



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2018 – JULY 2019

Letter From Heather



My journey with Empower Cherokee of GA, Inc. began in 2000. I was 21 years old and a University of Georgia Graduate for less than a month when I took a job as a Direct Support Professional Empower Cherokee. In that first year of employment I learned a valuable lesson. No amount of money compares to doing a job you are proud of at the end of each day. Through the years I have had a rewarding career in the Developmental Disabilities field serving as a Support Coordinator and Support Coordination Area Coordinator, however, noting could have prepared me for the reward I would reap when I came back home to my first employer out of college.

Becoming the Executive Director at Empower Cherokee of GA, Inc. has been like wrapping up in a warm blanket on a cold day. The people we support, the staff, the families and caregivers, and our countless supporters are truly like one big family looking out for each other. It is outstanding to observe and serve alongside so many people all working toward a common goal. And that goal is to empower the people we support to live life as they define it.

In recent months Empower Cherokee of GA, Inc. has made a clear effort to break down barriers and connect with our communities in a big way. From employment to community access we are supporting the men and women who choose to use our services to connect with their communities and build lasting relationships with people who do not experience the same disabilities.

Examples of opportunities range from work in a variety of group and independent jobs all over the county, volunteer opportunities, recreational opportunities, and so much more. We have learned that we support dreamers, artists, givers, hard workers, lovers, ambassadors of kindness and friends and neighbors in our local communities.

Empower Cherokee not only supports people with developmental disabilities, but also educates the larger community about kindness, compassion, and acceptance through our presence and contribution. It is my pleasure to be a part of an organization dedicated to “empowering people to live life as they define it.”

Impact 2019

130

Empower Cherokee Supported more than 130 people in Cherokee County

31

People Supported earned an income in a community setting.

11

People Supported receive necessary Medical Supplies



People Supported engaged in choice driven community based individualized services.

44



350

Over 350 personally identified goals accomplished

100

100% of people supported are off campus at least 1 day per month





Empower Cherokee

PROGRAM PROGRESS

A Look At Supported Employment

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Employment

Supported Employment Group and Individual

- Individuals Currently Employed Part time in Group or Individual Placements
 - Canton City Hall – 5
 - City of Holly Springs – 4
 - Roytec Industries – 6
 - Zaxby's – 2
 - Chick-Fil-A- 1
 - Kroger – 1
 - Wendy's – 1
 - McDonalds – 1
 - Cracker Barrel – 1
 - Belk – 1
 - Salvation Army Holiday Bell Ringer– 4 (seasonal)



Employment Continued

Not Traditional Employment

- Vibrant Communities Grant
 - 50/50 Grant valued at \$1750 with the Empower Cherokee match coming from donated funds to complete the following project:
 - Four Individuals learned how to create, glaze and fire pieces
 - Next they learned how to price, market, and sell their items
 - Continued learning and selling
 - Included 1 year membership at the Canton Arts Center and an Art Show.



A Look At Day Services Community Access Group and Individual

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Program Progress

Community and Volunteering

- Capacity to bring up to 85 people supported to community locations at one time.
- 100% of people supported receive a minimum of one group community activity each month
- People supported choose 100% of the community activities they want to participate in.
- Legacy Events – Large group events that have gone on for over 10 years in some form or another
 - Shriner Circus and Autograph Day
 - American Legion Day at the Fair
 - Cherokee Lanes Big Day Out

Program Progress

In House Programs

Fully developed Information station that features the schedule for both in and out of house activities and the curriculum for the focus areas each month.

- Every month we train people supported on health, rights, safety, choice, person centered practices, employment, and Community across all programs

Every person supported has an individualized support plan outlining the following.

- Hopes and dreams
- Goals people want to accomplish
- Health and safety Issues
- An outline of supports needed
- Schedule of individualized supports

Community Partners

OUR PARTNERS EMPLOY, DONATE, VOLUNTEER, AND GIVE US
OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE

Community Partners

At Empower Cherokee Community Partners can get involved in a number of different ways. Our partners may be employers, volunteers, donors and sponsors, in kind sponsors, group or organizations we are a part of, natural resources, paid and discounted resources, organizations we volunteer to assist, and much more.



