6 big things in 6 months

The difference our donors make
An Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) device, also known as a "talker," is used to help non-verbal children communicate and develop language skills. This loaner program gives families a chance to try the device before making the financial investment of purchasing their own.

With the support of our 2017 #GiveBR donors, we purchased seven new devices for the program. Our donors exceeded our goal, allowing us to give each family a printed guide for parents, children's books to introduce AAC to the children, and materials to make waterproof versions for swimming and bath time. With these new devices, the wait list for this program is now clear!

This spring, our staff presented at the Louisiana Assistive Technology Center's conference to show other industry professionals how these devices expand all aspects of communication, and how they can be used by multiple disciplines outside of the speech room. Emerge is becoming known as an innovative leader in this area.

"After participating in the loaner program and parent training, I've seen real progress and decided to purchase our own "talker." My son is now beginning to verbalize "hi" and other words, as well as continuing to expand his use of his AAC device!"

-Seth's mom
Supporters of the 2018 Angling Against Autism event brought in critical dollars for our J. Arthur Bergeron and Lana Valley Estopinal Scholarship Fund, established by Angie and Moonie Bergeron. In April, we disbursed over $26,000 to twelve families whose children participate in Bloom, a comprehensive tuition-based program. This leaves $7,000 should more families seek financial assistance later in the year.

Children with autism need intensive therapy, and that is expensive. For many families, insurance covers a great deal of the services needed, but it still isn’t enough. In many cases, insurance co-pays and deductibles can add up quickly for families whose children receive multiple therapies several times a week.

Our scholarship program helps families access the comprehensive therapies their children need. Since 2012, donor support has allowed us to provide more than $175,000 in financial support to families at Emerge.

“
Our family has benefited greatly from assistance provided for our daughter. She is talking so much more over the past year and is starting to grasp concepts in reading, which is something we never thought would happen.”

- Anna’s mom
autism awareness

WHAT IT IS

April, National Autism Awareness Month, was filled with support for our mission, the children we serve, and raising awareness.

FAMILIES IMPACTED

COUNTLESS!

April was a busy month at Emerge as we celebrated Autism Awareness Month. Sixteen local companies participated in our first ever classroom supply drive in honor of Autism Awareness Month. These companies and their employees donated hundreds of much-needed supplies. Having these items donated provides a huge cost savings to our center!

Rotolo’s, Flambee Cafe, and Walk-On’s hosted Give Back events, donating a portion of their sales to Emerge. Aside from raising funds, this was a great opportunity for us to raise awareness of autism and the services we provide in the community.

“Our volunteers choose to donate their time to Emerge because they know it’s a great organization where they can make a difference and really have fun.

-Starmount Volunteer Manager

We participated in two special events which gave our kiddos a chance to enjoy fun family outings. The first was a sensory-friendly story time at Barnes and Noble led by two of our Speech Therapists. The second was the LSU Autism Awareness Softball Game, where children were invited to go on the field with the team for the national anthem.
WHAT IT IS
Our Children’s Development Center Coordinator provides support to families receiving services at Emerge by counseling caregivers, linking families to applicable resources, assisting with therapeutic placement, and providing educational opportunities for our families.

FAMILIES IMPACTED
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Philanthropic contributions have enabled us to establish a new position - our CDC Coordinator. For parents, having a primary point of contact for resources and support while their child is receiving therapy services is invaluable, and that’s exactly what this position provides.

The CDC Coordinator organizes new family orientations, parent support groups, center activities and field trips, educates families on available resources both in and out of Emerge, and serves as the liaison with community partners that empower families of children with developmental disabilities.

This team member also manages our monthly Munch-N-Learn sessions, which cover a variety of topics for parents of children with special needs. In 2018, we have held sessions on:
- Dealing with problem behaviors at home
- Using visuals to promote language
- Creating a medical binder
- Play routines
- Sensory Processing Disorder

“I’m able to support families, helping to complete our continuum of care. I am able to assist them in gaining knowledge and access to a system that can often be difficult to navigate, as well as empower them to continually advocate for their child.”

-Lauren Shaw, CDC Coordinator
Thanks to two generous grantors, we were able to provide scholarships to nine children for our 11-week Kindergarten Summer Camp focused on building school readiness skills for children entering kindergarten or first grade in the fall of 2018.

The summer can be a challenging season for families of children with autism, as the team of professionals surrounding the child throughout the school year typically disburse. Parents become not only the primary caregiver, but also the teacher, therapist, playmate and more. Recreational activities that are appropriate and engaging for these children are often scarce or difficult to access because of financial limitations of families.

During camp, we focus on increasing each child’s engagement in a small or large group activity, helping children learn how to make friends and improve social skills, and use hands-on and experiential learning activities to increase each child’s love of learning.
Feeding Therapy

What It Is

Our Pediatric Feeding Therapy Program serves children with autism or related disorders and is led by an expert dual Licensed Psychologist.

Families Impacted

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My goal in feeding therapy is to take the stress out of meal times. The families I see dread mealtime. This therapy allows them to start to look forward to eating together as a family.

-Dr. Jane Morton

Unrestricted gifts to our center allow us to develop new programs to meet the emerging needs of the community. With up to 90% of children on the autism spectrum described as having "feeding problems," this challenge is becoming more common. Feeding therapy is in high demand in our area, with limited access to resources. We began our new Pediatric Feeding Therapy Program in January, thanks to general donations to our annual fund.

Feeding therapy is targeted to children with extreme pickiness, mealtime tantrums, distress and anxiety with new foods, and refusal of certain foods based on texture or type.

In the past six months, the program has grown to 18 clients per week, exceeding our target caseload. The services are in high demand, with 29 clients currently waiting for services.