#### **2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

# Every Step of the Way







#### LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

The political, public health and international tumult of the past several years has had many obvious effects. We live with more fear. More anger. More anxiety.

But there are some less obvious effects as well, some of which are particularly challenging for Laura Baker Services Association (LBSA). For example, we face a uniquely intense challenge today when it comes to hiring and retaining staff members to provide support for our clients with developmental disabilities. Right now, LBSA has room for and could care for at least 13 more clients (and we do always have a wait list) if we could only hire more people to provide them with



support. In other words, our ability to provide care for clients is fundamentally dependent on our ability to hire direct support professionals and other staff members.

And, in turn, our ability to pay such critical workers is overwhelmingly determined by decisions made by our state government about hourly reimbursement rates for this work. We have looked closely at how to maximize what we can pay, and for an entry-level direct support person it comes to about \$13/hour. That's less than a person can make taking a late shift at Taco Bell, and it's far less than the \$25/hour such workers are paid when employed by state agencies. We need help convincing our state's policymakers to change this.

Frankly, LBSA needs help of many kinds, and it is your reaction to that need that sustains us. When we seek volunteers, you're there. When we try to bring people's voices to our legislators, you speak up. When we try to think of innovative ways to provide care and grow non-governmental sources of income, you come through with ideas. And when we ask for financial help, you give. Thank you very, very much.

This year's theme, Every Step of the Way, fits perfectly with what you mean to us and to our ability to serve our clients. LBSA has been through a lot; in fact, we celebrate our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. We exist to serve folks with developmental disabilities, respect their life choices and dreams, and help them reach their goals. As we face the challenges of today and tomorrow, we are inspired by our mission and emboldened by the chance to walk with you, every step of the way.

Bob Gilbertson Board President

#### LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We tiptoed into 2021, hoping to rid ourselves of the specter of COVID-19, excited about the promise of the vaccines, and hoping to find enough staff members to reopen our closed homes and support the people who were looking for services. Somewhere along the way, we learned that 2020 and 2021 were the years of the Great Resignation. And COVID-19 was not ready to succumb: we navigated Delta and Omicron.

We learned that companion organizations in Minnesota and throughout the nation were closing their doors (or limiting the number of people they were serving), unable to overcome funding, staffing and COVID-19 challenges.

At any time during the year, it would have been easy for us to succumb to the weariness of these challenges, to announce that we, too, were going to be part of the Great Resignation.

At any given time, in any given year, it's easy to get pulled into the day to day and lose sight of the bigger picture. This has been especially true in the last few years, as practices (such as remote work) have altered how we work.

When our news seems dark and gloomy, it's easy to be sucked into the abyss and forget to be grateful for our many blessings:









Our amazing staff members who continue to work with us, despite these challenges, and the new people who have joined us to create a stronger team. We may be smaller, and we are mighty. Look for the stories of how our staff members have made a difference for the people we support.

Our community of support (you all!) who helped us reach our \$1 million fundraising goal with your generosity – both from your pockets and with your generous and kind spirits.

Our 125-year history (2022 is our  $125^{th}$  anniversary year!), which reminds us that we have overcome overwhelming challenges before and have the spirit and resolve to do so again.

In the past few years, we've learned how loud we have to yell (VERY LOUD) to make our voices heard and our issues understood. The future for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their caregivers is still at risk without community and legislative support. We are so grateful for each of you; the voices you lend and the support you provide.

In 2021, we tiptoed. In 2022, we are marching with purpose, to have an impact for now and the future. We ask you to continue your support: your financial gifts and raising your voices to ensure the people we support, their families and our staff members receive the support that will allow them to thrive.

Together, we can.

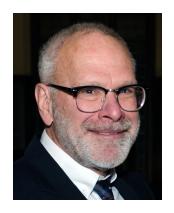
Sandi Gerdes, Executive Director

#### **GREG CLOSSER**

2021 Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award Recipient

Greg Closser is a communitarian. He might be surprised to be characterized that way. His Annual Report letters over the past several years reveal his commitment to community and his heart, which are the central reasons he is receiving the Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award.

