



# 2017

## Year in Review



taking on disability together

# A Message from the CEO



Dear Friends,

At Easterseals, we help people live better lives. That simple statement encompasses so much that occurs in so many ways, and serves as the mantra for all that we do.

In 2017, Easterseals Louisiana helped over 9,000 people live better lives. Those lives include premature babies, teenagers with autism, adults with behavioral health challenges, elderly great grandparents, and so many more people with diverse needs and challenges.

It takes committed people to help others live better lives. Among those are our diligent Board of Directors who guide our mission, our executive team who directs a culture of compliance and responsible leadership, our passionate 200 employees who tirelessly champion the rights of people with disabilities, and our volunteers who selflessly give their time, talent and money to make sure we reach every person in need.

This year we launched a very special program. PEERS provides social skills training to adolescents with Autism and related disorders. In 2017, we completed three PEERS classes. Witnessing the growth in these teens over the 14 week PEERS classes and hearing the testimonials of their parents has been a profound experience for all of us at Easterseals. Because of your support, these teens are able to navigate social situations and develop friendships.

Another project that we are very proud to have been a part of in 2017 was an initiative through the Louisiana Department of Health which provided screenings to all individuals on the Medicaid Waiver Request for Services Registry list. Many of these individuals have been waiting for services for years due to state budget limitations. Through this project, we screened 1077 individuals. This work helped to determine actual needs and in fact, facilitated immediate services for those in critical need.

Please enjoy this Year in Review as we look back at 2017 and let's continue to work together to help many more people live better lives in 2018!

With Warm Regards,

*Tracy Garner*  
President/CEO





# Program Spotlight:

## PEERS

PEERS (Program for the Evaluation and Enrichment of Relational Skills) is a parent-assisted evidence based intervention focusing on teens in middle and high school who are having difficulty making or keeping friends. Developing and keeping friendships correlates positively with self-esteem and independence. The intervention includes separate parent and teen sessions which meet at the same time for 90-minutes each week over a 14-week period.

Research indicates that parents can have significant effects upon their adolescent's friendships, both in terms of direct instruction and supervision, as well as, supporting their adolescent development of an appropriate peer network. The group focuses on skills that include having conversations, different forms of communications, choosing appropriate friends, handling bullying, how to enter/exit conversations, appropriate use of humor, and managing arguments/disagreements with friends.

Each session builds upon skills learned in previous sessions. Homework is given at the end of each session and is reviewed at the beginning of the next session. Newly learned skills are rehearsed by the adolescents in each session, during which they receive feedback from the certified facilitator and coaches who are students from local colleges.

ESL's goals are to teach the skills necessary to make and keep friends so that it will have a significant lifelong impact for adolescents with ASD, ADHD, anxiety or depression.

## MISSION STATEMENT

ESL is a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist children and adults with physical and intellectual disabilities achieve independence.



## 2017 Share a Smile Client



Easterseals Louisiana client, Jerzae, is just 5 years old and has debilitating seizures. Her mom had to recently make an extremely hard decision and Jerzae will soon be having brain surgery. The doctors have to separate the left and right hemispheres of Jerzae's brain to hopefully stop further damage due to her seizures. After hearing about Jerzae's upcoming surgery our amazing Support Coordinator, Amanda from our Thibodaux Office, was able to work with Make-A-Wish America so that Jerzae and her family could enjoy a trip to Walt Disney World! They stayed at Give Kids The World where Mickey and his friends tucked her in every night. Each bungalow is set up for kids with special needs, and the entire trip was all about making Jerzae smile as much as possible!

Easterseals Louisiana is proud to have such amazing staff members that always go above and beyond the call of duty for their clients. As you can see, Jerzae had a magical time at the most magical place on earth, all thanks to the combined efforts from our very own support coordinator and the Make-A-Wish America Foundation.



