



MUNROE-MEYER
INSTITUTE



2024 **ANNUAL REPORT**



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.





Table of Contents

- 4 Director's message
- 5 Device cuts autism assessment times
- 8 Artwork that makes a splash
- 10 On 'PAES' for a meaningful career
- 14 Early intervention offered closer to home at new Fremont clinic
- 16 UNMC leads national research team to explore newly discovered syndrome
- 18 Patient voices
- 20 Connie O'Neil remembered for kindness, belief in MMI programming
- 22 Remembering Paul Laikko
- 24 Recognizing excellence
- 28 MMI facts & figures
- 32 Board highlights
- 34 Foundation message

Munroe-Meyer Institute 2024 Annual Report

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Looking closely at a mosaic, at first you'll just see pieces of broken glass. But as you step back, you'll see that all of those components – those tiny colored tiles and pieces of glass – together make up a beautiful whole.

The work done at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Munroe-Meyer Institute is similar. We pride ourselves on helping to uncover the unrealized potential of the children and adults we serve on a daily basis, taking different strengths and using different strategies to uncover the potential that was always there.

This is the theme of the 2024 annual report.

Included here are stories of impact:

- How an autism diagnostic tool is changing the game for families that may be enduring long wait times.
- How the institute's newest Autism Care for Toddlers Clinic opened its doors in Fremont this year, becoming the first ACT Clinic outside of the Omaha metro. It already is helping alleviate burdens families in rural areas may face when it comes to treatment.
- How a team of researchers is exploring a newly discovered condition called Fetal Fentanyl Syndrome.
- How the Practical Assessment Exploration System Lab connects young adults with disabilities to employment opportunities.
- How art continues to be a part of the healing process at the institute, with installation of a school of metal fish above the splash pad the latest addition to MMI's family-friendly collection of artwork.

These projects, like many others around MMI, are a collaborative effort, requiring input from families, employees, community members and community partners. We could not do this without you.

So thank you for continuing to help us uncover the wonderful potential in everyone who steps through these doors. Enjoy our stories of success from 2024.

Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD

*Director and Hattie B. Munroe Professor
Munroe-Meyer Institute
University of Nebraska Medical Center*



From left, Jeena Kouris holds daughter Olivia Gebers during an autism evaluation on the EarliPoint device led by Patricia Zemantic, PhD, program director of the MMI Autism Diagnostic Clinic.

Device cuts autism assessment times

Autism is part of Jeena Kouris' daily life.

Her son was diagnosed as autistic a little over a year ago, and she supports clients with autism daily as a speech-language pathologist at the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

Because of her experience with her son, now 4, a screening for her now 20-month-old daughter was on her radar.

"It was always on my mind," Kouris said.

When her daughter was screened for autism, Kouris said, it was a pleasant surprise to see how quick the evaluation process was.

Kouris' daughter, Olivia Gebers, was screened using EarliPoint, a new diagnostic tool that can dramatically cut waitlist times for an autism diagnosis.

The device is a tablet that shows short videos. Research has shown that children 16 to 30 months old on the autism spectrum concentrate more on different areas of the video – objects instead of faces, for example – than their neurotypically developing peers. The device tracks eye movement 120 times per second and has shown a high degree of accuracy in identifying children on the autism spectrum.



Jeena Kouris holds daughter Olivia Gebers during an autism evaluation. Evaluations using the EarliPoint device can drastically cut down on wait times for a diagnosis.

“Despite the providers being fun, passionate and knowledgeable, testing in a clinical environment for kids is difficult. With EarliPoint, going through this process with my daughter was a lot easier.”

– Jeena Kouris

The device, which its makers say has an accuracy rating of about 80%, is not considered the final word on a diagnosis, said Patricia Zemantic, PhD, program director of the MMI Autism Diagnostic Clinic. It is used in conjunction with other accepted diagnostic tools.

The video evaluation takes about 20 minutes. Additional observation, including tests such as the Childhood Autism Rating Scale, are completed to ensure accuracy of a diagnosis.

Still, Dr. Zemantic estimated that appointments using the device will take about an hour and 15 minutes, quite a bit shorter than a traditional diagnostic session, which takes about four hours.

In cases where additional testing is required, Dr. Zemantic said, appointments total about two hours.

Since rolling the device out in March, therapists have evaluated about 30 toddlers. Feedback from parents has been positive, with them praising the device and the shorter assessment times, Dr. Zemantic said.

