

Choices

Community

RESPECT

Dreams

Relationships

Excellence

Interdependence

Inspiration

Fulfillment

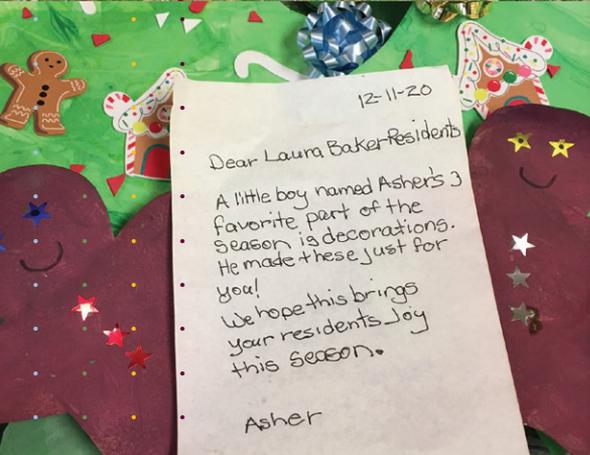
2020 ANNUAL REPORT



LAURA BAKER

SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Bringing the Power of Possibility to People with Special Needs





What a year it has been! At this time last year, we were newly resigned to endure a serious disruption in our lives. If you were one of those more fortunate, you only struggled with a toilet paper shortage, no place to go, and cabin fever. Others suffered more serious problems, including loss of job, isolation from friends and family, and heartbreaking loss of loved ones and friends. I think of the clients and staff at Laura Baker Services Association and how this past year has affected them. The isolation alone had to be terribly difficult for the clients and their families. But we know they also lost friends. They were isolated from familiar caregivers and family members. LBSA staff and direct-care employees faced the same challenges that all health care workers suffered. The emotional toll this has taken will extend beyond the pandemic.

It's not over, but we are slowly pulling out of it and we are beginning to see an end in sight. Daily life has changed as people have learned to work and live with imposed restrictions and innovative workarounds. I have heard many people say that we will never return to the old normal. That makes me wonder what the NEW NORMAL is going to be. I am hoping for better and offer the following suggestions.

Live with Gratitude: Ditch our selfishness to be generous and compassionate to those around us. How much tougher has the last year been on the clients of LBSA than on each of us? Generous and compassionate behavior is contagious. Acts of kindness change the behavior and attitude of both recipients and those who witness it.

Live with Hope: This has actually been one of the benefits of COVID. We live with hope for something better for all of us. Hope is a positive human trait that is recognizable when we see it in others. The LBSA message of being a Beacon of Hope should be part of the new normal.

Live Charitably: (from Pope Francis), "To live charitably means not looking out for our own interests but carrying the burdens of the weakest and poorest among us." The new normal should give the common good priority in human society along with the dignity of every individual human being. Sounds a lot like the mission and values of LBSA, doesn't it?

As we discover and create the new normal, let's make it better than before. Let's live with Gratitude, Hope and Charity. BE A BEACON OF HOPE.

— Greg Closser



In 2020, our world was tipped upside down. Ways to operate that worked were tossed aside in the wake of the pandemic. Shopping at favorite stores, stopped. In-person creative arts sessions, stopped. Choir, stopped. Trips to the movie theater, doctor, dentist, library, school, suspended. Visits with family members, suspended. Attending work, suspended.

Safety measures: face masks, face shields, implemented. Ramped up handwashing and sanitizing.

You all know the drill; you were doing it too.

During the upheaval, pieces broke loose. Some of the changes will be good going forward. Some of them make us realize how critical the connections and support from community are.

Again, you understand – you were living it too.

As human beings, we're not designed to be isolated from one another, no matter how attractive it may be for a time. We're built to be connected and interdependent.

Our services, and our amazing staff members have not been able to work from home – you can't help someone navigate their day-to-day needs from a distance. Not when you have to help them put on their shoes or take their medication. Not when you have to teach them new behaviors that will help them be more successful in navigating the community.

Teaching and managing the many aspects of our clients' lives is complex work and takes complex skills. You need to be a teacher, a mentor, an advocate. You need to be flexible and responsive. You need to be positive when the work is challenging.

In the fall of 2020, we had a staffing crisis. Many of our direct support staff found themselves unable to continue doing the work – especially for the pay we were able to offer. Some of them found other work that paid the same and was less stressful.

Others were required at home to help kids with school or to provide care for family members. Some had health concerns that kept them at home.