# 2017 Advocate of the Year

## Rain Bougere

Rain is an overall healthy, active boy who loves playing with electronics, being outside, playing with bubbles, and jumping. He never lets his Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis hold him back in life! Although Rain is non-verbal, he always has something to say and his mother, Slynita is often his voice. This past year, Rain and his mother expressed that they would like to see a gathering for families and individuals with autism. A family event with sensory activities, games, information booths and more was born and with the help of the Easterseals Thibodaux Office, Rain, his Mom, and the community, the First Annual Autism Family Day was held on April 22, 2017. This event was a huge success in bringing awareness and families together. Rain and his mother were honored at our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Sealed in Style Gala this past August where Slynita gave a moving speech about the work that Easterseals is doing in her community to support her son and so many others.



## Special Sponsor Highlight

### Century 21 Elite

A special thank you to Century 21 Elite for their continued support of our mission to take on disability!

## A Thank You to Debbie Coleman

Volunteers are worth their weight in gold. They share their time and talents without any compensation. As a non-profit, we depend on their contributions and value their hours of volunteering for most only a simple thank you. They are an integral part of an organization, a never-ending support and they make a great difference in the mission they believe in. Easterseals Louisiana is lucky to have such a committed volunteer with Debbie

Coleman of Wyndham Garden Shreveport, a special volunteer, a corporate partner and a giving woman. Easterseals thanks Debbie Coleman for her years of service and look forward to our continued partnership.



## In 2017, Easterseals Louisiana fought to protect Medicaid in Louisiana – Here's why:

### WHAT IS MEDICAID?

Medicaid provides critical, often life-saving, health care, long-term services and community supports to millions of children and adults living with disabilities. Created in 1965, Medicaid is jointly funded by states and the federal government. States design their Medicaid programs to provide federally mandated services in addition to services or special populations that are a priority in the state. Federally-mandated services are directed to both children and adults based on specific eligibility criteria and include hospital services, home health care, laboratory and x-ray services, and nursing home care. States must also provide Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment services for eligible children. States may also offer optional services, including prescription drugs, dental care, hearing aids, and physical and other therapy services which are particularly important to eligible individuals with disabilities. Medicaid covered nearly 70 million Americans during 2016, including children, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities and low income seniors.

### WHY IS MEDICAID SO IMPORTANT FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES?

Individuals with disabilities, especially those with chronic health conditions, can require medical and long-term care to maintain their health, independence and well-being. Medicaid is the largest payer for long-term care for all Americans and, often, the sole source of health and long-term care for many individuals with disabilities. One in seven Medicaid enrollees (or about 10.4 million Americans) is an individual with disabilities. Medicaid services such as attendant care, home health, adult day and prevocational services help individuals with disabilities remain in their home and communities and live productive lives. Some states offer Medicaid Buy-In programs that allow individuals with disabilities who are working to retain their needed health care coverage while earning above the regular Medicaid income limits. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid was the only available insurance program that included the benefits that people with disabilities needed to support their health.

### HOW DO MEDICAID INVESTMENTS IMPACT LOUISIANA RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?

In Louisiana, 18% of Louisiana Medicaid enrollees (or 237,300) are individuals with disabilities. Louisiana provides home and community-based services through a Medicaid waiver program that provides eligible Louisiana residents with disabilities with access to services to help them remain in their home and community rather than higher-cost, less-favorable institutional care. Louisiana received an estimated \$5.7 billion in fiscal year 2017 in return for providing specific benefits and protections to eligible Louisiana residents, including individuals with disabilities. The Louisiana Department of Health provides essential services and supports to individuals with disabilities through a network of community providers, including Easterseals Louisiana.

### EASTERSEALS POSITION ON MEDICAID REFORM:

Easterseals respectfully asks Congress to protect Medicaid for people with disabilities by:

- ✓ Opposing proposals that remove Medicaid's guarantee of services to eligible populations;
- ✓ Opposing proposals that convert Medicaid to block grant or per capita financing;
- ✓ Maintaining Medicaid's current structure that guarantees states a federal funding formula match, based on eligibility costs, without a federal cap;
- ✓ Ensuring Medicaid reform doesn't shift costs to individuals or reduce services; and
- ✓ Advancing policies that allow more Medicaid services to be delivered in home and community-based settings.