For Kouris, the streamlined efficiency of a screening using EarliPoint was a huge draw.

“Despite the providers being fun, passionate and knowledgeable, testing in a clinical environment for kids is difficult,” she said. “With EarliPoint, going through this process with my daughter was a lot easier.”

It helped, Kouris said, that Olivia could sit on her lap and eat snacks while watching the videos on the device. Those activities, she said, are more in line with Olivia “being her authentic self and not having to perform or complete demand after demand.”

MMI is one of a handful of sites involved in research that is testing the device’s efficacy among older children. It is the first in Nebraska to use the device clinically.

Alice Shillingsburg, PhD, director of the integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders at MMI, and her co-investigator Dr. Zemantic describe the device as a game-changer.

The device could be especially helpful in rural Nebraska, where it could be used to train local providers to perform EarliPoint diagnostic assessments. That would eliminate the need for providers to drive long distances for training. Many of the follow-up tests for patients could potentially be completed via telehealth.

Dr. Shillingsburg estimates that hundreds of families in Nebraska are on waiting lists for autism diagnoses.

“For many children, we will be able to use this device to confirm the presence of autism, when combined with clinical judgment and developmental history,” Dr. Zemantic said. “In cases where we might be uncertain, we can prioritize additional testing and assessments. But if we only do these more complicated, complex evaluations on a smaller number of patients, we’re going to be able to see more patients more quickly.”

Artwork that makes a splash

A brightly colored school of fish gently bobs and weaves above the indoor splash pad at the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

The decorative fish – all 58 of them – are the result of a partnership with Arts for ME!, an adaptive arts program for students.

Artist Therman Statom assisted students with the project. Statom also is the artist behind the flock of brightly colored birds, “Flying to Light,” hanging in the MMI lobby.

The school of fish adds to a robust collection of diverse artwork displayed throughout the institute. Sculptures, paintings, photographs and mixed media pieces adorn the walls and serve as a way to lift spirits and create feelings of wonder and joy.

Art across the institute, including the new fish, is part of the broader Healing Arts program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine. The program is designed to engage patients, caregivers, staff and students to heal through the arts.

“The Munroe-Meyer Institute is a place for healing. The role of art in the institute’s holistic approach to healing is not underestimated,” said MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD. “We showcase magnificent pieces across the building in a reminder that art is a way to come together.”

Patients, visitors and staff are greeted by two works of art before stepping foot inside the building. Kinetic sculptures, “Soar” and “Waterfall,” sit outside both entrances. Both were designed by Anthony Howe, who designed the Olympic cauldron for the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro. The sculptures weigh hundreds of pounds and are activated by the slightest breeze.

“Soar” sits at the southeast corner of the property and was a gift in honor of Omaha philanthropist Ruth Scott. At 35-feet tall, it towers over the MMI playground. “Waterfall,” which sits outside the front entrance, was

a gift from MMI supporters Bob and Myrna Krohn. It’s about 15-feet tall and is made up of more than 300 wind-driven cups that move in the breeze.

Other pieces of notable art throughout the institute include “Phoenix Ascendant” by Jennifer Radil. This mixed media piece, featuring a phoenix mid-flight, hangs outside the administrative offices on the fourth floor. It was commissioned in memory of Bruce Buehler, MD, former MMI director. Handmade paper and vintage map fragments, a signature of Radil’s work, are collaged into the feathers of the phoenix’s flaming wings.

In addition, Radil’s mixed media piece, “Nancy,” hangs outside the pool on the first floor, honoring the memory of Nancy Cowdery, a longtime MMI client.

A rotation of client art often is showcased in shadowboxes lining the walls of the second floor near the observation deck.

Nearby hangs a 3D map of Omaha, made as a community art project along with Autism Action Partnership. More than 350 decorated tiles make up the map.

As for the fish, students were involved in the process every step of the way. They started by drawing the fish. Statom, along with Erin Lunsford of Arts for ME!, helped to cut the fish out of aluminum and sand down the edges. Then students could paint and decorate the fish however they liked.

A handful of the student artists have ties to MMI, making the project even more special, Lunsford said.

“It’s all about the kids and their choices,” she added.

The fish range in size, with the heaviest weighing 12 pounds. Some are painted; others are adorned with mirrored tiles, shells or decorative stones.