We implemented pay raises for all staff members - without an ability to raise our rates. We sent clients away so they received the care they needed. We increased expenses and decreased revenue. Our



continued existence was tenuous. With the help of a payroll protection loan, a very generous matching grant from Bell Lumber & Pole, additional grants from the Astrup Family Foundation, the City of Northfield, The Enterline Foundation, Groves Foundation, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, Minnesota Department of Health, Northfield Hospital + Clinics, Northfield Shares, Otto Bremer Trust, Rice County, the Rotary Club of Northfield and the generosity of our donors, we made it through.

Some of our challenges have shown us where the gaps are between LBSA and the community, who we need to educate about what our services are and who we serve. It's a gap that we intend to address in 2021.

As we had been before the pandemic, we're continuing to assess what the future looks like. We're continuing to advocate for our direct support staff members to earn a living - to ask for government to acknowledge that ALL people who provide direct support need a livable wage, not just nursing home workers or PCAs, or whatever other class gets splintered off.

We keep advocating for policymakers to stop designing a system that creates some who have and some who have not.

We're working to develop programs that will address the service gaps we keep hearing about: a navigator service that will help people to understand and connect to all of the systems they need to help people with developmental disabilities craft the life they choose. Whether it's an attorney who can help create a special needs trust, assistance in accessing case management services or planning for transitions, the navigator is designed to ease the way.

We anticipate that 2021 will be another challenging year, a year of recovery from the many losses of 2020 and of rebuilding organizational capacity.

We're optimistic and we know that we will continue to need the community to understand and support our work. We're optimistic because of you, our beacons of hope, who have kept your lights shining in the dark and created a pathway to the bright future.

We thank you all for your understanding, for keeping us honest, for your support.

— Sandi Gerdes



Spirit of Laura Baker Award Recipient 2020

Steve Brockton

CONSISTENCY is Steve's middle name. Steve works overnights as a Senior Residential Counselor on LBSA's Oak Street campus. Not only has Steve continued to show up – night after night, for the last 17 years, but he does his job with competency and caring. So much so that Steve is the winner of this year's Spirit of Laura Baker Award. You could say Steve is keeping it in the family as his aunt, Margaret, won the award the same year that Steve started working at LBSA.

As an overnight staff person, Steve starts his shift at 10 p.m. each night. "It's funny

how clients come to recognize your face. Usually when they see me, they know it's time to go to bed," he says smiling. During the night Steve checks on each client in the household hourly. He needs to remain alert throughout his shift and be ready to assist anyone that wakes up. Steve says most nights are quiet but occasionally multiple clients may wake up at the same time and he may have to address multiple client concerns and behaviors at the same time.

Congratulations, Steve, on this well-deserved award!

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.

Frank Zastera

FRANK ZASTERA has been involved with people with disabilities for most of his life, growing up with his sister who has a developmental disability. In addition to being a family member, Frank was a legacy board member for LBSA, accepting a nomination to join the board after his father, Joe, retired.

Frank served on the board from 2000–2020 and served as secretary for 10 years of his service. Living in northern Minnesota, he felt like he wasn't able to contribute in all the ways he wanted, yet he was eager to find ways to make his service purposeful and meaningful. As the LBSA board changed over the years, Frank was a voice for families, and for retaining traditions that made a difference to the people we support and to families.



Frank understands the joys and challenges of growing up with a sibling with disabilities and could understand and advocate for services and supports that help both families and people with disabilities. He could be counted on to be a barometer for programs we were considering. He is a passionate advocate for adequately funding services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Frank, his sister and his family have moved on from LBSA. We are pleased to honor his – and their – legacy of service to LBSA with the 2020 Robert Bonner Distinguished Service Award!

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.



Lynn

IMAGINE, as a child, not being able to tell your parents that you are scared.

Imagine, as a parent, not being able to understand what is troubling your child.

For many families navigating the challenges of autism, life becomes flooded with questions and the search for answers can be exhausting.

When Lynn was six months old, her mom, Marilyn, recognized that something wasn't quite right. "She was a beautiful child, but I noticed she didn't cuddle like our first child and she started looking past people. That's when I became concerned." And so began Marilyn and her husband, Bob's,

energy-draining search for answers and ways to support their daughter.