From his 2019 Annual Report letter: "All of us are called to row together, each of us needing to comfort the other... Hope binds us together and together we make hope come true."



Greg understands that it takes a village to support people with disabilities. He joined the village as a parent and has continued his service by engaging in the broader community. He joined the LBSA board in 2011, served as vice president and took the reins as president in 2016. Greg has shared his gift of leadership with the association and has been a wise counselor and friend. He is a voice of calm when chaos is swirling around us. Truly a gift.

In practical terms, beyond Greg's service as a board member, he and his wife, Patty, have been the LBSA Easter Bunnies for many years, providing Easter baskets for all of our clients. They created A Great Day Farm, a center for recreation for people with disabilities who need both boundaries and freedom.

When we told Greg he was receiving this award, he said that Patty should receive this gift along with him. She also has a heart for people with disabilities and great vision for ways to adapt the world to make it better. Patty inspires Greg and manages at home so Greg can be out in the world. Together they make a great team!

Greg has been generous with his time, his talent, his wisdom and his treasures. He believes in the mission and vision of LBSA and has been an amazing partner in moving our work forward.

The Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award honors people who have been constant in their association with LBSA and who have made consistent and personally significant contributions of time, energy and resources.





#### LBSA HONORS 2021 TEAM MEMBERS

On Wednesday, June 23, we hosted a picnic at A Great Day Farm to honor our everyday heroes. Congratulations to the following award recipients!

Innovator: Penny Penn, Iris Reyes and Meg Diviney-Fearing

Community Builder: Isabel Nunez, Lisa Otterness, Megan Olson and Jenny Solar

Team Builder: Hannah Ries, Sophia Meyers and Elii Garcia
Cheerleader: Michelle Oaxaca, Steve Braker and Audrey Mann
Role Model: Kathy Bromley, Beth Schultz and Abby Malecha
Rising Star: Hector Osorio, Amairani Rosas and Lauren Code

Spirit of Laura Baker Award\*: Holly Ciffra

Our administrative team and board of trustees would like to acknowledge ALL STAFF for their incredible dedication, compassion and persistence during the past several, difficult years. Thank you for your heroic efforts every day!

<sup>\*</sup>The Spirit of Laura Baker Award is given annually to one individual who best embodies the mission, vision and values of LBSA – and the spirit of Laura Baker. Recipients care deeply for the people we serve and make a difference in their lives and in the life of the organization as a whole. Leadership and teamwork are the hallmarks of award winners' work in the organization.

#### **MEET JENNY**

Music has always been an integral part of life at LBSA. Performances for family, friends and community members, which featured singing and dancing by LBSA residents, began in the early 1900s. Since that time, music has been part of the curriculum. Hundreds of students and residents have participated in a variety of LBSA bands, choirs and other musical performances over the years. In recent decades, LBSA has employed a certified music therapist as part of its service team. Jenny Solar is LBSA's current music therapist.

During an internship at a children's hospital, Jenny says she was especially drawn to working with kids with developmental disabilities. After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Jenny worked for over a year with adults with developmental disabilities at an organization in Indiana. During that time, she was looking for an opportunity to move back to Minnesota. She heard about LBSA and was hired in October of 2016.

Jenny appreciates the fact that music is so multi-faceted because almost everyone can relate to it in some way. "You can listen to music, participate by singing or you can even play an instrument." Jenny explains that music therapy can be helpful for individuals in a variety of ways. Last year, she attended neurological music therapy training and learned a variety of new concepts that she uses in her daily work.

Some of the work has had amazing results that you might not associate readily with music therapy. "One client I have worked with has made significant progress with his fine motor skills development. This has helped him gain more independence, for example in feeding himself more effectively. I've also learned other skills, like the use of a metronome during sessions. This can provide the sensory regulation a brain needs and allow them to work on other skill areas during our time together."