“We approach it from their abilities,” Statom said. “A big part of this is letting them make their own decisions.”





Therman Statom, who has had his art showcased internationally, hangs fish from the ceiling above MMI's splash pad.



Joey Drwal works a shift of his internship at the MMI pool. In his role, he escorts clients to and from the pool, cleans spills and tidies pool equipment.

On 'PAES' for a meaningful career

When he wasn't waiting diligently to escort clients to and from the pool deck, Joey Drwal kept busy.

He gathered pool floats and toys no longer in use by clients and therapists in the Munroe-Meyer Institute's pool. At one point, he opted to drape a pink inner tube around his shoulders to free up more arm space.

He was quick to clean up spills, tidy the changing areas and pick up used towels during his shift.

Drwal, 22, works at MMI as an intern in the pool area. In addition to that role, he works part-time at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Health and Kinesiology building.

Drwal's success in the workplace comes from his own passion and drive, as well as from skills he's gleaned through MMI's Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) Lab.

"I think it really helped me," Drwal said of his time in the PAES Lab. "It helped with organization and learning to work with others."

The PAES Lab, which opened in December 2023, gives students with intellectual and developmental disabilities a taste of various careers, including sewing, construction, business and cooking.

Participants, who are 18 and older, choose a career path and, as in a typical job, undergo an onboarding process before eventually clocking in and completing their work.

Each of the five available career paths features between eight and 10 skills to master. Once trainees complete a section, staff print a report showing how well they did and how long it took them to complete tasks. That document can then be shared with their school or future employers.

If trainees complete all five careers, they will have learned more than 260 transferable job skills. Some of those translate to independent living, too, like learning to identify and operate kitchen appliances or practicing time management skills.

So far, more than 180 students have gone through the PAES Lab programming and at least a quarter have gone on to explore career options in the community, said Rachel Ray, assistant professor.





One of the most important parts, Ray said, is putting participants in fields where they have interest.

“They have the opportunity to really explore,” she said. “There’s a confidence that goes with exploring and trying something new and realizing they’ve mastered new skills.”

Some students stick around the program longer than others. But they’re all able to get quick and efficient assessments to connect them to the next steps in finding a job.

“We’re placing them in jobs that they want, not just what’s available,” Ray said. “They know they have the skills. It’s the confidence piece where they’re going in knowing and having experience they would not have had before.”

Drwal spent one semester in the PAES Lab. That experience opened up other internship experiences for him, including one with Disability Rights Nebraska and one with MMI’s coffee cart. His internship at UNO’s H&K building led to his now paid part-time position.

In the lab, Drwal tackled the business and marketing track. He completed general office tasks, such as alphabetizing, filing and numerical sorting.

That career path stood out to Drwal.

“I found it challenging, and I like to be challenged,” he said.

In his part-time job at the front desk of UNO’s H&K building, Drwal is responsible for greeting patrons and checking equipment in and out, as well as other tasks.

The experience also helped him focus on his strengths – working with people and staying organized, his mom Kay Drwal said.

“Typically some of the jobs available to people with intellectual disabilities are not as challenging,” Kay Drwal said. “One thing they’ve helped with here is to put him in programs and jobs that are more challenging for him. It’s more interactive. They take his skills and broaden them.”

Drwal is the first intern to work at MMI’s pool, said Margo Lutes, MMI physical therapist.

Having him around has been “absolutely wonderful,” she said. Not only has Drwal been a help for patients and therapists, but he’s also learning on-the-job responsibility.

He picked up on tasks quickly, Lutes said. And his love for the pool is evident in how he carries himself on the deck.

Drwal said his work experience has been his “dream come true.” He credits that, in part, to his mother’s support.

“We were supportive of anything he wanted to do, but we had no idea what that would look like as he was growing up,” Kay Drwal said. “We’ve let him direct us. To see him fulfilling these dreams has been amazing.”



Rachel Ray



Mark Shriver, PhD

Grant to aid, expand employment services

This fall, the Munroe-Meyer Institute received what is likely the largest grant in the organization's history.

A \$9.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education is designed to ensure individuals with disabilities between ages 14 and 24 have access to in-demand, good-paying jobs.

"This is perhaps the biggest grant in the history of MMI, and it is life changing for the families we serve," said MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD. "It not only allows us to grow our services, but most importantly, expands employment services for individuals with disabilities in Nebraska."

