

2021: A Defining Year



It is safe to say that 2021 was a “defining year.” We have certainly learned to live with a virus. Vaccines have definitely helped, and mask wearing is still encouraged. MERIL will continue to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic as long as it lasts.

I would like to thank our team members for their contributions. Shawn Appleby has worked diligently to keep the office building as sterilized as possible, and we continue to be lucky to have Richard Rau and Andrew Kunz at the front desk.

The Independent Living program received additional funds from the state of Missouri, and Lisa Gabriel, Robert Miller, and others have been instrumental in providing case management and information and referral services to individuals and agencies. And, the Adult Brain Injury program made its return this year.

Though we did not get the necessary rate increase we needed, the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program remains strong under the leadership of Ashley Tucker. Her team of Monica Boeh, Laura Hagan, Lauren Lynch, Maria Brandt, and Bethany Conley continue to help our participants hire the attendants they need in order to live independently in their homes.

The In-Home Nursing and Personal Care Attendant (PCA) programs continue to provide excellent services under the leadership of Amber King, Rachael McElvain,

and Tiffany Diaz. And a special thanks should be given to all of our outstanding caregivers!

MERIL strongly believes in the power of assistive technology and assistive tools, and Lauren Lynch’s role in this department has been extraordinary.

The business of MERIL would not be possible without Christopher Matthews, who works in public relations and human resources. In addition, our finance team of Tom Ross, Amelia Young, and Kelli Autry work with Jim Carrithers and Jane Knudson of the MERIL staff to keep the agency’s financial matters running smoothly.

There were two notable staff changes this year. Deann Young, long-time Chief Human Resources and Business Officer, retired this year after 12 years of service to MERIL. Her replacement, Jim Carrithers, brings a wealth of experience with him to the position. MERIL also welcomed Laura Hagan, who is the new CDS support specialist. It is exciting to see the board of directors grow from six to nine members. The new members are: Kim Wright, Mary Clements, and Chris Fagan.

I want to close this column by saying that because MERIL is a relatively small agency, totaling about 25 employees, we all must wear multiple hats and be great team players. I am proud to say that EVERYONE in the organization pitches in. We are a team, and this is what makes us MERIL!

- Rob Honan, MERIL CEO / Executive Director

Our Mission

Empowering people to live life fully

Our Vision

A barrier-free Northwest Missouri

Our Core Values

Choice – having direction and control over one’s life

Honesty – doing what you say you will do, keeping your promises

Acceptance – believing everyone has value, abilities, and desires

Respect – showing personal consideration for self and others

Trust – having confidence in others

The essence of **Independent Living** is the freedom to make decisions about your own life and to participate fully in your community.

Independent Living means being able to live in the way you choose, with people you choose. It means having choices about who helps you and the ways they help. It is not necessarily about doing things for yourself; it is about having control over your day to day life.

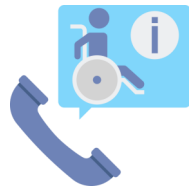
People First of Missouri

a self-advocacy support group, which was created by and is run by people with developmental disabilities. The St. Joseph and Maryville chapters meet monthly at MERIL.



825
Total
Participants

with disabilities in Northwest Missouri were assisted in their independent living journey – a total of **1,752** instances of service.



920
Information
& Referral

services for a wide variety of disability-related issues – available to anyone who contacts us.



140
Community
Education

hours providing information about disability resources, inclusion, advocacy, the independent living philosophy, and more.



329
Consumer
Directed Services

participants remained independent in their homes by employing a caregiver of their choice to provide personal care services.



202
Independent
Living Skills

services guided participants as they achieved goals (e.g., self-care, self-advocacy, mobility, etc.) to increase their independence.



141
In-Home
Services

participants received nurse visits and/or personal care attendant services from a MERIL caregiver.



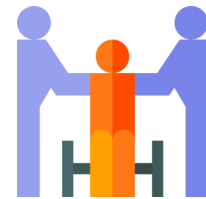
58
Assistive
Tools

services provided demonstrations and information about phones and devices for people with low vision, low hearing, and other disabilities.



