



MUNROE-MEYER
INSTITUTE



Annual Report | 2020-21



Waterfall, by Anthony Howe, is a wind-powered kinetic sculpture located at the main entrance of MMI. Waterfall was made possible through a generous gift from Bob and Myrna Krohn, longtime friends and supporters of the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

Our Mission

Is to be world leaders in transforming the lives of all individuals with disabilities and complex health care needs, their families and the community through outreach, engagement, premier educational programs, innovative research and extraordinary patient care.



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On the cover: A young MMI client peers through colorful tubing on the MMI playground.
Brad Anderson/architecturalphotographyinc.com

Munroe-Meyer Institute
Annual Report 2020-21


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Director's Message

When you are on a mission, the journey never really ends.

Of course, there are successes. In 2021, the Munroe-Meyer Institute moved into its amazing new facility. This was the culmination of years of planning and millions of dollars in philanthropy. The grand opening event, even subdued as it was by the necessities of safety measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, was a moving, joyous celebration of another milestone in MMI's history.

But the journey continues.

With this magnificent new building completed, we began moving into the next phase of MMI's evolution – growth! Our new home's larger space and state-of-the-art technology allow the institute to expand existing programming, create new programming and position itself for even more robust research and training efforts.

As we move forward, we will grow our provider pool, research capacity, educational programs and community partnerships. We will think outside of the box for solutions to both new and

longstanding challenges. We will re-examine how we function, and we will get away from doing things "because that's how it's always been done."

How will we do all this? With your help.

When growth is the goal, partners are needed – and MMI has been blessed with wonderful partners. As we look back on 2021 in this report, we revisit some of the collaborative efforts that pushed MMI forward in its mission. I am excited to share with you some of our success stories from the past year.

Thank you for being part of the MMI community. I look forward to continuing to work together, in 2022 and beyond, to transform the lives of people with disabilities and complex health needs. Our new home gives us the opportunity to grow. Our partners – as they always have – will help us shape and direct that growth.

Together, we are going to do amazing things. We are excited to be on this journey with you.



Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD
*Director and Hattie B. Munroe Professor
Munroe-Meyer Institute*

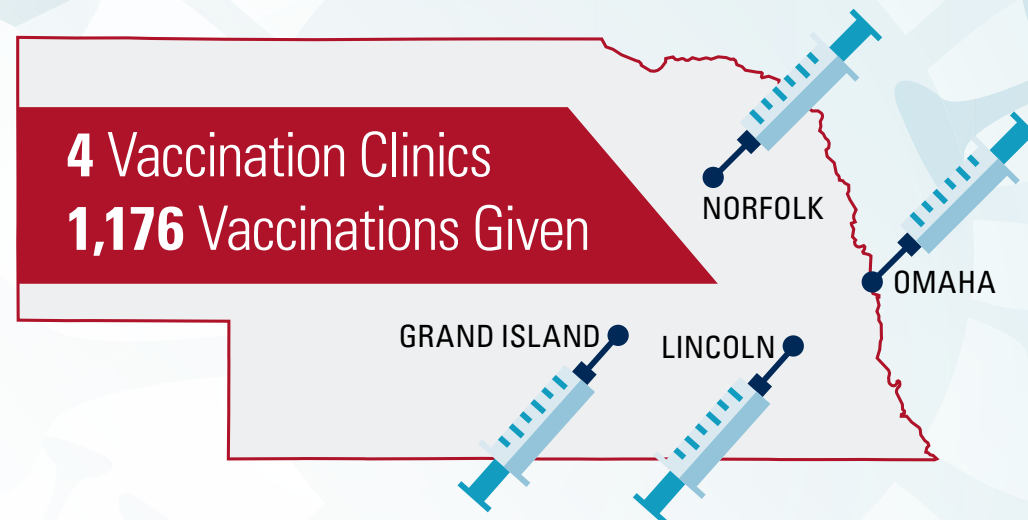
MMI's COVID-19 Response

Institute moves to protect the IDD community

From conducting the first vaccination clinic specifically for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to holding listening sessions for families navigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Munroe-Meyer Institute's role as an advocate for the IDD community was rarely more significant than it was in 2021.

With COVID-19 safety protocols in place at the institute early on, MMI leaders could turn their attention to helping the IDD community weather the challenges of the pandemic – challenges that were particularly acute, as the community was identified as especially susceptible to the potentially deadly effects of the virus.

The New England Journal of Medicine called intellectual disability "the strongest independent risk factor for presenting with a COVID-19 diagnosis and the strongest independent risk factor other than age for COVID-19 mortality" and advised that "patients with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers should be prioritized for vaccination and health care services."



One of the institute's most successful initiatives was spearheading the vaccination clinic, an example of MMI's ability to respond quickly because of its strong relationships and collaborators.

Tony Green, director of Nebraska's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, already were discussing vaccination rates for the IDD population in early 2021 when Dr. Mirnics learned COVID-19 vaccination doses were available through the Douglas County Health Department. (Some vaccine doses had been

made available in Nebraska to a number of individuals with IDD and their caregivers, but those opportunities dissipated quickly, and many were left without access.)

Working together quickly, Nebraska DDD, MMI and the Douglas County Health Department collaborated with community partners to schedule, publicize and hold a vaccination clinic in April.

"Nebraska was the first state in the union that provided full vaccine access to all individuals with IDD, their family members, caregivers and coaches," Dr. Mirnics said.

“One of MMI’s pillars is to act as an advocate for individuals and families affected by IDD, both those we serve and others throughout the state.”

– Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD

“We put it together in less than two weeks,” Green said of the April clinic at the CHI Health Center in Omaha. (As a result of the success of the clinic and MMI’s advocacy, the DDD went on to hold vaccination clinics in Lincoln, Grand Island and Norfolk.)

“One of MMI’s pillars is to act as an advocate for individuals and families affected by IDD, both those we serve and others throughout the state,” Dr. Mirnics said. “Both the Douglas County Health Department and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services proved valuable partners as we worked to get vaccines to the population we serve, which was disproportionately at risk – and remains so.”