#### "I really enjoy getting to work with such a wide variety of people."

During these last two challenging years, Jenny has ensured that the music has continued. Early in the pandemic, Jenny began offering music therapy sessions virtually and created themed video sing-a-longs for clients. In the summer of 2021. Jenny conducted music sessions outdoors, allowing her to maintain safety protocols. In October 2021, she restarted the LBSA Choir over Zoom which she says has been a fun alternative for her choir members. There were technology challenges at first, and she acknowledges that nothing can replace being together in person. Learning how to implement music therapy virtually has had some added benefits. "Using Zoom and other technology has been a good learning experience, providing flexibility to continue music sessions in bad weather. Early in the pandemic, one client went home to Duluth to stay with his parents for a while, and we were able to continue his music sessions remotely so he could have continuity with music in his life." Jenny even used some technology that she learned about from one of her music therapy clients



to create a music video for LBSA's December Gala. The video featured 32 music clients and was a performance of *Let's Take a Step*, an original song written by LBSA music clients and Jenny.

Like many services for individuals with developmental disabilities, LBSA's Music Therapy program has a significant waiting list. Thus, LBSA is in the midst of expanding its Creative Arts programming and will be hiring a second full-time music therapist as well as a full-time art therapist. When asked about her goals for the next two to three years, Jenny chuckled, "Well ... I'm not planning on leaving. But I am looking forward to being able to serve more people. It's not always about the music - it's about the relationships. I really enjoy getting to work with such a wide variety of people."

Jenny and her husband, Scott, have a two-year-old daughter, Paige, and are expecting a son in July. Jenny plans to return after a three-month leave. No doubt, the music will continue.

#### MEET DAVID

David enjoys people. He is fun and curious – and after spending a minute or two with him, you'll be answering questions and smiling.

"He has a sparkle when it comes to talking and being with others," says David's dad, Zach. "He's hilarious and shows an interest in others which makes him really enjoyable to be around."

Like many children with autism, life has been a roller coaster ride. David experienced challenges from an early age. And like so many families who have a child with a developmental disability, finding resources and ways to support their child can be time consuming and exhausting. Zach says they knew from an early age that something wasn't right. "Before David was a year old, he started missing milestones. Initially it was a struggle. We didn't want him to be labeled, and it took us a few years to face the facts." No one wants to be labeled. Yet the disappointing reality is that for families with a loved one with a developmental disability, with labels come resources.

Once someone has access to resources and is "in the system," the next challenge is finding the right services and resources. Every person is unique, which makes one-size-fits-all service solutions ineffective. This journey for the right fit can take years. For David, school and other group settings



were a challenge. "They (a public school system) weren't necessarily equipped for someone who wasn't high functioning," Zach recalls. "Many times, we received calls from the school office saying I needed to come pick David up from school because they couldn't keep him safe. There were moments where it felt like a full-time job."

# "It's fantastic. I'm so happy he is at LBSA."

- David's Dad

Over the years, group living settings have proven to be a challenge for David as well. David is fascinated by lawn mowers, leaf blowers, small appliances and anything that is mechanical. David would often elope and find local unlocked garages or sheds, creating an unsafe situation for David and a scary situation for neighbors who found him

on their property. Over the years, Zach knew he needed to find a different living environment for David because of these issues. He heard about LBSA through the grapevine and spent numerous years on the waiting list. In 2018, David moved into his cottage on LBSA's Oak Street campus.

It's taken effort and coordination on the part of David and his family working together with LBSA staff and local law enforcement to get these issues under control. LBSA staff have responded to local neighbors and police inquiries over the years. Megan Olson, who is one of LBSA's Qualified Developmental Disability Professionals (QDDP) and works closely with David, says that things have really improved for David over the last year. "We found a day program that is a good fit." In addition,

Megan attributes David's recent success to LBSA direct support staff. "Household Director Elii Garcia and her team have made a big difference. She trains her staff really well, and they are so good at working with David. He seems to enjoy his time at home more now and feels less in need of leaving campus."