# 2017 Special Events

## Sabine's Got Talent

This year, our friends in Many, Louisiana helped host our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Sabine's Got Talent! We had a lot of fun enjoying dancing and singing, all while raising funds for our services!



## Jazz on the Bayou

Started in 1993 by Easterseals Board Member, the world famous jazz pianist Ronnie Kole and his wife Gardner, Jazz on the Bayou has been delighting audiences for years. As the main funder of our PEERS Program, this two day event helps fund innovative programs and services that are proving to be life changing for people with disabilities. This favorite "backyard festival" has grown to host over 300 attendees each year and in 2017 raised over \$23,000.00 for ESL.

## Breakfast with the Easter Bunny

We held our first ever Breakfast with the Easter Bunny this past April! Friends of ESL came out to pet the Easter Bunny, enjoy a pancake breakfast, and had fun with lots of arts & crafts!



## Autism Awareness Family Day

With over 150 people in attendance, we are so glad we were able to provide some fun and games, resources and more to those who came out to our first ever Autism Awareness Family Day! All of this was made possible by our Thibodaux staff & community because of their kind donations!



## Chocolate & Champagne

Nearly 400 people came out this past April 22nd to DiamondJacks Casino & Hotel to sip champagne and enjoy some sweet treats, all while raising funds for disability services.

Thanks to the considerable efforts of event sponsors KTAL Channel 6, Diamond Jacks, Blue Cross Blue and Blue Shield of Louisiana, and Wyndham Garden of Shreveport. The event was a complete success, raising over \$55,350. This year Easterseals Louisiana was happy to honor Sherriff Prator of Caddo Parish with the our Lily Award, for his unwavering dedication to our community.



## Sealed In Style

Easterseals Louisiana's Annual Sealed in Style Gala 2017 honored Rain Bougere & Anthony Bondi, owner of Lacombe Family Pharmacy, for their support of ESL and our mission! It was a great evening of Roaring 20's costumes, live music, dancing, a silent auction, food, drink and more. We had a blast while raising \$36,000.00 that will be used right here in our community.



## Pink Party

Easterseals Louisiana has partnered with The Pink Party Organization in an effort to raise money and awareness for the ESL mission. This year the event raised \$9,500.00 for our services!



## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic

Our 7th Annual Golf Classic was held on October 6th as our community came together for a day on the links for an 18 hole golf tournament. With hole-in-one contests, raffles, beverages, snacks served on the course and more, it was fun for all who attended! Of course, it was all for a great cause - helping us continue our services to those with disabilities throughout the state of Louisiana!

## Campership 2017

From campfire sing-a-longs and late night ghost stories, to boating, nature walks, swimming, and arts and crafts, Easterseals camps provide the same excitement and activity available at other summer camp programs. The difference? Easterseals campers experience the joys and challenges of camp in a fully-accessible setting. This year, we sent 25 Campers to Camp ASCCA and Camp ABLE with the goal to provide a healthier, happier, longer, and more productive life for children and adults of all abilities.

Every summer, staff from across the state meet at Camp Able while ESL Campers are there for a day of Fun! They bring with them ice cream and spend the afternoon playing games and dancing together. It is a fun time for everyone!

Now **you** can help send a child to camp in 2018! With the launch of our new Campership Sponsor Program, we're asking businesses, organizations, and citizens to band together to help send kids with special needs to camp this summer. If you have interest in helping us send a child with special needs to camp to have a summer like no other, you can learn more online!

## To our Sponsors

As a non-profit community based health organization, Easterseals Louisiana depends on successful fundraising events, private gifts, and individuals like you for the financial support that allows Easterseals to play such a vital role in the lives of people living with a disability. In 2017, more than 2,000 individuals and 150 business donated to help make this year a success as we continued our services across the state and worked to take on disability, together. A big thank you to everyone who donated in anyway. Your support is making a difference!





# Our Work in 2017

Easterseals is working to be more involved with our community than ever before! Check out all that we have been up to this past year and learn about some of our clients that are truly Taking on Disability!