“That was really a big first step at that point,” said Carolyn Chamberlin, president and CEO of Special Olympics Nebraska, which contacted its athletes and families about the clinic.

The clinic is only one example of how MMI’s connections enabled it to quickly mobilize for the benefit of clients in 2021.

“We engaged with (former Director) Dr. Adi Pour and Douglas County Health very early on in order to advocate for information, services and supports for Omaha residents with disabilities,” said MMI’s Mark Smith

of the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities and chair of Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert’s Advisory Commission for Citizens with Disabilities.

MMI’s efforts during the pandemic:

- The institute’s leaders realized early on that MMI was an essential service to its families, and the institute never closed, adopting strict safety protocols – which resulted in no known transmission within the institute – and shifting many services to telehealth.
- The institute pivoted to telehealth provision for the majority of its services within three weeks.
- MMI employees reached a vaccination rate higher than 99%.
- MMI and the UCEDD were involved in several projects concerning COVID-19 during 2021, including organizing and conducting listening sessions for families of younger children with disabilities on their experiences and challenges, as well as their successes, in dealing with the pandemic. The findings were presented at the annual conference of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

- A grant from the Administration on Community Living enabled MMI to develop an information and outreach campaign on COVID-19 for stakeholders in the state. “We mounted a social media campaign, along with mailings and other outreach, to get the word out on issues around vaccine hesitancy,” Smith said, adding that MMI partnered with the Nebraska Association of Service Providers to focus on messages to direct service professionals.
- Camp Munroe was held in 2021 with strict protocols to provide a safe activity for campers and respite for families.
- During the pandemic, MMI instituted a free behavioral telehealth consultation clinic.
- MMI received a federal grant to help provide translated information through YouTube videos to non-English speaking communities across the state. The project is set to launch in 2022.
- Jessica Gormley, PhD, of the MMI Department of Speech-Language Pathology, was part of a national effort, led by Penn State University, to create an app that teaches providers how to more effectively communicate with patients who cannot speak. That’s proving especially helpful in treating COVID patients who have been intubated.
- MMI teamed with Autism Action Partnership to provide COVID-19 information and activity kits to families throughout the state with children on the autism spectrum.

- Holly Roberts, PhD, MMI Department of Psychology, developed a national profile on COVID-19 and mental health and shared her findings on the national podcast, “Ag State of Mind,” in 2021.
- No MMI employee lost his or her job because of COVID-19.

Advocacy and community education efforts are ongoing in 2022.

“We are currently filming videos, that are available on YouTube in 12 different languages, on COVID-19, with an emphasis again on vaccination hesitancy,” Smith said. “We have interpreters in place for the effort. We also have agreements in place for a media campaign to get the word out to individuals and families on the availability of these resources.”

Both projects target critical areas for the MMI community: either vaccine hesitancy for those working or living with vulnerable individuals and/or groups who have trouble accessing up-to-date information on the pandemic.

“I am grateful to the state and our colleagues and friends working at DHHS and Douglas County for partnering with MMI and others,” Dr. Mirnics said. “Together, MMI, Douglas County and Nebraska launched the first IDD-focused vaccination clinic early in the pandemic, and our efforts to protect and inform the population we serve continue.”

The community’s appreciation was well-illustrated at the April vaccination clinic.

David and Mary Jo, parents of 20-year-old Leah, were so excited by the opportunity that they drove from Lincoln to get their daughter vaccinated at the IDD-specific clinic.

“I’m grateful,” Mary Jo said. “David and I have been vaccinated for several weeks now, but Leah is our main concern. I was thinking, ‘Somebody must have really pushed for this,’ and I’m glad someone did.”

Leah is vaccinated and proud at the April 2021 vaccination clinic spearheaded by MMI and its state and local government partners.





Westside transition students attend a music class at MMI, one of the institute's many collaborations with Nebraska school districts.

Creative Collaborations

Leveraging strengths in dynamic ways

Inside the Munroe-Meyer Institute, five young men and women from the Westside School District gather around artists and support staff as they beat on drums and other percussive instruments.

The class is part of Westside Community Schools' transition program, which works in collaboration with MMI to provide advocacy skills training, independent living skills training and other transition services for Westside students ages 18 to 21.

Since the opening of its new building near the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Scott Campus, MMI's transition program collaborations have almost quadrupled in size, from 22 to 72 students from Westside and Millard Public Schools.

The music class is part of the Advocacy and the Arts portion of the transition program. Funded by a generous donor, the class – which utilizes several types of artistic media – allows students to work on self-expression, social skills, general advocacy and self-advocacy.

“The arts often bring out students’ voices in ways traditional classroom activities do not,” said MMI program coordinator Rachel Ray. “We see a lot of expression, personality and independent thinking. Creative activity, such as playing music or painting, is a wonderful tool for self-expression.”

Collaborations with several Nebraska school districts are helping to transform the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The institute's psychology, speech, physical therapy, occupational therapy and other departments have contracts and collaborations with Omaha Public Schools, Millard Public Schools, Bellevue Public Schools, Papillion La Vista Community Schools, Westside Community Schools and ESU 2, which comprises 16 rural school districts. Through the grant-funded Mid-America Mental Health Technology & Transfer Center (MHTTC), MMI also is able to provide mental health training and technical assistance to behavioral health-focused agencies, including schools, across the state.

The Advocacy and the Arts transition class grew out of an art class that MMI held in 2019 with WhyArts for students from Westside, Millard and Papillion La Vista. The class was so successful, MMI continued providing it for its district partners.

“Westside has a longstanding partnership with MMI, and in the past several years, it has grown in a very intentional and strategic way,” said Kami Jessop, EdD, director of special services at Westside. “Each of us is looking for additional ways to build on our unique strengths and leverage each other's strengths to be better for our population of learners.”



MMI's embrace of Nebraska's school districts is no accident. Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, has consistently sought collaborations with educators since his arrival in 2016. MMI has many longstanding contracts to provide services to area districts and leadership and program directors continually explore ways to support schools and enhance school programs to transform the lives of students and young adults with IDD.