Our Partners

Employers

- City of Canton
- City of Holly Springs
- Roytec
- Zaxby's
- Chick Fil A
- Red Lobster
- Cracker Barrel
- Salvation Army

Our Partners

Donors

- Po Boys Car Club
- Knights of Columbus
 - Woodstock
 - Waleska
- Women of the Moose
- Kathy Davis Foundation
- The Kindness Revolution
- Empower Cherokee Board of Directors
- United Way
- Woodstock Junior League
- Angle Auctions
- Golden Kiwanis of Cobb County
- Family Life Magazine



Our Partners

Places we Volunteer

- Cherokee County Animal Shelter
- Mariposa Farms
- Flowers with a purpose
- Camden Hall
- The Bert Show Big Thank You
- Chamber of Commerce Canned Food Drive
- Relay for Life

Our Partners

Recreation, Education, and Community Development

- Cherokee County Schools
- In Harmony Music Therapy
- Vibrant Communities Grant
- Cherokee Parks and Rec
- YMCA
- Canton Art Center
- Canton Moose Lodge
- American legions
- Cherokee Lanes
- Santa Doug
- Cherokee Area Transit
- Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce
- The Georgia Learning Community for Person Centered Practices

Our Partners

People who serve us

- Revolution Church
- Hayes Insurance
- Volunteer Fundraising Committee



Parents and Caregivers – We have an endless supply of parents and caregivers who serve us regular with volunteer hours, donations, parties, activities, and various other supports

Survey Data

SATISFACTION AND POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Survey for People Supported

- 96% of Participants Surveyed Report liking their services
- 92% of Participants feel they have the right to make important choices
- 92% of Participants enjoy activities offered by Empower Cherokee
- 99% of Participants state they are treated well at Empower Cherokee
- 96% of Participants feel safe at Empower Cherokee
- 35% of Participants who are not working would like to have a community job
- 96% of Participants who do work are in the job they want
- 91% of Participants get assistance when needed or wanted at Empower Cherokee
- 93% of Participants feel listened to by staff at Empower Cherokee

Survey for People Supported

- 93% of Participants feel that they learn about Health and Self Preservation at Empower Cherokee
- 92% of Participants feel that they participate in community activities as much as they would like to.
- 99% of Participants feel they learn about Person-Centeredness and Self-Advocacy at Empower Cherokee
- 96% of Participants feel they would refer other people to Empower Cherokee
- 90% of Participants feel that they get help to pursue their hopes and dreams at Empower Cherokee

Caregivers Surveys

- 100% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Services at Empower Cherokee
- 100% of Caregivers are Likely or Very Likely to refer others to Empower Cherokee
- 100% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the quality of Care/Assistance provided for their loved one by Empower Cherokee
- 100% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the responsiveness of Empower Cherokee Staff
- 88% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the professionalism of Empower Cherokee Staff
- 94% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the ability of Empower Cherokee to provide appropriate assistance to persons in the program.
- 93% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the individualized care provided at Empower Cherokee
- 100% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the safety of Empower Cherokee's Programs

Caregivers Surveys

- 94% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with Empower Cherokee's ability to help their loved ones achieve goals
- 92% of Caregivers are Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the timelines in which services are delivered at Empower Cherokee
- Caregivers report that their loved ones are immersed into the community and connecting with people outside of programs 76% of the time with the scale rating not at all in the community to full community emersion
- 100% of survey responses that were not Satisfied or Very Satisfied were Neutral.

Person Centered Organizations Training

3 YEAR LONG ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING AND EDUCATION
PROGRAM FOR KEY STAFF AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE ORGANIZATION

Person Centered Practices Results

Empower Cherokee participated in a training initiative with Support Development Associates to align with the Centers for Medicaid Services Final Ruling that Home and Community based Services must be Person Centered.

