefits of gardening and physical activity help decrease all of these disparities. Evergreen's horticulture programs also provide the individuals we serve with functional life skills and a chance to earn a fair wage that many desire to increase their quality of life. These programs are critical in 2021, as so many of the people we support have lost their incomes because of the pandemic.

North Central Texas: The smiles on their faces said it all. After months of being closed due to COVID-19, Evergreen staff members at our North Central Texas Division decided its Dallas horticulture program would reopen for residents in a limited capacity. To avoid mixing households and possible COVID-19 exposure, residents from one community home at a time could return to the programs your generosity made possible.



The people supported couldn't wait to get back in the dirt. There were new seeds to plant, soil to till, grass to cut and weeds to pull. Their hard work paid off in healthy and delicious food for community homes residents. They enjoyed squash, tomatoes, zucchini, peppers, lettuce, kale, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, oranges, lemons, strawberries, grapefruit and herbs.





Thanks to two generous grants from CoServ and the Grayson Foundation, we were able to build greenhouses at our day programs in Sherman, Texas and Minden, Louisiana.

North Central Louisiana: "More than a dozen individuals served in North Central Louisiana lost their jobs in the community due to COVID-19 workforce cuts," Lesa Hamilton, Executive Director of North Central Louisiana explained. "Having a meaningful vocational program, like our horticulture program, will make a huge difference in providing the people we serve with new job training and opportunities."

Hundreds of people served by Evergreen have reaped the benefits of participating in our horticulture programs with the help of supporters like you. For some individuals, the repetitive movements required



to plant seeds help to improve their motor and cognitive skills. Others are developing new skills and independence through more advanced work, such as canning food and making jellies.

Evergreen currently has four Horticulture programs – two in Texas and two in Louisiana. With your help, we can expand this important offering to more of the people we serve in our other divisions. To designate your gift to our horticulture programs, visit evergreenls.org/give and type "horticulture" in the special notes section or write "Horticulture" on the enclosed envelope.



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Sue Buchholtz, MBA, EDDBA Candidate

UPCOMING EVENTS

VISIT [EVERGREENLS.ORG/EVENTS](https://evergreenls.org/events) FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR SPONSORSHIPS

SUPPORT OUR LIFE-CHANGING WORK AT [EVERGREENLS.ORG/GIVE](https://evergreenls.org/give)



Friday, May 21, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Virtual event

For more info:

heather.reuscher@evergreenls.org



Friday, June 4, 2021 at 6 p.m.

Pam's Bayou in a Bowl

2049 N Mall Dr, Alexandria, LA 71301

For more info: mitzi.lasalle@evergreenls.org



Thursday, June 10, 2021 from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

East Ridge Country Club

1000 Stewart Dr, Shreveport, LA 71106

For more info: cathey.crow@evergreenls.org