MMI's partnership with Millard Public Schools has led to creative programming, including a student wellness program in Millard middle schools in collaboration with the MMI Department of Psychology. The MHTTC team has provided technical assistance to help Millard's counselors, school psychologists

and social workers develop their work around behavioral coaching, as well. The MMI Department of Recreational Therapy has a social skills program in two middle schools and at Millard South High School, as well as the transition program.

“When we get a concept or idea that we think would help us, we reach out and ask, ‘What would you think about this?’” said Terry Houlton, PhD, director of special education for the district. “It's been an ergonomically developing partnership that's become very valuable.”

Developing an integrated model for mental health within Millard schools has taken eight years or more, said Carrie Novotny-Buss, EdD, coordinator of elementary special education in the district.



“It wasn’t until we had the conversation with MMI that things started to come together. It was a more comprehensive, systems-level conversation about how we were going to support kids, from the administrative level to the licensed mental health professional to the classroom teacher who works with the child every day,” Dr. Novotny-Buss said.

MMI’s partnership with ESU 2 grew from a U.S. Department of Education grant, the Mental Health Professional Partnership. The grant, received in 2020, seeks to build mental health services in schools by training providers and district personnel.

Masek said MMI’s “willingness to collaborate, problem solve and think outside the box, especially on issues of mental health shortages in rural areas, made it an obvious partner for this five-year effort.”

The program focuses on three ESU 2 school districts over four years, ultimately serving 12 of ESU 2’s 16 districts.

In the first year, MMI helped develop a curriculum for best practice training in school mental health, developed and ran a “mental health boot camp” for the three districts and developed a professional seminar on school mental health for graduate-level trainees. MMI also built a supervision series – which was not part of the grant, Masek said – to help district supervisors establish new mental health program criteria.

Three of the program’s first four trainees were hired in rural districts. In November, the Mid-America MHTTC School’s mental health team led a virtual learning institute for all ESUs in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education.

“The partnerships we’ve had with Millard, as well as ESU 2, have given us direction to continue to make an impact in the state,” said Mindy Chadwell, PhD, of the MMI Department of Psychiatry.

MMI’s collaborations aren’t all in behavioral health or transition programs.

Jennifer Richey, manager of MMI Care Coordination Services, is piloting a program with an OPS elementary school and district social workers to develop an intake form to access MMI services, as well help families find support outside of direct patient care.

The program may grow to include on-site educational sessions on federal and state support, Richey said, as well as other issues. The OPS social work team already is scheduled for 2022 training on autism as part of the effort.

When MMI moved into its new home, collaborative possibilities only got more enticing, Dr. Jessop said.

“The new building helps with accessibility, it helps with proximity, it helps, honestly, because MMI is our neighbor now,” she said. A group of special education professionals already has met at MMI to discuss diversity-equity-inclusion efforts at the invitation of Dr. Mirnics, she said.

Other partnerships are on the horizon, including discussions with Jamie Gehringer, PhD, on how Westside students might access his virtual reality lab, which includes VR versions of real-life events that present sensory challenges, such as getting a haircut or taking an airplane trip.

Dr. Gehringer also has partnered with the MMI Severe Behavior Department so that if a Westside student were onsite in the VR

“MMI is a phenomenal resource right in our backyard. It’s just a matter of figuring out how to capitalize on that. What are the needs, and how do we work together to address them?”

– Kami Jessop, EdD

lab and started to have an adverse reaction, professionals from the department would be on standby to help with de-escalation.

“MMI is a phenomenal resource right in our backyard,” Dr. Jessop said. “It’s just a matter of figuring out how to capitalize on that. What are the needs, and how do we work together to address them?”

Jolene Johnson, director of the MMI Department of Education and Child Development, which works with school districts throughout the state, said educators have been asking for more information on the institute and the new building since its opening. The department also fields questions about creating more effective programming.

“Schools reach out to us for resources, for example, how to have a better afterschool program,” Dr. Johnson said. “And we do craft some individualized evaluations based on what the school needs.”

Sandra Willett, PhD, director of the MMI Department of Physical Therapy, said her school partners also are exploring possibilities.

“Definitely, the aquatics programs and the new spaces in recreational therapy have created more awareness of MMI,” she said. “People ask about our new space and the new programs we are offering – not only families but our educator colleagues.”

Physical therapy’s Young Athletes Program – a collaboration with Special Olympics Nebraska, Omaha Public Schools and Bellevue Public Schools – is poised to grow, Dr. Willett said.

“It has always taken place annually in a local school district – one year with OPS families and the next with Bellevue Public School families,” she said. “With our space being bigger and more centrally located, we are considering merging those groups to reach a larger population and provide the program to both districts every year.”

But it’s more than the building driving school partnerships. MMI’s strong relationship with schools, students and parents is a critical component of its efforts to ensure transformational success at home, school and the community.

“MMI is an exceptional partner,” Masek said. “They always are willing to help and think outside the box. I feel comfortable asking questions, and I always get responses and support back.”

Dr. Jessop agreed.

“Dr. Mirnics has faith in the work of public schools; he has faith in the work of the school districts and the special education departments,” she said. “And he is unifying all of our agencies for the greater good for this population of kids.”



Robust research is integral to transforming lives

Collaboration, curiosity and innovation are the backbone of breakthroughs

The Munroe-Meyer Institute's mission is about transforming lives.

MMI accomplishes that, in part, by exploring new and better ways of providing therapy, programming and interventions to the people it serves.

Research is integral to that process, and MMI has a robust research portfolio, working with many national and local collaborators to expand knowledge across a spectrum of research activity.

"The ultimate goal of MMI's research endeavors should never be forgotten, and it is the goal behind every effort of the institute – to improve the lives of our patients and families," said MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD.

MMI's efforts in pursuit of that goal include what Jennifer Blackford, PhD, MMI director of research, refers to as basic science research, clinical outcomes research and community research – investigations that take place in the lab, with informed and consenting patients, and out in the community.