Voith Paper in West Monroe held a Diaper Drive for our EarlySteps Program and donated a car full of diapers! It takes our community coming together to support our cause and we are so thankful for everyone that made this possible!

ESL client, Daniel, and his brother Matthew, participated in a 5K run. His brother pushed him the entire way and made sure he crossed the finish line!



We now have BINGO in Thibodaux!

Thanks to volunteering staff and community members we are able to raise funds and awareness every week!

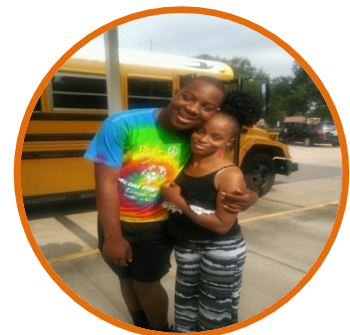


We had a blast with NAMI Northwest Louisiana at their 4th Annual Mental Health Awareness Walk this November! We passed out water bottles, enjoyed some Gumbo, and of course raised awareness about Mental Health!



This year we welcomed new Director of Clinical Services, Stacey Pierce! When asked, "Why Easterseals?" her response was simple, "I have been working alongside ESL for a long time so the transition to the Easterseals family has been easy & fun. I am excited to get this new program up and running! "We can't wait to see all the great things Stacy will do for ESL in the years to come!"

La'Trevious is just 13 years old and was selected to compete in the State Special Olympics this year! This is his second time competing and we are so proud to see him work so hard to achieve his goals!



Ariana Alexandria, Program Manager in Alexandria, LA, is also a member of the Central Louisiana Children's Coalition and she is out feeding the homeless today! Thank you for all that you do, not only for Easterseals, but for your community, Ariana!



Our office in Alexandria made a big move this year! Our new location will allow us to grow in the future so that we can do more to support those with disabilities!



Successful events wouldn't be possible without our amazing Community Advisory Board in North Louisiana!

Staff in our Shreveport office filmed a state-wide PSA earlier this year thanks to KTAL. Since then, our commercial has played thousands of times allowing more people to learn about the work we are doing at Easterseals!



We had a great time at our 2017 Leadership Meeting! We learned how to work together and lead better so we can continue to provide life changing supports in the community!



Please meet Mr. Ray Ruffin, a longtime client of ESL. He has been attending STARC for over 20 years and was elected by the supervisors at STARC for King of their Ball this year! Next to him is his Queen and friend of over 20 years, Sheree. Ray was so excited to show off his crown and ribbon to his support coordinator, Miriam, when she came to visit! We all deserve to get to feel like royalty every once in awhile!



Our Covington office celebrated National Nurses Week by honoring ESL Nurse, Pat Jackson, who does so much for our clients in Covington, LA!

Annually, our offices have a friendly competition to see which can set the best scene following a theme while including doughnuts in the picture. This year, ESL took you "Around the World" and on an adventure! Members from our Community Advisory Board came together to vote on the winner of this year's competition and our Covington office is taking the Doughnut Day Crown once again!



At our Annual Manager's Meeting, we had the pleasure of having a special guest speaker! Mr. Ryan Gatti, State Senator, shared with us why Easterseals is special to him and why he continues to fight for us and those with disabilities every day. Together we can fight for the voiceless and take on disability!



Our offices across the state loved getting to pass out stuffed animals donated by PetSmart to their clients this Holiday season!



# Celebrating the Staff

As we reflect on our eventful year, ESL has a lot to be thankful for, especially our great team! Our *amazing* staff across the state is what makes all that we do possible. Without all of them working endlessly, we wouldn't be able to help the 9,000+ clients with disabilities annually that we do. We are especially grateful for those who celebrated anniversaries with us this year, because their continued work is making a huge impact in our communities across the state!

