The year 2020 will go down in history as one of those historical years that defines an era. There is pre-Covid and post-Covid. Mask wearing, Zoom meetings, social distancing, and testing are part of the new norm that was not part of our lives prior to February 2020.

We live in a changed world, and we at MERIL are also conducting the business of independent living much different than we did earlier this year. Yet, as they say, “the show must go on.” Our services are now conducted with a greater focus on safety and emphasis on health, including telecommuting, telehealth, use of personal protective equipment, social distancing and sanitizing the office on a frequent basis.

MERIL is still providing three major programs: (1) the Independent Living (IL) program, which provides five core services and equipment to folks with disabilities in Northwest Missouri so they can live lives of their choosing; (2) the In-Home personal care attendant services program, in its second year, continues to provide services to over 30 individuals at a time; and (3) the Nursing program has been a godsend to those who need nursing services in their homes, averaging over 200 total visits per month.

As we look into the future, we will be focusing on ways to evolve with the changing political, economic, and Covid landscapes. Some of the goals that I have are: 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. Given the fact that we have had a very difficult year, I am extremely proud of the work our staff has done this past year.

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.

- Rob Honan, MERIL CEO / Executive Director

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.

Self-advocacy — Empowering people to have as much control over their own lives as possible.

Social advocacy — Removing barriers in society so people with disabilities are fully included in the community.

Systems advocacy — Ensuring laws protect the rights of people with disabilities; supporting adequate funding of IL resources.
Data from internal reports, including our 704 Report (annual performance report for Centers for Independent Living) from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020. Icons from www.flaticon.com authors “freepik,” “smashicons,” and “flat icons.”
Transitioning out of a nursing home with MFP!

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 residential care facility. MERIL provides information and personalized guidance to those who participate in the program.

MERIL’s Lisa Gabriel helped coordinate Albert Shaw’s transition to independent living in the community, with funding from MFP and assistance from Missouri Assistive Technology.

Moving from a nursing home to an apartment at the end of April 2020—in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic—presented unique challenges, including bare store shelves and delayed deliveries. Nonetheless, Albert was able to successfully obtain the supplies he needed to move into his home, which he remembers as “one of the happiest days that I have had in a very long time.”

Albert had been living in a nursing home for a year and a half prior to contacting MERIL and beginning the process of transitioning to independent living in the community.

“MERIL and Money Follows the Person was a godsend,” Albert said. “Without them, I would still be in the nursing home. Instead, I am living in my own apartment, having peaceful sleep, cooking, and taking care of myself.”

Assistive TAP phones help with hearing loss!

Julia Johnson, 85, recalled an incident that led to the police arriving at her home to check on her wellbeing.

The police officer told Julia that a family member had attempted to call her on the phone several times throughout the day. When Julia did not call back, the family member became concerned and asked the police to make sure Julia was not in danger.

Julia was fine. She had simply not heard the phone ring.

Having discovered that her hearing loss had progressed to the point that she was no longer able to use a standard telephone, Julia sought out an assistive technology device.

A MERIL representative met with Julia and demonstrated several types of phones that have features—such as amplified volume—designed for people who experience hearing loss, low vision, and other types of disabilities.

Julia received a phone through the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), and now has no problem hearing the phone ring or carrying on a conversation.

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.
Stewardship of Tax Dollars & Donations

Income Sources

- Fees for Service (92%)
- Grants, Donations, & Misc. (8%)

How Funds Were Used

- Programs & Services (82%)
- Management & General (18%)

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 2019—June 2020), we totaled $3.6 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, 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.

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).

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), Tammy Blakely (director), Kelly Narowski (director), Jaren Pippitt (immediate past chair), and Robert Honan (CEO).

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.