"We have all these levels of research at MMI, and in these, we are collaborating across the entire state and in many cases across the nation," Dr. Blackford said.

MMI has more than 60 grants, many of them collaborations – with other universities, such as Penn State and the University of Southern California, community organizations and the state and federal government.

A Sampling of MMI Initiatives

- A multisite grant in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin and the National Institutes of Mental Health Intramural Program to study the neurobiological basis of anxiety.
- A national effort, led by Penn State University, and involving MMI speech-language pathologist Jessica Gormley, PhD, to create an app that will teach providers how to more effectively communicate with patients who cannot speak – an especially timely effort in the era of COVID-19.
- Two grants with Autism Speaks: the first, as part of a multisite, nationwide effort to develop screening and assessments of anxiety, irritability and ADHD in autism; the second, looking at the potential of micro-RNA in saliva to diagnose autism.
- Providing space for a University of Nebraska-Lincoln team that is part of a national effort to explore the effects of poverty on brain development.
- A longstanding role in the Nebraska TIPS (Tracking Infant Progress Statewide) program, which, in collaboration with local hospitals, tracks the development of premature babies after leaving the newborn intensive care unit.
- Being among multiple national sites for the START-Play (Sitting Together and Reaching to Play) program, a physical therapy intervention for young children with neuromotor disorders with a research component.



“At MMI, our service providers think like scientists, in terms of evaluating programs and seeking concrete, provable outcomes that lead to the best possible treatment for the kids and families they serve.”

– Jennifer Blackford, PhD, MMI director of research

MMI’s strength, Dr. Blackford said, is its institute-wide commitment to research. When she arrived at MMI in 2021, she was impressed to find many clinicians and educators who, despite not being in research positions, were curious, innovative and open to being part of the research process, with the goal of discovering more effective or efficient services.

“What I saw when I came to MMI was this intellectual curiosity that ran throughout the entire institute,” Dr. Blackford said.

“At MMI, our service providers think like scientists, in terms of evaluating programs and seeking concrete, provable outcomes that lead to the best possible treatment for the kids and families they serve.”

Each patient’s experience offers an opportunity to explore ways to improve the interventions at MMI, Dr. Mirnics said.

“If we follow our patients’ journey, collect data and systematically analyze the outcomes and relate them to interventions, this becomes an extremely powerful research endeavor,” he said. “Every patient has lessons to teach us.”

MMI also has positioned itself to expand its research programs and collaborations with the 2021 opening of its new home at 6902 Pine St. The building opens the door to even more partnerships and collaborations, which Dr. Blackford actively has been pursuing.

“People are reaching out to our faculty to collaborate on multisite grants,” Dr. Blackford said. “We are a well-respected national collaborator. People want us to be part of their projects.”

“The new building features exceptional research space,” Dr. Blackford said, noting her own lab’s mock magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, which allows kids to practice the MRI procedure ahead of time, greatly reducing their anxiety.

“I’ve never had space for that before,” she said. “That’s a huge luxury; families can come to the place they already know is a safe place, where we care about them, and they can be comfortable engaging in research here.”

The new amenities such as the Virtual Reality Laboratory, the Makerspace, the mock MRI scanner and other state-of-the-art technology will allow for cutting-edge research.

“MMI also is a place where families want to come, which increases the chance that we’ll be able to get people to participate in research.”

As a result of these advantages, including the new amenities, institutional commitment and targeted support by the research office, MMI also will be able to attract, not only collaborators, but more world-class researchers to join the institute.

“That will increase the institute’s already robust research portfolio, setting the stage for even more success and growth,” she said.

In addition, Dr. Blackford created the Research Productivity Group, a mentorship program for junior faculty. Twenty members signed on

to participate – roughly three times what Dr. Blackford was expecting. So many, in fact, that she had to split the group into two cohorts.

“We’re building communities, providing support and starting to connect people – which also will build our internal collaborations,” she said. “The conversations are resulting in innovative ideas that will be exciting to explore.”

And “explore” is the key word, Dr. Blackford said.

“The clinicians and educators of MMI constantly are exploring alternatives. People at all levels throughout the institute, from directors to volunteers, are aware of the importance of research in determining the effectiveness of an approach or treatment.

“That’s the true spirit of MMI – getting the best treatment for our clients in the fastest, most effective way,” she said. “There is a humility at MMI, a focus on service to the families that is not about the ego of the clinician or the researchers.

“It’s that openness – that willingness to accept that, even if treatment modalities are working, there might be a way to do it better – that opens the door to new ideas, new internal and external partnerships and exciting breakthroughs.”

MMI Community Engagement Director Melonie Welsh agreed, calling MMI an idea incubator.

“That is why new projects and partnerships are happening continuously, in every area, including research,” she said. “Every member of the institute is always looking ahead for the most cutting-edge and effective ways of transforming the lives of the people we serve.”



Hitting new strides

New building helps Munroe-Meyer Institute design intensive therapy program to help Bentley’s family address his needs.

[Click here to read Bentley’s story.](#)



Community Connections

In November 2021, the Munroe-Meyer Institute Department of Genetic Medicine and two partners – Children’s Hospital & Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine – were named a Rare Disease Center of Excellence by the National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD).

The new center – one of only 31 nationwide – positions MMI and its collaborators as part of an innovative network seeking to expand access and advance care and research for patients with rare diseases in the United States.

“This designation and collaboration will lead to more robust and innovative therapeutic research that then will lead to improved care and more effective treatments,” said Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, director of MMI.

The designation, which would have been impossible without the investment of all three organizations, showcases MMI’s commitment to collaboration.

MMI works with a spectrum of entities: The University of Nebraska Medical Center and other University of Nebraska System institutions, health care organizations, community organizations, state organizations, schools and national networks such as NORD.

“The need is immense, and resources are limited,” Dr. Mirnics said. “It is vital that we work with our partners and complement their strengths and expertise to achieve the biggest impact for the disability community.”