Lynn grew up in the early 1960's when little was known about autism. "We felt badly for Lynn. So many clinics, doctors, tests," Marilyn recalls. "So many wonderful people worked with us, but nobody had answers." Throughout her early childhood, Lynn met with doctors, speech therapists and hearing specialists, and was subjected to test after test. It seemed like each new visit produced a new diagnosis. Early on, Lynn was even diagnosed as being deaf and was fitted with hearing aids. During these early years, Lynn also attended a variety of day programs.

As the years progressed, Marilyn and Bob's family grew, and Lynn's behavior became more and more difficult to manage. "She never slept through the night. She was hyperactive and getting into things and her behavior became very challenging. This was a tough period." The combination of navigating the system of doctors and clinics looking for answers, managing an ever-growing household (now four children) and supporting their daughter, Marilyn and Bob came to the realization that they needed additional support for Lynn. "We looked at many places and people were so sympathetic, but we kept hearing, 'We're sorry. We don't have anything here.'"

In 1972, someone recommended visiting Laura Baker School in Northfield. After meeting with the administration, Marilyn says, "We heard something we had never heard before ... *We'll try!* We couldn't believe it." Lynn moved into LBSA within a couple of months. For the first several years, Marilyn and Bob drove to Northfield every week to visit Lynn. They would often take her on car rides and spend time together at LBSA. Eventually, Marilyn and Bob moved to the Northfield area to be closer to Lynn. Car rides evolved into visits home which Lynn loved.

Lynn grew up knowing she had a family who loved her, and Lynn loved them - and music. Ever since Lynn was a baby, music played an important role in her life. She loves to be sung to. As a very young child, music was one of the few things that would calm Lynn down when she was upset. In later

years during visits home, Lynn would enjoy sitting with Marilyn at the piano, listening to her play Lynn's favorite selections. "We had a special song which I would play when it was time to return to her home at LBSA. As soon as she heard that particular tune being played, she would get up and head for the garage."

LBSA Music Therapist, Jenny Solar, says Lynn loves participating in her household music sessions. "Lynn gets a huge smile on her face when we start music and pull out instruments. She really enjoys the social aspect of groups and the positive interactions between herself, staff, housemates and me that the groups help facilitate. She also likes to say 'cheese' so then we'll sing 'On Top of Spaghetti' and let her sing the 'cheese.' Even if she doesn't fill in the word, she still gets a huge smile!"

In addition to music, Lynn loves spending time outside (when the weather is WARM), going for walks and van rides, trips to A Great Day Farm and attending her day program at Epic Enterprise Monday through Friday.

Marilyn says she and her family are very appreciative for everyone at LBSA. "Lynn is treated with respect and care from everybody; from Sandi (Executive Director Sandi Gerdes) on down. Household Director Katie Swenson and her staff in Lynn's neighborhood home are wonderful. Lynn appears more peaceful and content than ever. She is in a place she loves - *her* home with *her* housemates."



Meet Amairani + Joseph

AFTER having worked in the fast-food industry, Amairani Rosas, a sixteen-year-old high school junior, came across an ad for a Direct Support Professional (DSP) position at LBSA. She wasn't sure what to expect, but "I knew that I wanted to try something different."

After graduating high school, Joseph Flores worked for a number of years in retail and banking before joining LBSA as a DSP. "I have always liked helping others and I have wanted to do this type of work, but I never had the guts to." After speaking with a friend familiar with LBSA, he decided to give it a try.

Starting any new job can be nerve-racking. Especially work you have no experience doing and that carries a lot of responsibility. "I was pretty intimidated on my first day." Amairani acknowledged. "But Grace (mentor and lead staff Grace Neuroth-Casson) did a

very good job of helping me feel comfortable." Joseph described similar feelings heading into his first shift. "I was scared at the beginning. I didn't really know what to expect with not knowing the clients yet." For Joseph the anxiety quickly disappeared as the residents asked him a "ton of questions, like what T.V. shows I like and what I liked to eat."

DSPs are the backbone of organizations like LBSA, providing the essential, individualized support that people with developmental disabilities need in order to have an opportunity to thrive. The work that Amairani and Joseph do is complicated and requires managing a wide variety of responsibilities. Duties can include providing behavioral support, managing meals, household chores, documenting, communicating with other staff and guardians, frequently making decisions with people, about their lives, passing medications,

coordination of appointments, transportation and facilitating recreational activities.