The grant was awarded to Rachel Ray, assistant professor, and Mark Shriver, PhD, director of the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

"It's going to be really exciting to enhance and expand our training," Ray said.

In addition to Ray and Dr. Shriver, the grant will involve other MMI and UNMC staffers, as well as community partner Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation. Those partnerships, Ray said, will allow the UCEDD to aid individuals across the state, including in rural areas.

By the end of the five-year grant, Ray said, the goal is to have worked with 2,500 individuals on employment activities across the state.

That effort may include lighter touches, like career interest inventories and assessments.

"We're not just getting them jobs because there are jobs available," Ray said. "We're tailoring training and career exploration to their interests. We can demonstrate the individual's skill level, as well. These teens and young adults have the aptitude and capacity to do the work."

This grant will help to complement existing programming at MMI.

MMI already offers an employment training program for students between ages 18 and 21. In addition to placing students in roles they are interested in, the program offers assistance with filling out job applications, interviewing skills and lining up references.

Similarly, the Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) Lab, which opened last winter, gives students a taste of various careers. Participants choose a career path and, as in a typical job, undergo an onboarding process before eventually clocking in and completing their work.

The grant will help to expand the PAES Lab, allowing more students to participate.

In addition, the grant will use virtual reality to enable students to explore additional career paths and take part in additional training programs.

Dr. Shriver said: "This grant builds on the model programming and collaborations in transition and employment that Rachel Ray and her team have developed and extends MMI's impact across the state by building capacity to connect individuals with disabilities to competitive integrated employment."



Kelly Leuthaeuser works with Jackson Graham during therapy at the Fremont ACT Clinic. It's the first ACT Clinic outside of the Omaha metro area.

Early intervention offered closer to home at new Fremont clinic

Jackson Graham is busy prepping for kindergarten.

He's got some basics from preschool under his belt.

But as a child on the autism spectrum, Jackson has extra work to tackle. His parents were ecstatic, for example, when he started responding to people when he hears his name and when he can go through a day without taking off his shoes.

Now he can work on those extra skills closer to home, thanks to the recent opening of the Munroe-Meyer Institute Autism Care for Toddlers Clinic in Fremont.

This is the institute's third ACT Clinic and the first to be located outside of the Omaha metro area.

ACT Clinics are a community outreach program, providing one-on-one early intervention services to toddlers with autism spectrum disorders close to where they live, said Amber Paden, program director at the new clinic. All three clinics offer the same services.

ACT Clinics serve children up to kindergarten eligibility. At full capacity, the new clinic will be able to serve 15 to 20 children at a time, Paden said. The clinic will serve families from Dodge County and surrounding rural areas.



“Providing access to care for Fremont and the surrounding smaller communities can be really life-changing for families and enhance the overall quality of life for kids and their families,” Paden said.

The Fremont metro and surrounding rural communities are currently without clinic-based applied behavior analytic services for children with autism spectrum disorders, Paden said. Some families travel to Omaha for services, but that can pose hardships.

Having a clinic so close to home has been helpful, said Leilah Graham, Jackson’s mother. Not having to drive to and from Omaha allows her to pick up shifts at work or tackle errands close to home.

Jackson, 4, goes to the clinic daily. He works on skills like keeping shoes on and sitting down while eating instead of wandering around.

That’s not all the applied behavior analysis therapy has done. Paden said Jackson also has worked on things like sitting at a desk, following instructions, asking for items with a communication device, and imitating the daily actions of others. His family celebrates each victory.

So far, Graham said, half days of preschool have been manageable. But longer days at kindergarten will be harder for him.

Jackson was diagnosed with autism at MMI about one year ago. From there, MMI therapists got the ball rolling and signed him up at the Fremont clinic.

Each day, Jackson comes home with a chart showing progress toward the goals his family and therapy team have set. His family reinforces those skills at home with strategies provided by the therapists at the ACT Clinic.

“He’s been quick to achieve every goal they’ve set,” Graham said. “The convenience has been super great, too. I know there are a lot of other families that are excited to have the new clinic here.”

Funding for the clinic comes, in part, from an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant through the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska designed to provide behavioral health training to rural areas and establish providers there.

Clinic officials are working with Midland University to bring in Applied Behavior Analysis students for internships and training. It’s a step toward building a workforce to serve the entire state.