MMI’s new home provides room for many new health initiatives and collaborations. The institute piloted a yoga class in 2021.



One of MMI's new community collaborations in 2021 was with Union Pacific for its impactful GoBabyGo! Nebraska! program.

At a Glance: Our Vast Portfolio of Partnerships

NORD, a clinical and research collaboration, is only one of the national networks that include MMI.

NATIONAL NETWORKS

- **The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD).** The UCEDD is one of MMI's most consequential network affiliations. MMI is one of only 67 centers nationwide to receive this federal designation, working – through training, service, research, communication and advocacy – to support the capacity of Nebraska to sustain all its residents.
- **The Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Program.** The institute is the Nebraska site for this national program that trains people to self-advocate or advocate on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
- **The Mid-American Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.** As part of the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration network, MMI is among 10 regional centers throughout the United States disseminating and implementing evidence-based practices for mental disorders into the field.

“Now that we have space within our new facility to expand, we can do even more,” said Amy Nordness, PhD, associate director of MMI. “By tapping into these national networks, we can team with other well-respected clinicians and practitioners across the country, building initiatives that lead to new program development or research activities that impact individuals with IDD across the country. It energizes our creative thinking.”

The collaborations also help enhance MMI's stature, Dr. Nordness said, attracting top-notch students and faculty and providing a national dissemination mechanism for ideas and studies.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

MMI works with institutes of higher learning across the state, although its collaboration with UNMC and University of Nebraska System campuses is especially strong.

In 2021, the MMI Department of Genetic Medicine's collaboration with the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions paid off with the graduation of the first class from the MMI-UNMC College of Allied Health Professions genetic counseling educational program. MMI hired three of these new genetic counselors in July.

MMI also provides practicum sites for other institutions. The MMI Department of Recreational Therapy, for example, is

collaborating with the College of Saint Mary to provide a practicum site for the institution's occupational therapy students and Creighton University to provide a practicum site for the institution's psychology students.

With the move to the new building, MMI also is poised to expand its collaborative programs with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, which already include a joint master's in applied behavior analysis through the MMI Departments of Psychology, Pediatric Feeding and Severe Behavior, as well as the integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

“The possibilities have grown in this new location,” Dr. Nordness said. “We are exploring a collaboration between UNO and the MMI Department of Speech-Language Pathology that would include classroom and clinical training elements, as well.”

The collaborations aren't only local.

“We provide long-term clinical training for graduate students, interns and fellows from more than 50 affiliated colleges and universities,” said Keith Allen, PhD, director of academic affairs at the institute. “We have collaborations in every corner of the country, including University of Oregon, University of Florida, Endicott College-Massachusetts, University of Texas and University of Minnesota, to name a few.”

HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

MMI has a strong partnership with Nebraska Medicine and Children's Hospital & Medical Center, with a great deal of service provision being done at each site.

MMI also works with clinics in rural Nebraska to provide behavioral health care in primary care locations, which Dr. Nordness said has "a huge impact across Nebraska."

Other collaborators include Boys Town National Research Hospital, Methodist Women's Hospital, the Truhlsen Eye Institute and CHI.

And the collaborations continue to grow. In 2021, the MMI Department of Genetic Medicine partnered with the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center and the June E. Nylan Cancer Center to begin providing genetic counseling services in Sioux City, Iowa.

"There is a wide variety of health care needs in Nebraska, and no one organization can meet all the clinical needs, whether related to a specific diagnosis, age, location or anything," Dr. Nordness said. "MMI has specialty skill training in the health care needs of individuals with IDD, so if we partner with other organizations, we can meet the clinical needs of the families as well as train other providers in other locations. So eventually those services can be provided within home communities."

"One of the unique things we bring to our health care collaborations is our focus on individuals with IDD," Dr. Nordness said. "It's a different skill set, and as we collaborate with other health care organizations, we help them provide an impressive level of care to the population we serve."

SCHOOLS

MMI has many collaborations with school districts across Nebraska, providing services such as behavioral health training and interventions, physical, occupational and speech therapy, and recreational therapy activities. MMI's district collaborators include:

- Omaha Public Schools
- Millard Public Schools
- Bellevue Public Schools
- Papillion LaVista Community Schools
- Westside Community Schools
- Madonna School
- ESU 2, which comprises 16 rural school districts

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

"MMI's federal designation as the Nebraska UCEDD also has helped lead to strong partnerships with the state, meeting regularly with state leaders to talk about the state's plans and needs," said Mark Shriver, PhD, director of the UCEDD.

"The National Core Indicator Survey that we do is a good example of a contract that we have to help gather information on the quality of services being provided by the state to the IDD community," Dr. Shriver said.

The close relationship with the state enabled MMI to partner with Tony Green, director of the state's Division of Developmental Disabilities and his office on its COVID response in 2021.

MMI also is recognized as an expert within the state. In November 2021, Sarah Swanson, of the UCEDD, testified before state legislators on a proposed law to expand the family waiver, which would expand access to services statewide.

The expectation – as mandated in the federal legislation – is that MMI work with its state DD partners, such as the Nebraska Developmental Disabilities Council and Disability Rights Nebraska.

"We participate with the state in DD activities across Nebraska," Dr. Shriver said. "In addition, we serve on entities such as the governor's Developmental Disability Advisory Council and the Nebraska State Independent Living Council. Our partnership with the state is a strong one."

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

MMI has historically worked closely with community organizations such as Autism Action Partnership and Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands, among others. Now, MMI's new home near the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Scott Campus is providing new ways to enhance or expand community partnerships, as well.

Special Olympics Nebraska was one of the first community partners to make use of the new MMI building, holding a health, dental and vision screening there shortly after it opened.

"Historically, we haven't been able to do that," said CEO Carolyn Chamberlain. "The building has increased our ability to offer opportunities to the athletes we serve. The fact that you have a whole Caring for Champions Program speaks volumes to the partnership and to the vision – as well as to the possibilities of what the future could look like."



