Dear Reader:

MERIL celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019. From the humble beginnings of a brain injury support group at the old Heartland Hospital to the current organization that offers three major programs—Independent Living (IL) Services, Consumer Directed Services (CDS), and In-Home Services—we have been a stable force in the community, serving individuals with disabilities in achieving their life goals.

Some of the 2019 highlights include the lift off of the In-Home Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program, the re-establishment of the Brain Injury Support group, and the implementation of the Adult Brain Injury (ABI) program. In addition, the MERIL Board of Directors was expanded from seven to ten members.

As we look into the future, we are looking at ways to evolve with the changing political and economic landscape. Some of the goals that I have are: to seek additional funding sources in order to diversify funds, recruit additional board members to fill needs on the board, and look at ways to provide more efficient services in order to maximize revenue.

We hope you enjoy this annual report. If you wish to learn more about MERIL, and the services offered by Centers for Independent Living, please visit us at www.meril.org.

Sincerely,

Robert Honan,
MERIL CEO / Executive Director
### Total Participants
897

with disabilities in Northwest Missouri were assisted in their independent living journey—a total of 3,150 instances of service.

### Information & Referral
1371

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

### Community Education
40

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

### Consumer Directed Services
341

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

### In-Home Services
102

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

### Independent Living Skills
553

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

### Assistance Fund
88

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

### Peer Support & Counseling
25

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

### Home Modification
5

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

### Transition Services
79

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

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Data from internal reports, including our 704 Report (annual performance report for Centers for Independent Living) from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019. Icons from www.flaticon.com authors “freepik,” “smashicons,” and “flat icons.”
Independent Living Success Stories

Transitioning out of a nursing home with MFP and assistive technology!

Money Follows the Person (MFP) is a program that provides funding for people with disabilities who want to live in their own homes instead of in a nursing home. MERIL provides information and personalized guidance to those who participate in the program.

MERIL’s Lisa Gabriel helped coordinate Gary Holland’s transition to independent living in the community, with funding from the MFP program and assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation and Missouri Assistive Technology.

Gary’s newly modified vehicle allows him to drive with a prosthetic leg. Gary also received a rollator and a shower chair that enable him to meet his personal care needs in his home.

“Since I came out of the nursing home, I can take care of my own needs,” Gary said. “MERIL got me back to being a person, enjoying life, and [increasing my] quality of life and independence!”

Since moving out of the nursing home, Gary’s mobility has improved, allowing him to be more active, lose weight, and better control his diabetes symptoms.

CDS participant finds amazing service dog!

Sarah Bybee, a MERIL Consumer Directed Services (CDS) participant, has always wanted a service animal. With the help of her daughter, Jaimi, she found a service dog named Sophie online.

After finding Sophie—who is trained to work with people who have PTSD, seizure disorders, and depression—Sarah's family started a GoFundMe account so that Sarah could buy a plane ticket to pick up Sophie from Homeward Bound Transport in Texas.

“It was love at first sight,” Sarah said. “She found her forever home, and I found my forever dog.”

Sarah has since attended classes and Sophie has earned her canine good citizen award. Sarah plans to train Sophie to help people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). Sarah was diagnosed with MS in her 30s, and she values her independence.

Sophie motivates Sarah to walk, helps her go up and down stairs, and accompanies her wherever she goes. Recently, Sophie successfully attended her first movie at the theater.

Sarah said she has not felt depressed since bringing home Sophie and she cannot imagine life without her.
Stewardship of Tax Dollars & Donations

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 2018—June 2019), we totaled $3.8 million in income and $3.5 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 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.

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](http://www.mosilc.org).

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**Choose your own caregiver**

help with cleaning, cooking, shopping, personal care

**Phones & devices for**

low hearing, low vision

**Nurse visits at home**

medication, blood pressure, diabetes care

**Independent Living Skills Training**

**Nursing home transition**

**Accessibility**

[www.meril.org](http://www.meril.org) **816-279-8558**

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**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.

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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), Jonathan Connally (secretary), Joseph D. Hegeman (treasurer), Susan M. Bashinski (director), Tammy Blakely (director), E. Wayne Crawford (director), Christy McGuire (director), Kelly Narowski (director), Jaren Pippitt (immediate past chair), and Robert Honan (CEO).