- Advisory Committee Meetings
- Structured Coaches and Leaders Meetings
- Increased Community Participation
- Changed Organization Name and Mission
- Improved rating scores with Support Coordination and Qlarant
- Better in house opportunities for people supported
- Continued development of the Information Station (schedule and information)
- Collaborative approach to problem solving
- Structured format to analyze company processes
- Improved communication across departments
- Increased independence of people we support to make real decisions for themselves with support.
- An understanding about how to balance what a person supported wants with what they may need for health and safety reasons.
- Goals set for the organization by both the coaches and leaders and the advisory committee
- Better job descriptions and performance measures
- More fundraising
- More Creative Ideas across all departments
- Development of the Personal Focus Worksheet for ever participant along with a one page description to help plan better goals for the annual service plan.
- More volunteering, work, and socializing for the people supported
- Purchased more vehicles for people supported.

Fundraising Efforts

Empower Cherokee started intentional fundraising efforts in 2019. Historically the program operated a Golf Tournament, however that stopped more than 5 years ago, and there was no organized effort to raise funds after that. Empower's fundraising effort started by hiring a Community Developer part time. This developer was tasked with coming up with at least one fund raising event annually. Over the course of the first year the following fundraisers have occurred.

- Empower Cherokee Golden Gala (held in FY 20)
- Décor and Pour Event
- The Great Canton Duck Race (Held in FY 20)
- Online Empower Cherokee Merchandise Sale
- Donation drive for Empower Cherokee Thanksgiving Luncheon
- Vibrant Communities Grant (Empowered Artists)



Directors and Organizational Chart

Board of Directors

Executive Board:

Richard Kearley – President

Mike Spivey – Vice President

Dr. Susan Padgett-Harrison – Secretary

Lonnie Peplau – Treasurer

Board Members:

Tammie Anderson

Angela Bacon

Martha Causey

Mindy Davis

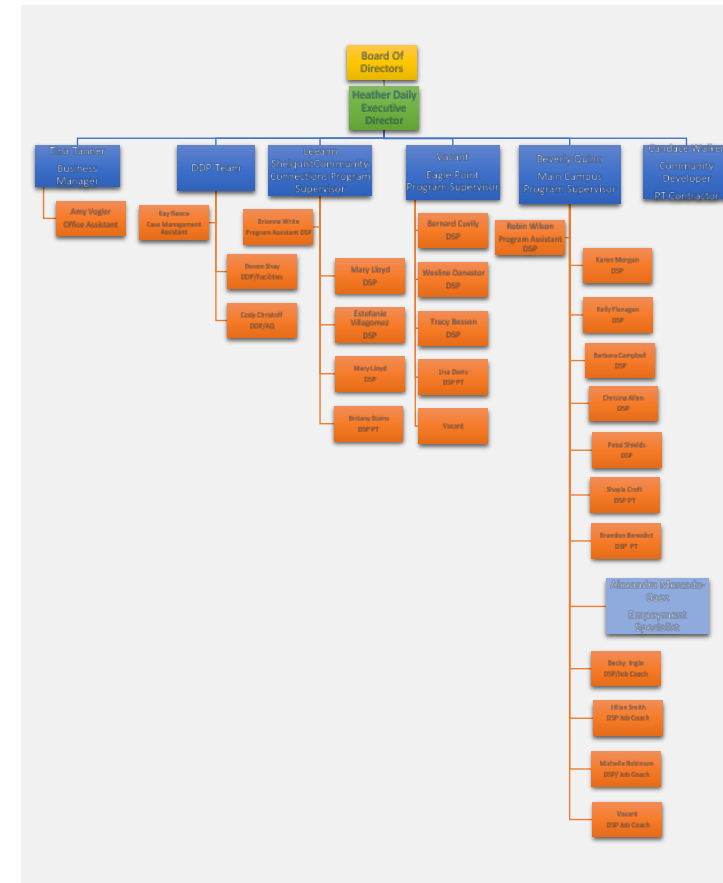
Louise Flanders

Aaron Ingram

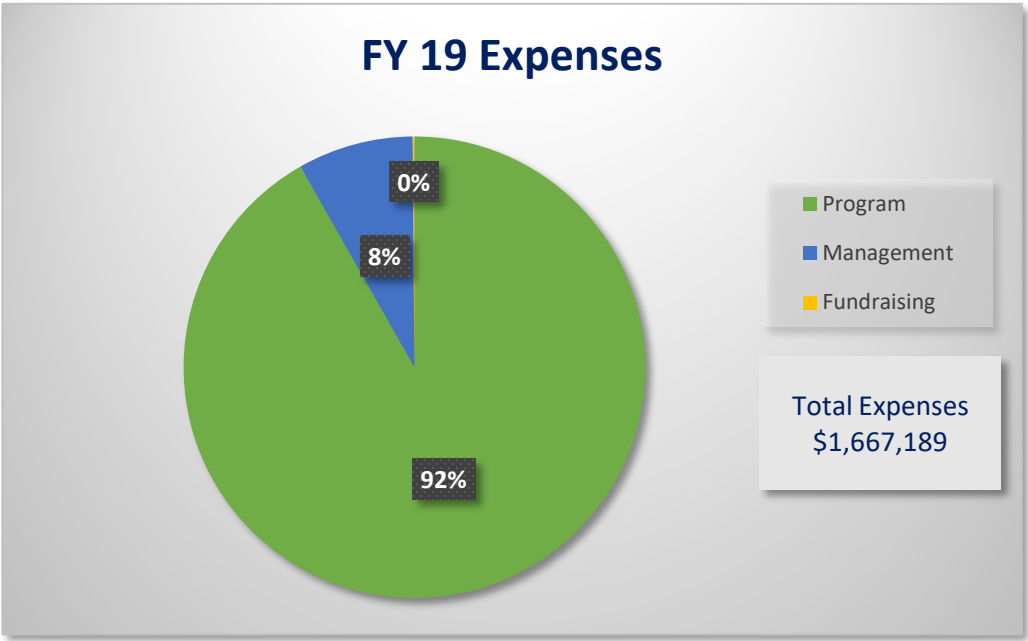
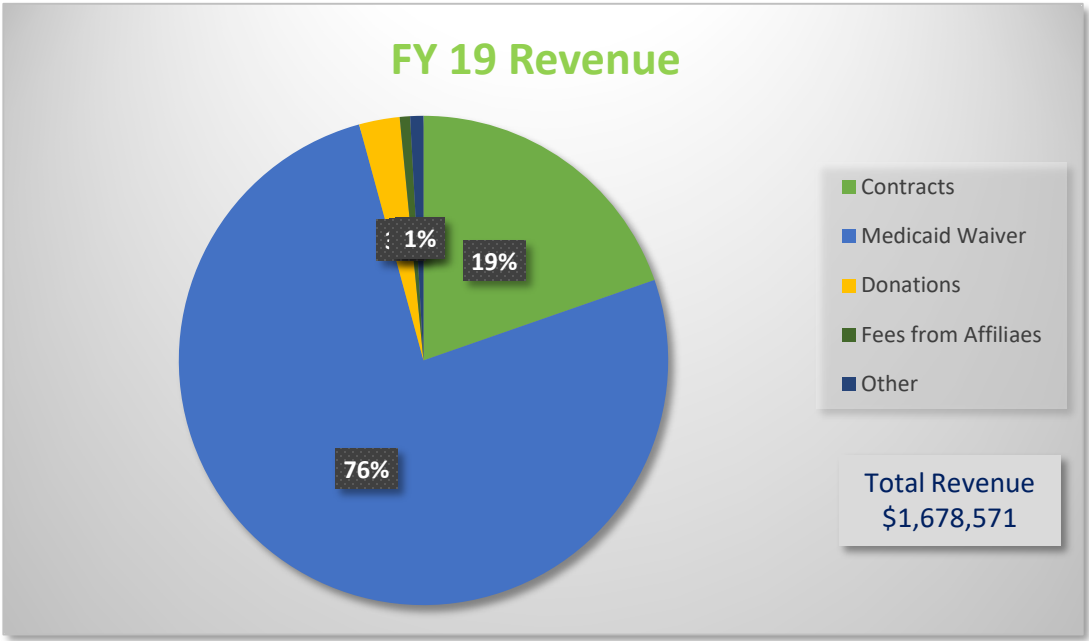
Donna McGowan