47
Assistance
Fund

requests for durable medical equipment, assistive devices, safety and health care items, etc., were provided to participants in need.



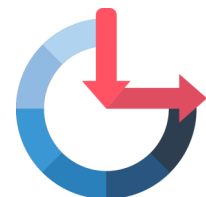
2
Peer Support
& Counseling

services provided participants with the support necessary to learn independent living skills and socialize with peers.



1
Home
Modification

services, such as guidance for installing ramps, allowed people with disabilities to live safely and comfortably in their homes.



99
Transition
Services

supported people with disabilities as they either planned for life after high school or moved from nursing homes into homes of their own.

Independent Living Success Stories



Independence with Assistive Tools!

[Missouri Assistive Technology](#) provides a wide variety of assistive technology devices—including phones, magnifiers, and computer equipment—to MERIL so that we can demonstrate them to people with disabilities throughout Northwest Missouri.

MERIL provides informed demonstrations of the devices, either in our office or in people's homes, so they are able to find out which device best fits their needs. And many people qualify for free devices!

The most popular devices are the telephones available through the [Telecommunications Access Program \(TAP\)](#). These telephones are designed for people who have hearing loss, low vision, and other types of disabilities.

Pictured at the top is a participant holding a cordless TAP phone with amplified volume. This participant is unable to use a standard telephone due to hearing loss.

MERIL's Lauren Lynch demonstrated different phone models for the participant so that he could select the one that would best allow him to communicate.

During this demonstration, Lauren asked the participant if he was experiencing any other barriers due to hearing loss. It was discovered that the participant was unable to hear a smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector while he was sleeping because he removed his hearing aids before going to bed.

Pictured at the bottom is a participant who experiences tremors in both hands, which make it difficult for her to complete certain daily living tasks, such as holding a cup, holding silverware, writing, turning knobs, and checking her blood sugar levels.

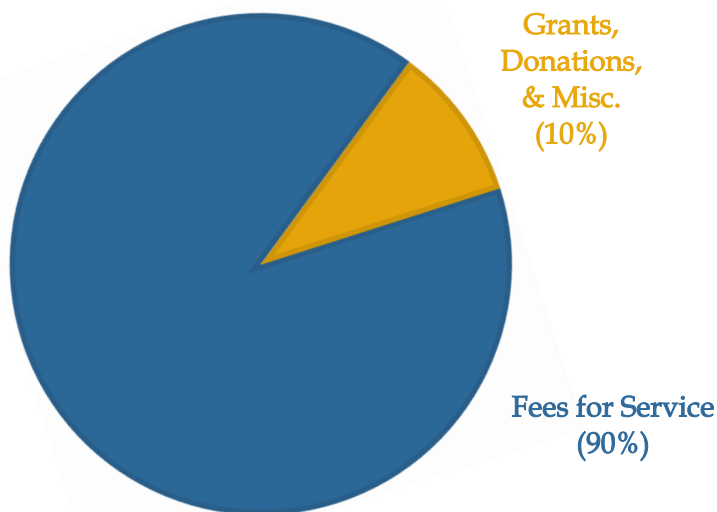
Lauren showed this participant a variety of devices that could possibly help her, including: a rocking knife, writing bird, universal knob turner, food bumper, meal lifter, liftware, and dycem mat. The participant was able to try these devices to see which were best suited to her needs.

Assistive technology devices are important tools that allow people with disabilities to live independently in their homes. More information is available at www.meril.org/tools, and <https://at.mo.gov/device-loan/>.