The Munroe-Meyer Institute's annual Trunk or Treat, which was held as a drive-thru event again in 2021, draws many community partners who, along with MMI staff, decorate cars, wear colorful costumes and hand out treats to visiting children.



The new vision clinic at the Munroe-Meyer Institute, designed to serve children and adults with disabilities and complex health care needs, is a collaboration with the Truhlsen Eye Institute at UNMC.

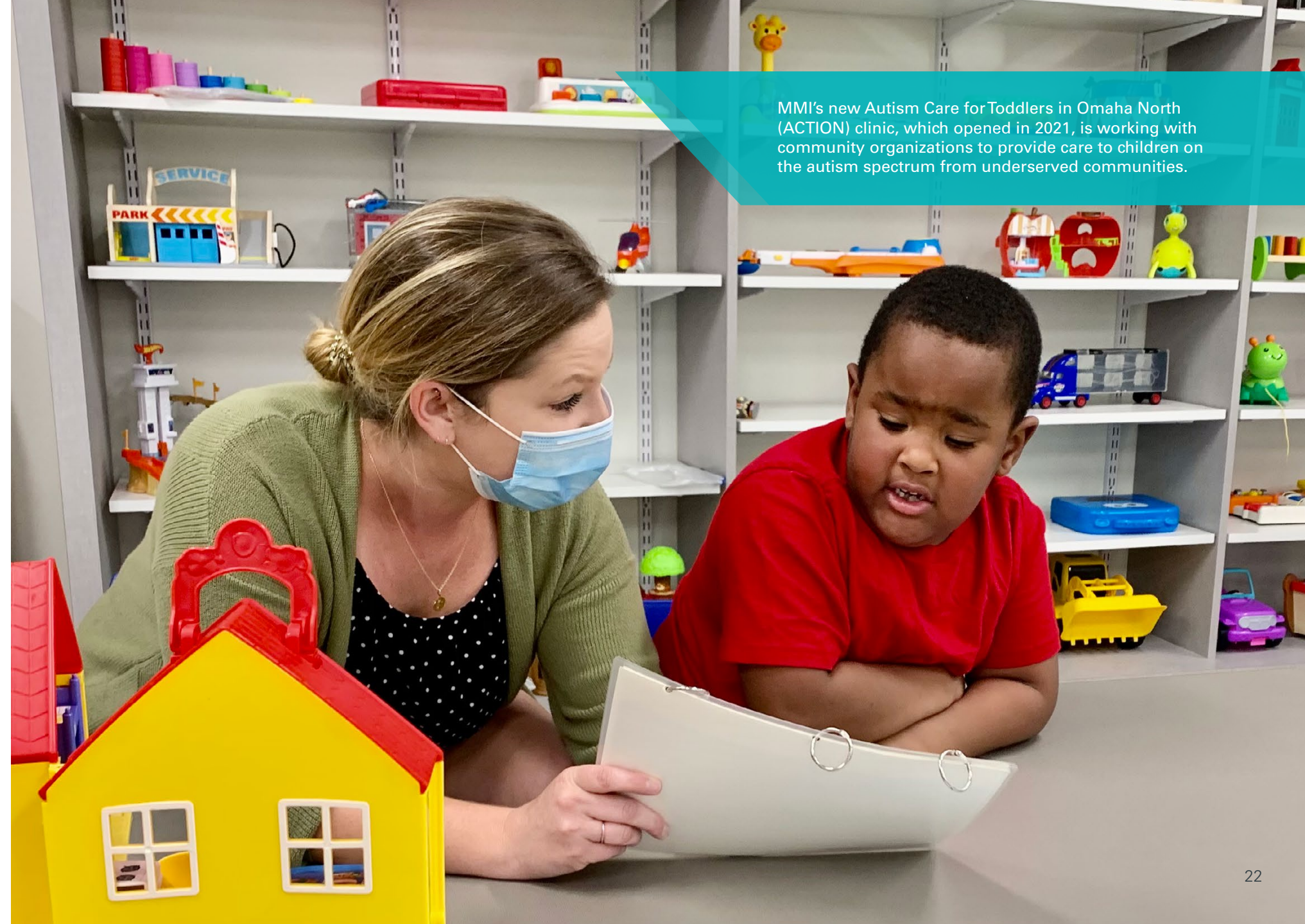
Denise Gehring, executive director of Sheltering Tree, provider of affordable independent apartment options for adults with developmental disabilities, said her organization began collaborating with MMI on a new program earlier this year. The program curriculum focuses on critical skills for independent living.

“MMI has been very generous in allowing us to use community space to hold trainings,” Gehring said. “Without that space, we wouldn’t have been able to provide these trainings, CPR in particular – because we’re not going to teach CPR in a one-day Saturday course. We teach it over six weeks.”

Meanwhile, MMI is working to build community partnerships at the Autism Care for Toddlers in Omaha North (ACTION) clinic, as well. Clinic director Elizabeth Preas, PhD, said partners such as Avenue Scholars will help MMI make an impact.

In the end, MMI’s transformative mission is at the heart of all its collaborations.

“Teamwork and collaboration always have been a hallmark of MMI’s mission, dating back to the beginning, when the collaboration between the Society for the Relief of the Disabled and the Visiting Nurse Association helped create the institution that today is MMI,” said Melonie Welsh, director of community engagement for the institute. “As MMI moves ahead, collaboration and partnership across all levels of government, education and community will allow us to continue in our effort to transform the lives of the people we serve.”



MMI’s new Autism Care for Toddlers in Omaha North (ACTION) clinic, which opened in 2021, is working with community organizations to provide care to children on the autism spectrum from underserved communities.



Board Highlights

The Hattie B. Munroe Foundation

The Hattie B. Munroe Foundation donated 110 \$150 gift cards during the holidays for MMI client families in need. The foundation also provided funding for a psychology internship, Camp Munroe and related children's programs, and two professorships – for the MMI director and the MMI director of research – totaling \$880,000 for various programs.