Today, David attends his day program five to six hours per day, five days per week. He enjoys going out to eat, going for walks, bowling, playing basketball, going to movies and listening to music. Adele is his favorite.

Zach says he feels very good about David's situation. "It's fantastic. I'm so happy he is at LBSA. I feel pretty strongly that it is one of the top places in Minnesota."



#### 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Through another challenging year and with the help of YOU – our supporters, volunteers, board members, partners and *amazing* staff – we were able to continue our mission and experience a variety of successes along the way in 2021.

- Most importantly, we continued to provide housing and support services, continuing our mission to respect the life choices and dreams of people with developmental disabilities and help them reach their goals.
- We navigated the COVID-19 pandemic without widespread negative effects to our staff and clients.
   We are incredibly proud of our staff for their work to keep our clients safe over the last two years.
- We launched Family Navigation Services, which will assist families and people with disabilities to access services and supports to make their lives more manageable and improve quality of life for clients and their loved ones.
- LBSA hosted four COVID-19 vaccination clinics throughout the year for clients, staff and family members. Approximately 500 doses were given.
- We launched our two-year **7-4-7 fundraising campaign,** the goal of which is to raise \$1.4 million for the LBSA Annual Fund and an additional \$700,000 for our Program Expansion initiative by the end of 2022. In 2021, we exceeded our first-year campaign goal, raising a combined total of \$1,054,733 for the Annual Fund and Program Expansion initiative.

















- We set new fundraising records for our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament (\$52,000+) and our 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala (\$253,000+). Thank you!
- We awarded three staff members with a Gary Martin Memorial Scholarship\* award.
   Congratulations to Teadora Kontos, Elizabeth
   O'Sullivan and Zachary Peterson.
- The LBSA Choir resumed in the form of Zoom
   Choir, which has become a fun alternative for LBSA
   clients during the pandemic.
- LBSA music therapist Jenny Solar conducted 410 individual music therapy sessions. LBSA clients, with Jenny, wrote an original song titled *Let's Take a Step*. The song was performed virtually at the December Gala and featured 32 clients.
- In program satisfaction surveys distributed annually to clients' care teams, LBSA achieved a 91.7% "satisfied" or "very satisfied" for overall service satisfaction.
- We began a series of leadership workshops for LBSA management facilitated by Sarah Carlsen of Carlsen Coaching & Consulting.
- We grew our population of social media followers by 9.2% and our email and newsletter recipients by 9.3%.
- We received a "Top Rated Nonprofit" designation from GreatNonprofits and a Gold transparency rating from Candid (GuideStar).

<sup>\*</sup>The Gary Martin Memorial Scholarship is for LBSA staff
members who are working on a degree, certificate or
certification program while maintaining employment at
LBSA. The scholarship honors Gary, who was a longtime LBSA
resident, and is made possible through generous donations from
Eugene and Mary Anne Dietz and Dave and Amy Tonsager.

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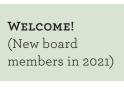
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Thank you for your service! (2021 outgoing board members):
ASHA BOZICEVICH, MARY CLOSNER, JOE HARGIS and MATT SEWICH

Q: Are you a parent, family member or caregiver of a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities or do you know someone who is?



#### Here to Help You

Laura Baker Services Association's Family Navigation Services program is designed to help individuals and families with developmental disabilities navigate the complexities required for support. Our services are based on an initial FREE consultation. We use a person-centered approach, not one-size-fits-all, and can support your decision making in the following areas:

- · Regional and state developmental disability programs and services
- Support system planning for someone with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD), such as Down syndrome (Trisomy 21), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Peer support and family connections
- Community resource connections
- First steps in accessing county, state and federal programs (disability waivers)
- · Housing options: at home, independent living, group homes and respite
- Major life transitions and challenges
- Access to networks of professionals and service providers who can serve your family's needs
- Navigating any obstacle that is preventing you from achieving your goals



#### LEARN MORE

Scan here or visit *laurabaker.org/services/family-navigation* to schedule a FREE initial consultation and learn more.