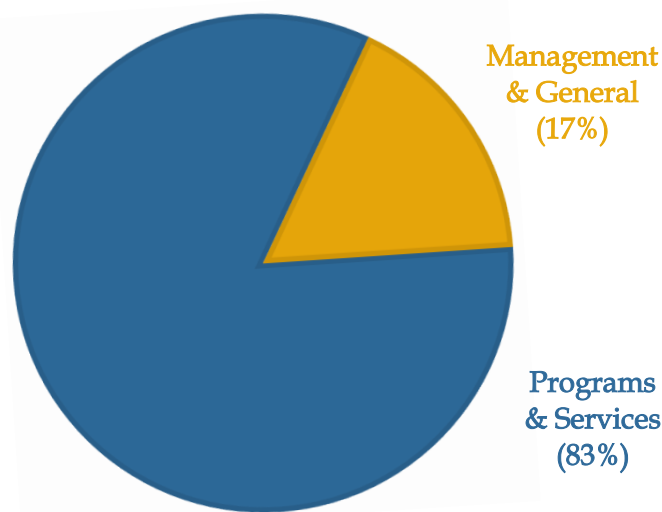


Stewardship of Tax Dollars & Donations

Income Sources



How Funds Were Used



We pride ourselves on being good stewards of the income we receive, which is primarily from Medicaid-funded fees for service, state grants, and donations. We allocate as much funding as possible to direct services.

This fiscal year (July 2020 – June 2021), we totaled \$3.5 million in income and \$3.3 million in expenses.

Yes, You Can Make a Difference!

Your contribution will help change lives!

Donations to MERIL help fund programs that assist people with disabilities in their goal to live a full life in their homes and communities.

Please consider a financial gift to MERIL. You may mail a check, donate via [Facebook](#), or use the [PayPal link](#) on our website.



In addition to donating, you can help us immensely by spreading the word about our services. The more people who know about us, the more we can help.

Mike (pictured right) now lives in his own home with the help of our Independent Living Services and the Money Follows the Person program. Visit www.meril.org to read more about people who have benefited from our services.



Thank you to our outstanding donors, volunteers, and community partners!

We deeply appreciate everyone who donated time, money, or equipment to MERIL, and we want to thank the community service organizations who help inform people about our services. If it were not for your support and generosity, we would not have had the impact we had this year. Thank you!



Helping people with disabilities
and people who are aging
live independently
in Northwest Missouri.

Subscribe: www.meril.org/news

Contact: 816-279-8558
meril@meril.org

Main office: 4420 S 40th St.
St. Joseph, MO 64503

Branch office: 2416-B South Main St.
Maryville, MO 64468

Northwest Missouri's Center for Independent Living

Since 1994, MERIL has provided five core services for people with disabilities in our nine-county service area:

- ◆ Information and referral
- ◆ Independent Living skills training
- ◆ Transition services (youth and nursing home)
- ◆ Peer support
- ◆ Advocacy

Our vision is: **A Barrier-Free Northwest Missouri.**

More than half of our board members and staff have a disability. We use our personal experiences to see the **abilities** that people have, and we respect people for who they are.

We believe people with disabilities should **have control** over their own lives, achieve their own goals, and fully participate in their communities.

Learn more about Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri at www.mosilc.org.



disability resources & referrals **Nonprofit**

Choose your own caregiver

help with cleaning, cooking, shopping, personal care

Phones & devices for
low hearing, low vision

independence

advocacy & peer support

Nurse visits at home

medication, blood pressure, diabetes care

Youth
Services

Independent Living Skills Training

Nursing home transition

Accessibility

www.meril.org
816-279-8558

Call us. Tell us about your health condition or disability. We'll help you get the resources you need to live independently.

MERIL offers a wide variety of services and resources for people with disabilities.

Our most popular service is our Consumer Directed Services (CDS) program, which allows a person to hire a caregiver of their choice to perform personal care tasks in their home.

We help caregivers find part-time jobs!

MERIL helps the CDS participant (the person with a disability) find a potential employee (caregiver). Anyone who is interested in becoming a caregiver should contact MERIL to fill out an application. The hours are flexible and no experience is required.

Midland Empire Resources for Independent Living (MERIL) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization governed by a board of directors: L. Kent Allen (chair), Sandy Lewandowski (vice chair), Christy McGuire (secretary), Joseph D. Hegeman (treasurer), Tammy Blakely (director), Mary Clements (director), Chris Fagan (director), Kelly Narowski (director), Kim Wright (director), and Robert Honan (CEO).