The Meyer Foundation for Disabilities

The Meyer Foundation for Disabilities (MFD) held a virtual Walk & Roll for Disabilities on March 7, drawing approximately 450 people. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Owl Ride was not held in 2021. MFD worked with the MMI Department of Recreational Therapy to create a yoga program this past year. Additionally, MFD provided funding for the new MMI building's kitchen, which will be the home of MMI's popular cooking club, one of the many adult recreational programs sponsored by the foundation.

The Munroe-Meyer Institute Board of Directors

The board works closely with MMI leadership to inform the public of the breadth and quality of MMI's programs. The board annually awards the Rhoda Davis Blatt and Hattie B. Munroe Foundation scholarships. The board oversees the distribution of holiday gift cards to selected MMI families in need, as well as reviews and

approves the MMI Department of Recreational Therapy budget before it goes to the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation board for final approval.

The Munroe-Meyer Guild

The Munroe-Meyer Guild held its Garden Walk in June, with more than 1,000 people touring five gardens. In 2021, the guild donated Lisa Worrall's cut-paper art collage, featuring MMI clients of all ages (and former therapy dog Captain Fred), which now is displayed near the building's south entrance. The guild also donated a \$70,000 handicapped-accessible outdoor raised garden, on the north side of MMI, to the MMI Department of Recreational Therapy for use by its new garden club.

The Scottish Rite Foundation of Nebraska

On June 27, RiteCare clinicians hosted DriveRite Thru for RiteCare at Lake Zorinsky, a socially distanced event that raised about \$2,500. On Sept. 30, the Scottish Rite hosted the RiteCare Classic at Pacific Springs Golf Club, drawing 18 teams and raising \$19,100 for speech language therapy for Nebraska children. In place of the Friends of RiteCare dinner, an appeal letter was sent asking past guests to support RiteCare services. In total, Nebraska Scottish Rite Freemasons donated about \$660,000 for speech therapy through the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute and an additional \$80,000 for speech services through the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 2020.



Lisa Worrall's cut-paper art collage, donated in 2021 by the Munroe-Meyer Guild, hangs near the building's south entrance.

The Community Advisory Committee

In 2021, as MMI moved into the new building and began operations, the MMI Community Advisory Committee continued to provide critical input on MMI initiatives such as the building project, current and future programmatic planning, operational processes and overall organization. The committee serves as a valuable working partner in guiding the institute's activities by representing the voice of the community and its local participants. The committee has been a critical sounding board in shaping both the current and future path of MMI.



Recognizing Excellence

The heart of MMI is its people.

The MMI Standouts recognized at the February 2021 Celebration of Excellence included:



**Community Service Award
Holly Roberts, PhD**

Dr. Roberts is recognized for her connections to the Nebraska community. She has become psychology's "clinic liaison," specifically because she is so effective at forming strong and authentic community partnerships and extending these partnerships across Nebraska to help underserved communities. She also forged a new partnership with United Behavioral Health geared toward establishing another primary care outreach clinic.



**Spirit Award
Anne Woodruff Jameson, DPT**

Dr. Woodruff Jameson is recognized by colleagues for her relentless efforts to identify and support programs in the intellectual and developmental disability community. She is a frequent volunteer at MMI community engagement initiatives. Colleagues also appreciate her ability to mediate during difficult conversations.



Educator Award Allison Grennan, PhD

Dr. Grennan transformed the Nebraska Internship Consortium into a virtual training program and led an innovative mentoring program to help all interns feel part of a larger team and mission.



Researcher Award Kristen Fishler, MS

Fishler has been instrumental in recruiting more than 100 families as part of a national study, while inspiring several research projects. Her ability to rally others around a mission or project makes her an invaluable team member.



Support Staff Award Mandi Reinders

Reinders is an extraordinary team player, often volunteering for extra responsibilities and actively seeking ways she can support the ACT Clinic at every turn. She works to ensure all families have the necessary resources to access services – for example, assisting non-English speaking families in accessing translators and translated materials.



**Staff Clinical Provider Award
Leslie Van Winkle, MA**

Van Winkle has been at the forefront of establishing a more efficient and effective integrated speech-language therapy model during clients' visits across multiple programs and departments. Moreover, she helped expand and transform the onsite and telehealth delivery of Project ImPACT during the pandemic.



**Faculty Clinical Provider Award
Brad Corr, DPT**

Dr. Corr has expertise in translating basic-science findings into real-world applications that provide patients with interventions not available elsewhere.

2021 Silver U Awardees

Lynne Capoun, MMI Department of Physical Therapy: Her unwavering pursuit of clinical excellence and tireless dedication to the children and families she serves raises the bar in regard to teamwork, excellence and accountability.

Jessie Weber, MMI Severe Behavior Program: Her selflessness and commitment to excellence create a positive and effective work environment. She constantly strives to find solutions and create systems to ensure the Severe Behavior Program is providing optimal services for families.

Hannah Jackman, MS, MMI Department of Speech-Language Pathology: Despite the added support dedicated to training students, she maintains high levels of productivity and efficiency. She cares deeply for her patients and is a devoted advocate for their needs in order to provide excellent care.

Christi King, MMI Department of Psychology: She has been terrific in overseeing the smooth running of psychology office operations during the pandemic crisis and critical to departmental success. She has been flexible, adaptive, collaborative and innovative in finding ways to make things work.

Andrew Sodawasser, MMI Severe Behavior Program: His confident and consistent dedication to the patients and families he serves has been unwavering. In the face of continued change, continued unrest and inevitable burnout, Andrew had led his team with respect, humility and transparency.

Brianne Walbrecht, PhD, MMI Department of Physical Therapy: She is truly passionate about setting appropriate and achievable goals for those with whom she works. She possesses a passion for her work, and this is seen in her interactions with students, teachers, fellow therapists and families.

2020 MMI Standouts

The MMI Standout awards are given to MMI staff members who go above and beyond in service of the Munroe-Meyer Institute or its clients. Due to the pandemic, the awards were given intermittently in 2020 and 2021. The winners:

Amanda Barton, MS; Joe Biodrowski; Sarah Birkel, OTD; Emily Drew, MPT; Jill Fahrner; Carol Gaebler, MS; Tyler Heath; Sara Klingelhofer, MEd; Margo Lutes; Natali Semerad; and Hannah Stanzel.

