2019
mid-year impact report
Donor Support In Action
At every point in Emerge’s six decades of service, the community has stepped forward and invested in us, believing in our ability to bring about transformational change.

On June 6th, we celebrated yet another incredible milestone for our organization as we hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking for The Emerge School for Autism. This new building on our campus will soon become a reality due to the generous support of donors in our community.

Our school is the first and only public charter school in Louisiana exclusively designed for children with autism. By transitioning from a private, tuition-based school to a public charter, we eliminated the tuition expense for families, thus helping to increase access for those with limited means.

Since its launch in 2018, The Emerge School has been a vital community resource and with the addition of a new 7,000-square-foot facility, we will be able to serve up to 48 children in our first phase of growth. Construction is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2020.
Many children with autism lack self-awareness, have poor motor coordination, and difficulties processing sensory information from the environment. This means personal care routines and daily living abilities can be extremely challenging. Since wellness relies on the ability to care for oneself, various issues such as cavities or irregular sleep habits could arise from these missed routines.

With donor support, our Occupational Therapy (OT) Department has implemented a variety of new opportunities to address these needs with the creation of an Activities of Daily Living (ADL) Suite. Equipment such as a bed, weighted blankets and altered lighting teach sensory and motor skills to ensure activities like sleeping in bed and brushing teeth can come more naturally to the children in our care.

In addition, many children at Emerge experience sensory issues that can make everyday outings very intimidating. Donor support has allowed us to expand our services by offering haircuts and dental screenings at Emerge.

Because these ADL skills do not come easily, our hope in expanding opportunities at an early age is to ensure children’s independence as they emerge.

"The only other ADL suite for children in the country is in Cincinnati. We are so excited to offer this opportunity to our clients!" - Missy Devillier, Director of Occupational Therapy
On May 11th, we hosted our fifth annual gala to benefit The Emerge Center. Funds raised at this event provide critical dollars to strengthen and enhance Emerge’s innovative coordinated care model. To demonstrate the impact of our care model, we would like to tell you about Jaxon.

Jaxon is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and has severe communication challenges. After multiple ear infections, it was important he undergo a hearing test, which quickly proved to be a challenging new experience for him.

To prepare him for a successful hearing test, his team of therapists began working together on a four-week plan. In Speech and Applied Behavior Analysis, his therapists created social stories to familiarize him with the step-by-step process of a hearing test. In OT, they taught Jaxon various self-soothing techniques, practiced wearing headphones, and played with a toy otoscope. Our audiologists joined Jaxon’s therapy sessions to allow him to become familiar with them.

After four attempts and over a month of preparation, Jaxon not only made it through his hearing test, but he also enjoyed it. By the end of the test, he was laughing and clapping, proud of the work he had accomplished. Had he been unable to participate, he would have had to be sedated to undergo hearing testing.

Donor support made this success possible for Jaxon and his family.
As the capabilities of The Emerge Center grow, our new Research and Design Initiative is working to raise awareness of our unique care model nationally. In order to garner broader attention, we are partnering with universities to advance research studies. Our donors have directly enabled the launch and growth of this new initiative.

The primary focus of our research efforts is a seven-year retrospective chart review of children who have participated in Bloom, our five-day-a-week multidisciplinary program for children with autism. Currently, the study is focusing on 77 children. This chart review will analyze data of pre- and post-test scores in three areas: Applied Behavior Analysis, Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

We are fortunate to partner on this project with Dr. Anne Foundas, the Executive Director of The Brain Institute of Louisiana, Managing Partner of NOLA Brain and Behavior, and Research Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Louisiana State University.

Dr. Jane Morton, Emerge’s Director of Research and Design, has shown immense dedication to ensure validation and a deeper exposure of our services to the benefit of the broader community.

“Our goal is to educate and influence other clinics to consider a collaborative program like Bloom.” - Dr. Jane Morton
As a thought leader in our field, Emerge is frequently approached by organizations seeking information about how to better serve children with communication challenges and sensory delays. By sharing our expertise, we are able to help organizations modify their environments and programs to better accommodate diverse groups of children.

In April, a group of Emerge Occupational Therapists educated East Baton Rouge librarians about how to host sensory-friendly hours. These recommendations included adapting the library’s environment to ensure individuals would have an enjoyable learning experience. We have a continued relationship with Knock Knock Children's Museum, working with their staff to help familiarize them with the needs of sensory-friendly children so they can create special experiences for them.

Emerge has also been approached by The Baton Rouge Zoo, The Manship Theatre, and The Arts Council to host workforce training days and to help create sensory-friendly activities. In addition, Emerge has partnered with local news stations for insight into the lives of families with children who are not neurotypical.

"We not only have the opportunity to provide support and education to the families we serve, but also the chance to share our knowledge and expertise with other local organizations, making our community a better place to live for all families of children with special needs." - Lauren Shaw, CDC Coordinator
thank you

to all who support us!

www.emergelafoundation.org