Amairani and Joseph are new to LBSA, having been hired in the last six months, and join the organization at a critical time. Maintaining adequate staffing levels has always been challenging for intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) service providers, especially in the last 20 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges. In September 2020, the staffing crisis came to a head for LBSA. As client's day and work programs closed due to safety protocols, LBSA was faced with adding 13 full-time positions to support clients during daytime shifts. Competing against higher wages and COVID-related childcare issues added to staffing challenges. As a result, LBSA made the difficult decision in September to temporarily consolidate our five Oak Street campus cottages down to two to ensure the safety and well-being of our clients.

During this transition, the LBSA administrative team and board of trustees implemented a plan to recruit and retain employees. The plan included raising our wage scale for new and existing staff who provide direct support at a cost of \$216,000 annually. In November, LBSA received a generous

grant from Northfield Shares to help with additional staffing costs but will need to raise more money each year to fund that added expense. Since September, LBSA has focused on recruiting and has been fortunate to find talented new employees like Amairani and Joseph to join our team.

Even though Amairani and Joseph are new to their roles and the work is often challenging and complex, they both agree that the work is rewarding. Joseph says it's fun coming to work each day. "They (the three young women Joseph supports) have the best vibe. They are always happy and cheerful." He adds that the clients have also taught him a lot. "I am amazed at how motivated they are with being healthy. They're always eating vegetables. Now I do too." He chuckles, "They are rubbing off on me."

Amairani appreciates being able to share in successes with the clients she works with. "There are many rewards that come with the job. Just knowing that I am helping someone have a better life. Seeing them flourish." She says fun, surprising moments happen every day. "This morning we played a short round of tag in the living room. So many giggles. I said 'Wow, you are really fast.'" Amairani says spontaneous moments like these contribute to her enjoyment of her work. "I hope to be doing this for a long time."

LBSA has a variety of full-time and part-time DSP positions available. If you, or someone you know, would like to join our team of talented support professionals go to laurabaker.org/employment to fill out an application or learn more.

2020 Accomplishments



OUR MISSION is to respect the life choices and dreams of people with developmental disabilities and help them reach their goals. Understanding that the needs of each individual are unique, we empower families to choose from a continuum of care that will support their loved ones in leading fulfilling lives. In January 2020, we never could have predicted just how much of a roller coaster ride the year would prove to be. Through some very difficult times, and with the help of supporters, volunteers, partners and the community, we were able to accomplish a number of achievements in 2020.

- We created new protocols, changed staffing levels and navigated all the challenges of COVID-19, allowing us to keep our clients and staff safe.
- We created a new salary schedule for direct support staff to increase our ability to recruit and retain staff.
- LBSA was honored to receive the Martin Luther King Jr. award from the Northfield Human Rights Commission.
- LBSA employee, Molly Halls, received the Direct Support Professional of the Year Award for Minnesota!
- Thanks to a donation from Eugene and Mary Anne Dietz, we awarded Olive Omoro the first ever Gary Martin Memorial Scholarship. Olive is a direct support professional at LBSA and is studying nursing at Winona State University.
- In program satisfaction surveys distributed annually to client's care teams, LBSA achieved a 98.6% "satisfied" or "very satisfied" rating to questions on a five-point rating scale.
- LBSA was one of eight community housing and support service providers in the nation featured in an advocacy report published by ANCOR.
- Music Therapist, Jenny Solar, offered music therapy sessions virtually and made themed video sing-a-longs for clients.
- Art Specialist, Bridget Novak, worked to create written and visual directions for art projects that could be facilitated by clients' direct support staff.
- Starting in late summer, Jenny and Bridget facilitated outdoor, socially distanced art and music projects for LBSA clients.
- We launched our newly redesigned website with the goal of creating a better overall user experience.
- In partnership with KYMN Radio and Neuger, we aired a six-part radio series titled "Why Community Matters." The series highlighted challenges developmental disability service providers face and the role of community partnerships in overcoming those challenges. (*Visit laurabaker.org/news to listen to the series.*)
- We launched an LBSA Instagram page. *Be sure to follow our page!*
- We increased LBSA's overall social media following on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by 14%.
- We estimate that over 400 people from 22 states tuned into our 25th Annual (first-ever virtual) Gala on Saturday, December 5. We raised over \$200,000 for LBSA services and programs.
- We received a "Top-Rated Nonprofit" designation from GreatNonprofits and a Gold rating from GuideStar.