MMI by the Numbers

More than
17 Disciplines



5 supporting philanthropic boards

Approximately
520 Employees

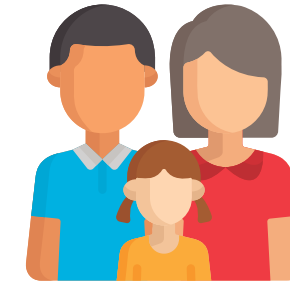
One of 67 federally designated University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD).

One of 52 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) programs.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Approximately

90,000
Yearly Services



serving clients across the lifespan with 81% taking place in the community.

In 2021, more than 275 volunteers provided approximately 9,730 service hours.

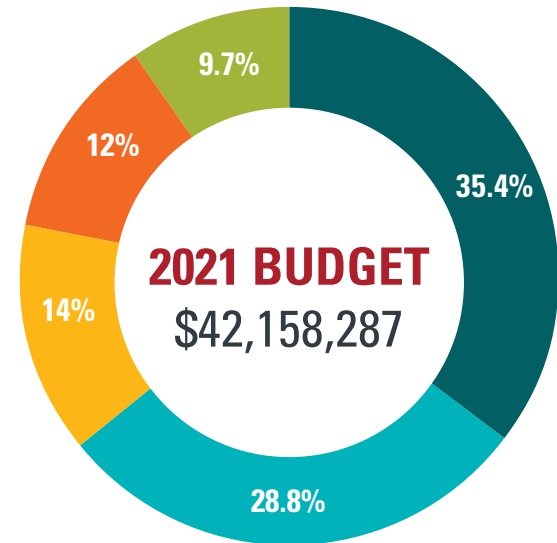


MMI has more than **35 provider locations** with 18 outside Omaha with more than 50 types of services provided.

30 Recreational Therapy Programs and Clubs

Serving approximately 425 families annually.

More than 14,500 hours of service provided to families.

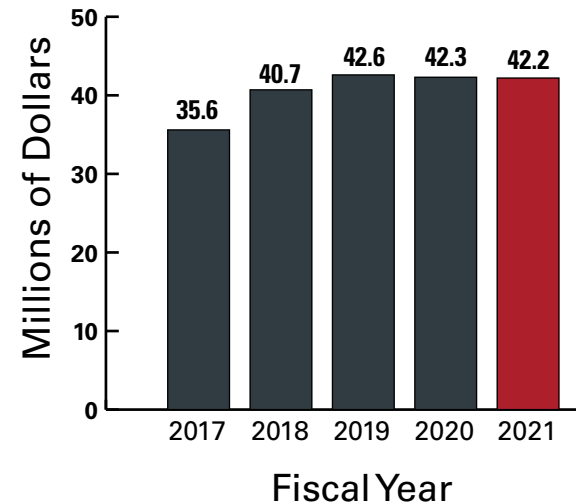


Revenue Sources

- Clinical service reimbursement
- State/local/school grants & contracts
- Philanthropic/other funds
- Federal grants & contracts
- State appropriation

Annually, more than **\$42 million** budget, with more than **\$17 million** in federal, state and local grants and contracts and **\$5.9 million** in philanthropy.

MMI Budget 2017 – 2021



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



More than 110 community training activities provided to 4,861 participants.



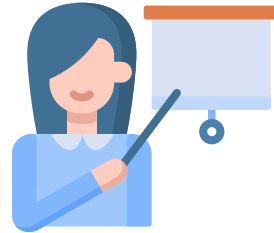
Approximately
2,700 Hours
of technical assistance.

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

More than

9,700 Participants

in workshops, conferences, teleconferences and other community education activities in domestic and international forums.



More than

130

courses and seminars taught by faculty and staff.

Interdisciplinary training in 2021: 141 students, interns, residents and post-doctoral fellows. Of those, 129 were long term and received more than 300 hours of training.

MMI receives approximately

\$5 MILLION

federal research funding annually.

In the last

15 Years

More than **3,500** long-term students received training at MMI.

More than **140** clinical and research fellows trained at MMI.

HISTORY

1919

The Society for the Relief of the Disabled forms a new charity dedicated to providing therapy and braces to children impacted by the polio epidemic.

1997

The Meyer Rehabilitation Institute (MRI) and the Hattie B. Munroe Pavilion become the Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) for Genetics & Rehabilitation.

2019

MMI breaks ground for a replacement facility at 6902 Pine St. in Aksarben Village.

MMI celebrates its Century of Caring.



1922

The charity is founded as the Hattie Baker Munroe Home for Convalescing Crippled Children.

2009

MMI becomes an academic unit of UNMC.

2021

MMI begins providing services in its new building.



It has been said that necessity is the mother of invention. The proverb rang true in 2021 more than any other.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in remarkable ingenuity at the Munroe-Meyer Institute. Our practitioners used their vast knowledge to produce new practices to ensure the health and safety of all persons. Some creative changes were small, such as transparent face coverings for speech therapy. Others were much larger, such as equipping clinics for virtual therapy, learning and treatment.

Many of these changes were more expensive than typical supports, but that did not stand in the way of MMI's goal of transforming the lives of all individuals with disabilities and complex health care needs.

This creativity could not have happened without your support. Thank you to all those who donated this year. Your support allowed MMI to reinvent the way things are done, without sacrificing our level of excellence. Your generosity paired with the inventiveness of MMI will reverberate for years to come.

In 2022, we will emerge stronger and ready to meet the needs of our patients in a beautiful new location. We look forward to sharing our progress with you.

To learn more about how to make a gift to MMI, please go to nufoundation.org/mmi, or contact Jessica Janssen Wolford at jessica.janssenwolford@nufoundation.org or 402-504-3327.



UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Medical Center



**UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute
for Genetics and Rehabilitation**

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