Currently, MMI offers internship opportunities for Applied Behavior Analysis students at Midland. This year, several human services students will complete internships at the Fremont clinic.

“We want to continue to grow the collaboration with Midland by offering training and introducing them to the behavioral health services we provide,” Paden said.

Everyone on staff has Fremont ties, including longtime residents and students from Midland. Paden has

lived in the community for more than two decades.

“Having lived here as long as I have, and having children myself, I’m aware that resources are limited in smaller communities,” Paden said. “Bringing these services will change the lives of so many families that otherwise wouldn’t have opportunities to access these services.”

The Fremont clinic is a leading example of setting up ACT clinics outside of the Omaha metropolitan area, said Regina Carroll, director of ACT Clinics. For many parents, driving a long distance to a clinic for autism treatment can be prohibitive. Opening clinics across the state would help to ease that burden.

“We are hoping that once successful, we will be able to use this model to set up ACT clinics in other locations throughout Nebraska, increasing the reach of the services we provide,” Carroll said.

MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, added: “We’re looking for partners to help establish these ACT clinics in Nebraska communities. We believe in addressing the silent autism spectrum disorder epidemics by providing life-changing services across the state.”



Daniel Olson works with Jackson Graham at Fremont’s new ACT Clinic.

MMI leads national research team to explore newly discovered syndrome

In the spring of 2024, the Munroe-Meyer Institute led a national team of researchers that suggested an explanation for a recently discovered condition called Fetal Fentanyl Syndrome.

The newly discovered syndrome causes distinctive physical birth defects, including cleft palate, particular facial features and unusually small heads.

While these physical findings resemble those seen in a metabolic disease of genetic origin, Smith-Lemli-Opitz syndrome (SLOS), these patients did not have a metabolic disease. Rather, this novel syndrome is related to non-prescription fentanyl use by mothers during early and mid-pregnancy. This novel syndrome was termed Fetal Fentanyl Syndrome (FFS).

The syndrome piqued the curiosity of Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, director of the Munroe-Meyer Institute, and Zeljka Korade, DVM, PhD, professor of pediatrics at UNMC, because it closely resembled the features of SLOS, a developmental disability arising from disruption of the body's ability to synthesize cholesterol.

The Korade and Mirnics laboratories, which have been studying the developmental role of cholesterol for about two decades, proposed that the mechanism by which SLOS and FFS arise might be related.

"For over a decade, we have studied disorders caused by mutations in sterol synthesis enzymes," Dr. Korade said. "We analyzed biochemical profile and gene expression changes in several animal models. It was intriguing to find that novel syndrome, described by Dr. Karen Gripp, had similarities with the syndromes we study. This was the beginning of our research into FFS."

Barely six months after the Korade-Mirnics research began, in a new study published in *Molecular Psychiatry*, a team led by Drs. Mirnics, Korade, Ned Porter, PhD, a research professor in the Vanderbilt Department of Chemistry and Institute of Chemical Biology, and Dr. Gripp, a geneticist at Nemours Children's Health and professor of pediatrics at Thomas Jefferson University

who first reported on the syndrome in 2023, may have explained how this novel syndrome arises.

The key? The study found that the cause of FFS may be fentanyl's disruption of the baby's ability to make cholesterol, related to fentanyl exposure in the womb.

"Cholesterol is essential for development," Dr. Mirnics said. "Without cholesterol, you cannot survive. If you have impaired cholesterol production, the developing brain and body are impacted."

"Fentanyl not only impairs the synthesis of cholesterol, but it also leads to the build-up of the same highly toxic sterols in cells that are found in SLOS patients," Dr. Porter said. "It seems likely that the presence of these toxic compounds during fetal development plays a large part in the syndrome." The Porter Research Group at Vanderbilt has studied these toxic compounds in collaboration with MMI researchers for more than a decade.

Dr. Gripp said the new work was an important next step following the initial identification of FFS.

"We thought that the fentanyl was the likely reason for this new syndrome," she said. "But we could not prove this beyond reporting what we saw. This second paper is so important, because in an *in vitro* assay, they show that indeed fentanyl can have effects that would result in the findings we see."

In the recent study, researchers used multiple cell models to test whether fentanyl could be interfering with the body's ability to make cholesterol, potentially leading to FFS. They exposed different types of animal and human cells to fentanyl. The result: The fentanyl exposure disrupted multiple steps in the cholesterol-making process.