New in 2021

IN ADDITION TO creating and navigating a “new normal” for our clients and our existing programs, 2021 will be an important year for LBSA. LBSA’s Executive Director, Sandi Gerdes, in conjunction with LBSA’s board of trustees, has been working for months with consultants to develop a roadmap for program expansion. This initiative will consist of two phases which includes the launch of a **Family Navigation Services** pilot and a **Behavioral Consulting Services** pilot.



Family Navigation Services pilot program goal will be to assist parents, families, and guardians of special needs children with improved access to coordinated and integrated care. This program will help families and guardians navigate the services available, identify and link to resources, provide education and ongoing support and connections to other people in the same situation. We plan to launch this pilot program in June of 2021.

Behavioral Consulting Services pilot program goal will be to assist parents and guardians with young and adult children with the development of support plans to address behavioral challenges. These plans will be designed to stabilize behavior, with the goal of helping individuals remain in their existing housing environment and to increase their overall quality of life. Our timeline will be to launch this pilot program in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Both pilot programs address significant gaps in support services for individuals and families of children with developmental disabilities. Both programs leverage LBSA’s decades of expertise in providing services to people with developmental disabilities as well as providing support to families with special needs family members. After months of discussion, consultation, and research, we believe that both programs will create new streams of revenue for LBSA and will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization.

LBSA will need to raise additional funds for this initiative. If you would like to learn more about how you can help, please contact Director of Community Relations Andrei Sivanich at andrei@laurabaker.org



MEET HOLLY

HOLLY CIFFRA, LBSA's In-Home Services Director says, "You only get one life, so why not enjoy it?"

Easier said than done during a global pandemic. It's clear that Holly lives these words and takes it one step further.

Over the past year, Holly has been helping others enjoy *their* life during what has been a difficult year for so many. If you have spent time recently on or near LBSA's campus you may have seen inspiring artwork mysteriously appearing. "Once we moved to social distancing and everyone wearing masks, after a while I could see how people were struggling, and the toll it was taking on everyone with the uncertainty, sadness, loneliness and stress in people's eyes. Feeling kind of down myself, I thought, 'What can I contribute to LBSA that would be meaningful to others,

hopefully lift their spirits and give them hope?'" The light bulb was lit.

Early in the pandemic, artistic, affirming messages creatively done in chalk began to appear on sidewalks around LBSA's main building. "Hope." "Stay Strong." "Courage." As fall gave way to the cold, the messages continued. Sidewalk chalk art transformed to snow sculptures: a giant penguin, a Beacon of Hope lighthouse sculpture complete with a solar powered beacon! As spring arrived, so did a rock garden with painted rocks: "Love." "Community." "Together."

The previously unknown artist is now revealed.

It should be no surprise that Holly found her way to LBSA. From babysitting, to running a daycare for 16 years, to working



in senior care centers, Holly has spent most of her life providing care and support to others. Holly first heard of LBSA from one of her daycare moms who was working at LBSA. She recalls their conversations about how rewarding it was to work at LBSA. Over the years, Holly got more familiar with the organization by volunteering at LBSA's Dinner Theater. Her volunteer experience left her with a positive impression. "It was impressive how elegant the Dinner Theater event was, and I admired how much fun everyone was having." Finally, in 2017, Holly started working part-time at LBSA. Shortly thereafter she closed her daycare and began full-time, first as a direct support professional and then as the director for LBSA's In-Home Services.

Holly says she enjoys making connections with clients and says it's important to her to feel like she is making a difference in people's lives. Even though the pandemic has been challenging for staff and clients at LBSA, Holly is always on the lookout for opportunities to turn lemons into lemonade. One example is a client Holly works with who has difficulty reading. "When stores in town started posting signs on their front doors this quickly became a fun adventure. We would work on exercise (being one of her current goals) by walking around

downtown Northfield stopping at store windows to see what each sign had to say. At first, we read to ourselves, but that changed to taking turns reading a line out loud. Not long after we were taking turns reading signs." Holly says she was amazed at the change she witnessed. "She became more confident in herself; like she could do anything."

Holly says another great part of working at LBSA is the comradery amongst staff. "Everyone seems to work together toward the same thing; not just to get clients what they *need*, but opportunities to be part of the community." She believes staff's focus on going beyond basic needs and working on behalf of clients to find opportunities for community and engagement is something that makes LBSA unique. It's also the reason she enjoys her work here.

When asked if Holly is going to work at LBSA forever, she chuckled. "I might."