**We are Easterseals, and we are Taking on Disability Together.**



**Dawn Rollins**  
Monroe  
5 years



**Renée Dean**  
Shreveport  
5 years



**Lakrasia Holloway**  
Covington  
5 Years



**Amanda Williams**  
Covington  
5 years



**Tina Thrower**  
Shreveport  
5 Years



**Megan Simon**  
Alexandria  
5 Years



**Jessica Schafer  
& Nicole Landry**  
Thibodaux  
5 Years & 15 Years



**Sanae Dominique**  
Shreveport  
5 Years



**Quovatas Turner**  
Covington  
10 Years



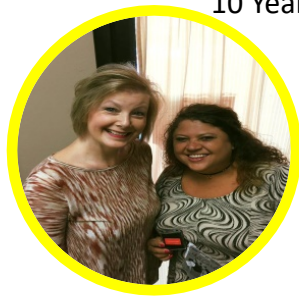
**Janis Grisby &  
Brenda Harrison**  
Shreveport  
15 Years



**Pamela Newton**  
Monroe  
10 Years



**Tracy Garner**  
President/CEO  
15 Years



**Miriam Meadows**  
Covington  
15 Years



**A Special Shout Out to Jason Seaux!**

Please join us as we celebrate our very own Support Coordinator, Jason Seaux, for receiving the Innovative Housing Superhero award from HOPE Connections this year!

Jason received this award for his work in making ICE the agency in the Continuum with the highest participant retention rate because of his dedication to serving the most difficult and most vulnerable in our community. He did this by finding ways to keep them housed where conventional methods have failed. His dedication, level of engagement, and true care for his clients are just a few of the things that have made Jason so successful. He is truly Taking On Disability and we are so lucky to have him be a part of the Easterseals Louisiana family!

"We have but one life. We get nothing out of that life except by putting something into it. To relieve suffering, to help the unfortunate, to do kind acts and deeds is, after all, the one sure way to secure happiness or to achieve real success. Your life and mine shall be valued not by what we take...but by what we give."

-Edgar "Daddy" Allen  
Founder of Easterseals

## A Look Ahead

As great as 2017 was, it's time we look ahead and plan for the future! Mark your calendars now so that you can attend these 2018 ESL events!

EVENT	DATE
Sabine's Got Talent	February 16, 2018
Jazz on the Bayou	March 24-25, 2018
Autism Family Day	April 7, 2018
Chocolate & Champagne	April 21, 2018
Give for Good Day	May 1, 2018
Pink Party	TBA
Sealed in Style	August 18, 2018
Golf Classic	October 5, 2018



## How to Get Involved

### Want to Volunteer with Easterseals?

Creating solutions and changing lives is what we do at Easterseals. Join us and you, too, can make a difference and help people with disabilities achieve their goals. Volunteer your time and share your talents! Whether performing office work or volunteering at an event or camp, your strengths and talents can go far in touching the lives of people living with a disability. There are a lot of opportunities for you to volunteer your talents, gifts and time. Please contact Bernie Bitting @ 318.221.8244 or email [bbitting@laeasterseals.com](mailto:bbitting@laeasterseals.com).

### Want to Donate to Easterseals?

Millions of people live with disabilities, and each day that number grows. Put your dollars to work – donate today to help individuals and families living with disabilities. Donate now online with a one time gift, or commit to monthly giving! You can also fill out the Donation card on the back of this page and mail it in as a way to give to those in your community. Thank you in advance for helping Easterseals Louisiana take on disability!

Visit the website below to donate online:  
[www.easterseals.com/louisiana/](http://www.easterseals.com/louisiana/)

### Follow us on Social Media!

To stay up to date on all things Easterseals Louisiana and the impact we are making in your community, be sure you are following us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. We post daily news, photos, and videos so that you can stay in the loop with everything that ESL is doing to take on disability!

Easterseals Louisiana







*For more information please call*

504.523.7325

*email us*

info@.laeasterseals.com

*or visit our website*

<http://www.laeasterseals.com>



**Donate Today!**

<http://www.easterseals.com/louisiana/>

If you would like to make a donation, you can do so at any time online!

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This is in ☐ Memory of / ☐ Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

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