### We're celebrating 125 years of service in 2022.

This organization has survived the Spanish Flu epidemic, the Great Depression, World War I and II, Vietnam, recessions, deinstitutionalization, increasing rules and regulations, and the move from private pay to Medicaid funding. We've navigated sea changes in transportation and communication, medicine and mass media. We're moving faster, communicating faster to more people and we can treat and cure more things.

When Miss Baker established this organization in 1897, the majority of services were provided in state-run institutions, where people lived out their days being largely cared for, with little personal agency or community connection. She had worked in those state-run institutions as a teacher and saw that people needed the

opportunity to learn and grow, have opportunities to sing and dance, go to school, and learn to navigate society.

Meals included formal service. Grace was said before every meal. Rooms and personal spaces were to be kept immaculate, including beds being made so a quarter would bounce and window shades being evenly drawn on every window.

People's hygiene was impeccable: gentlemen were shaved, hair was kept neat, clothing was to be well-fitted, pressed and clean. Ladies had similar standards.

Miss Baker lived through much of the change and handed the organization off with a clear sense of purpose and vision. The number of people who remember going to the lake for the summer or formal eating in the dining room, with bells to summon dining staff, are fewer and fewer these days.





Doug has lived with us, in various places, since he was five years old. This year he turns 94. He has witnessed many changes over the years and watched the organization transform over and over again, adding and subtracting buildings (a barn, Margaret Graves Hall, the Cottage and the grand old white house). Now Doug is living in a house in the community. He's always been active in the community: church, the library, shopping downtown Northfield, working in the LBSA kitchen, and going to the doctor and the dentist.

Society's views of people with IDD have changed dramatically as well. Once seen as either demonic or angelic (depending on the time in history), people with IDD are now seen as people. People deserving of dignity and respect and the support required to allow them to live lives they choose.

Much still needs to change. Public policy consistently adopts a "one-sizefits-all" mentality, and offers A solution, for people who are not the same, and for people who do not need the same level or kind of support. While we used to institutionalize everyone, now we prescribe that everyone with a disability can live independently in the community, in their own home. These kinds of policy decisions are not person-centered and do not take into account that people are different. Vastly different. While independent living and self-determination should be readily available to everyone who



wants it, we need to provide an array of options. Some people don't want to live alone, regardless of their ability to do so. Some people cannot live alone. And despite the rhetoric that says it's always less expensive to live in community, the reality is that "always" continues to be a problematic word.

Public policy needs to find ways that allow people with IDD to get the support they need without making them impoverished. It also needs to find ways to ensure the people who provide support can do so without being impoverished. These kinds of systems, which are meant to contain costs, create systemic co-dependency. These kinds of systems impede progress and creativity.

How do we create a system that acknowledges that people can both be competent and need support?

We've learned to listen to self-advocates, which is an amazing step forward. Unfortunately, we've applied their words and thoughts to every person with a disability, without getting to know that person and/or learn their story.

At LBSA, we have been personcentered from our beginning. Being person-centered means throwing away "group think" and one-size-fitsall solutions. It's arduous because solutions are different for every person. It takes time and patience. It's messy. It's who and what we need to be – what all organizations need to be.

Some would say that 125 years is long enough - it's time to retire the model and move on. If people with intellectual and developmental disabilities could get what they need, we could do that. Instead, we're faced with a complex world, where politicians, who control our funding, and thus, our fate, are hard-pressed to understand our support services. We're told our coalition isn't big enough or loud enough to get the funding we need for people to receive the support they need. We're charged with doing more with less. COVID-19 brought new rules and regulations and no new funding. COVID-19 brought the Great Resignation and wage inflation without additional funding. It's enough to make you wonder about how long we can persist. And then, we're reminded: we've been doing this for 125 years.