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Brent & Tobi Larson

The LBSA's Legacy Club recognizes households that have stated their intent to include LBSA in their estate plan. If you would like to learn more, please contact Andrei Sivanich at andrei@laurabaker.org

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Ronald & Glorian
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*In Memory of
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Dr. Jennifer Bierman
& Mr. James Griffin

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Elizabeth Truman

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Julie & Howard
Thorsheim

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*In Memory of
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Roberta Rankin

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Louise Morse*
Richard & Jeanie
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Mark & Ruthann
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Marilyn Matta

*In Memory of
Nadine Sylvester*
Marilyn Matta

*In Memory of
Pete Wallin*
Richard & Jeanie
Deplazes

*In Memory of
Stella Welk*
Marilyn Matta

*In Honor of
Maxine Closser*
Margerie Barnes
Janelin Barron
Jane Barthelemy
Kristen & Brent
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Dustin Beltramo &
Bridget Dolan
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Lynn Matta*
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*In Honor of
Ruthie Neuger*
Adam & Marla Neuger

*In Honor of Charlie &
Matt Sewich*
Hailey Vath

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Beth Christensen
Aurora Pharmaceutical
BoardBOS, LLC
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Dr. David &
Anne Brust
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CakeWalk
Cannon Valley Makers
Carbone's Pizza &
Sports Bar
Content Bookstore
Cub Foods
Family Fare
Fette Electronics
Forget Me Not Florist
Goodbye Blue Monday
Coffeehouse
Dr. Richard &
Kris Goodwin

Michael Hero & Marie
Westerman Hero
Hogan Brothers'
Imminent Brewing
Judy's Floral Design
Just Food Co-op
Lisa Karsten
Keepsake Cidery
KYMN Radio
Brent & Tobi Larson
Larson's Printing
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Tammy Minar
Loon Liquor Company
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Ann Lufkin
Martha's Eats & Treats
Marilyn Matta
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Northfield Downtown
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& Clinics
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Quarterback Club
Rare Pair
Jim Rossow &
Betsy Spethmann
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Hog Barbeque
Sheldahl Flexible
Technologies, Inc.
WSI Sports

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Astrup Family Foundation
City of Northfield
The Enterline Foundation
Groves Foundation
Mayo Foundation for
Medical Education
and Research
Minnesota Department
of Health
Northfield Hospital
& Clinics
Northfield Shares
Otto Bremer Trust
Rice County
Rotary Club of Northfield

Thank you for your support!



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*LBSA staff
+LBSA board member



Statement of Unrestricted Activities

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE
YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020

Support and Revenue

Client Services*	\$ 5,528,754
Donations	698,842
Other Income	312,689
In-Kind Donations	13,044
Net Gain/(Loss) on Investment	47,294
Total Support and Revenue	\$ 6,600,623

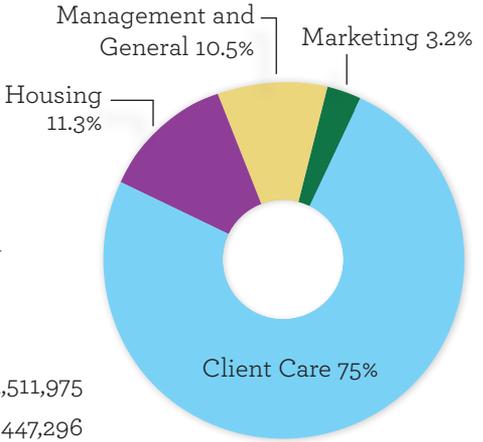
Operating Expenses

Salaries & Benefits Client Care	\$ 3,641,943
Client Program Expense	243,866
Transportation	13,403
Contracted Services	301,862
Housing	683,194
Food	202,768
Other Client Care Expenses	128,959
Total Client Care Expenses	\$ 5,215,995

Management and General	\$ 634,164
Marketing & Events	196,831
Total Support Services	\$ 830,995

Total Expenses	\$ 6,046,990
-----------------------	---------------------

*Includes amount from PPP Loan Forgiveness



**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020**

Assets

Current Assets	\$	1,511,975
Investments		447,296
Building and Equipment (Net)		3,864,527
Total Assets	\$	5,823,798

Liabilities

Current Liabilities	\$	483,008
Long Term Liabilities		760,610
Total Liabilities	\$	1,243,618

Net Assets

Unrestricted Assets	\$	4,566,234
Temporarily Restricted Assets		13,946
Total Net Assets	\$	4,580,180

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	5,823,798
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2020 financial results audited by LB Carlson, LLP



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