Flondell Thompson

Mike Zenchuck



Financials



Vision for 2020 and Beyond

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE AND PLANNING FOR 50 MORE

Moving Forward to Meet our Mission

Mission Statement:

Empowering people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live life as they define it through employment and community connections with the resources necessary to achieve their dreams.

Goals For The Future of Empower Cherokee

THINGS TO STRIVE FOR OVER THE NEXT 3 YEARS

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Goals

Set Agency-Wide

- Increase Community Employment
- Increase Community Presence for all non employment activities
- Increase total hours participants spend in the community
- Increase capacity of fleet
- Continue Person Centered Planning
- Increase efficiency across all departments
- Increase fundraising efforts



Goals

Set By Coaches and Leaders

Documentation Requirements

- Review training procedures and streamline and clarify what and how to document including guidelines around what is enough and what is too much.
- Reduce the time we spend on documentation and apply time savings to supporting the people in our program.
- Find ways to simplify documentation and still meet not only minimum requirements but also best practices.
- Look at our overall understanding of documentation, perhaps we are misinterpreting provider expectations and doing too much/too little in certain areas.

Parent/Caregiver Involvement

- Find the best way to keep parents and caregivers of people supported informed, educated, and updated. (Newsletter, email, resource manual, blog etc.)
- Determine the effectiveness and feasibility of a “PTA” type group which would house a parent liaison, volunteer opportunities, and educational opportunities)
- Educate parents on how adult services and school age services are different.
- Educate caregivers and parents on what we expect from them when their loved one enters our program (Parent Accountability)

Person Centered Practices and Individual Support Plans

- Educate participants to really have “a voice” in the planning process so that their program is based truly on their needs, hopes, and dreams.
- Develop a peer support group that would potentially coach other self-advocates on how to have “a voice”
- Create a Curriculum and education for people we support around person centered planning including balancing important to and important for, self-advocacy, and self-preservation.
- Effectively educate staff and families of participants on the purpose and intent of the Individual Support Plan process and Person Centered Planning.
- Find solutions to navigating new expectations and requirements from DBHDD and stay true to our mission.

Goals

Goals Set By Advisory Committee

- Keep having advisory meetings
- Everyone needs to be someone people want to be around
- Focused efforts on supported employment
- Focused efforts on community outreach and opportunities
- Assure there are lots of opportunities to socialize with friends and family
- Maintain a fully staffed organization



Goals

Set by Management and the Board of Directors

- Review the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Empower Cherokee's Practices
 - Reorganization of the Business Office
 - Revise Job Descriptions as needed
 - Revise Procedures across all departments to assure they match current procedures
 - Continue to maintain a financially stable organization
 - Diversify Funding Streams
 - Maintain Staff wages competitive with other providers and similar positions in Cherokee County and Surrounding areas.



Conclusion

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- Empower Cherokee is a viable and growing program for persons with IDD that has been a staple in the community for 50 years.
- Empower Cherokee is more than a resource to people with IDD and their families, we are also a resource for the Cherokee County Community as a source of volunteers, donors, and employees
- Empower Cherokee is well liked among participants, families of participants, and other stakeholders in the community
- Empower Cherokee continues to grow its community presence and solicit community partners who share our vision.
- Empower Cherokee looks forward to living out the new vision of empowering people to live life as they define it for the next 50 years.