These past few years have been crazy. Our very existence is threatened by a staffing crisis, by indifference to our funding needs, by public pressure to be perfect without the funding to improve. When you look in the rearview mirror, it's easy to imagine the worst, and we continue to hear stories of organizations who are limiting their services or closing altogether due to the pressures of inflation, COVID-19 and extreme staffing shortages.

The hopes and dreams of the people we support, indeed of all of us, have been dampened by these challenges. It's become easier at times to focus on all that's wrong in the world, instead of what's good. Looking forward for the next 12 months is also challenging: we don't know when staffing challenges will ease or if the legislature will grant us more money so we can attract and retain our amazing staff members and serve the people who are waiting.

Now is when looking at our 125-year history brings hope and a sense of

# renewal. We've endured through major challenges – and we're still here.

As we move forward in these challenging times, we are taking a new look at what people need, and we are expanding and changing our programs, as we have done throughout our history, to make us relevant for the next 125 years.

We've added Family Navigation
Services to support people with IDD
and their families as they work to
assess the many challenges that come
with living with a disability. Our
navigators can help with: who does
what, and how do I apply for that, and I
didn't even know that was an option.

One family had an adult child living at home who lost his job due to COVID-19 and needed more support than mom and dad could provide. We were able to identify service options for the person (who lived in South Dakota) and the

process for accessing those services. We were able to create language for the family to request what was needed for the person that honored his strengths and minimized risks.

We're also providing Housing Stabilization Services and Housing Support Services to people with IDD who are living independently that can help them stay in their homes. Our job is to help with landlord or neighbor issues and connect them to other supports they may need to be successful.

We are exploring providing Behavioral Support Services to assist people to be successful in overcoming challenges. We are targeting the fourth quarter of 2022 for opening this service.

Throughout our 125 years, community has been critical to our success and integral to accomplishing our work.

As we look back on the past, we gain confidence that we will find a way through the current challenges. We are small – and we are mighty. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. We are proud to carry on Miss Baker's legacy of community, music and art, dignity and respect, and opportunity for each person as we build into the next 125 years.

Together, we can.

#### THANK YOU, DONORS

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In Memory of Wendy Deplazes

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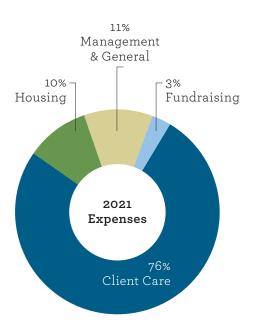
# Statement of Activities For the Year Ending December 31, 2021

#### SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Total Support & Revenue	\$ 5,702,259
Net Gain/(Loss) on Investment	67,045
In Kind Donations	16,943
Other Income	178,259
Donations	1,049,909
Client Services	\$ 4,390,103

#### **OPERATING EXPENSES**

Total Expenses	\$ 5,941,243
Total Support Services	\$ 802,678
Marketing & Events	178,656
Management & General	\$ 624,022
Total Client Care Expenses	\$ 5,138,565
Other Client Care Expenses	64,013
Food	177,953
Housing	620,133
Contracted Services	427,559
Transportation	25,183
Client Program Expense	202,382
Salaries & Benefits Client Care	\$ 3,621,342
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#### Statement of Financial Position As of December 31, 2021

#### **ASSETS**

Total Assets	\$ 5,414,331
Building & Equipment (Net)	3,653,369
Investments	604,986
Current Assets	\$ 1,155,976

#### LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	\$ 395,011
Long-Term Liabilities	678,124
Tota Liabilities	\$ 1,073,135

#### **NET ASSETS**

Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 5.414.331
Total Net Assets	\$ 4,341,196
With Donor Restrictions	30,946
Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 4,310,250

2021 financial results audited by LB Carlson, LLP



- Direct mail
- Newsletters
- Annual reports
- Brochures and flyers
- Catalogs, sell sheets and price lists
- Letterhead, envelopes and business cards
- Pocket folders
- Calendars
- Programs
- Fundraising materials
- Invoices and forms
- Posters and signage
- Window clings, magnets and stickers



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