But the results also posed another question: Why don't all children of mothers using non-prescription fentanyl end up with FFS?

The researchers found in this study that cells with one mutated copy of the gene that causes Smith-Lemli-Opitz are increasingly susceptible to adverse effects of fentanyl. That leads to about 3% of the population, Dr. Mirnics said.



Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, director of the Munroe-Meyer Institute, and Zeljka Korade, DVM, PhD, professor of pediatrics at UNMC.

“Not everyone is equally susceptible,” Dr. Mirnics said. “The potentially adverse effects of any medication or chemical compound might depend on your genes, lifestyle and environmental factors. One drug might not cause problems for me and might be catastrophic for you.”

“The effects of fentanyl may also be exacerbated by some prescription medications if taken at the same time during a pregnancy,” Dr. Porter said. “It’s been a surprise to find so many highly prescribed medications that cause the same biochemical effect as does fentanyl. Fentanyl exposure while taking one or more of these prescription medications will likely compound the effect of fentanyl alone.”

“The Korade lab has been working on the cholesterol metabolism, which is affected in Smith-Lemli-Opitz syndrome, so they had been involved in similar work,” Dr. Gripp said, adding that her team had cited work from the Korade and Mirnics labs in the 2023 paper. “They were able to use their experience, their assays and show that fentanyl did indeed have the effect we anticipated, in the sense that it affects cholesterol metabolism.”

The researchers stressed that fentanyl is safe when prescribed and used appropriately, and that further validation studies are needed in pregnant mouse models and human patients. These studies are ongoing and are a focus of a new grant application to the National Institutes of Health.

The new study is a striking example of addressing a health crisis by combining strong basic science and genetics with a broader understanding of factors that can disrupt the developing brain, said Pat Levitt, PhD, chief scientific officer and vice president and director of the Saban Research Institute, who was not affiliated with the study.

“That they have made the connection between a neurodevelopmental disorder in which cholesterol production is key with that occurring due to prenatal fentanyl exposure, but only in those individuals that have genetic risk, is even more remarkable given the pace at which they made these new discoveries,” Dr. Levitt said.

Patient VOICES

We value feedback from our patients and their families. Here's what they're saying:

Marley Ruiz may not speak with words.

But the 3-year-old has gained confidence in the way she communicates, whether that's through signing or with an augmentative and alternative communication device.

Marley's success and newfound confidence comes from her experience with the Munroe-Meyer Institute Speech-Language Pathology Department.

Through speech therapy, Marley also received an autism diagnosis, said her mother, Sylvia Ruiz.

"We worried about getting her what she needed," Ruiz said. "This taught us how to communicate with Marley and her with us."

It was hard, Ruiz said, not to compare Marley's developmental milestones to other children her age.

After starting therapy at MMI, Marley showed her quick learning skills. She tackled speech therapy, as well as some sessions with occupational and physical therapy.

Now she has leaned into her independence and has expanded her vocabulary, letting her more easily communicate with her parents.

MMI proved to be a welcoming environment with caring providers, Ruiz said. It's evident, she added, that providers want to help their patients along their entire treatment journeys.

"It changed everything. Not only did it help with Marley, but it helped us as parents," Ruiz said. "It was really nice to get our foot in the door and be granted all of these blessings along the way."





Nidal Sharif has a packed schedule.

When he isn't at his part-time job, Nidal finds himself at the Munroe-Meyer Institute, where he takes dance classes, competes on the bocce ball team, takes bike rides and drops in for cooking, art and other recreational therapy clubs.

Nidal, 26, has been receiving services at MMI since he was 18 months old. He still sees therapists at the institute for speech therapy services.

Nidal's parents, both immigrants, faced several hurdles, such as cultural and social differences, language barriers and discrimination.

When Nidal was diagnosed with Down syndrome, his mother, Graciela Sharif, said they didn't fear it. Instead, they feared how society would treat him.

They found a welcoming community at MMI.

"MMI really opened a lot of doors for us because of the services they provided Nidal," Graciela said. "It really removed those barriers. It helped us see the possibilities in him."

At MMI, Nidal worked on his speech, fine motor skills and behavior. His parents implemented similar strategies at home.

Graciela found a support system. And as the family became more involved in MMI through Nidal's care, she joined boards and committees. Now she works at MMI as a LEND diversity coordinator and parent resource coordinator.

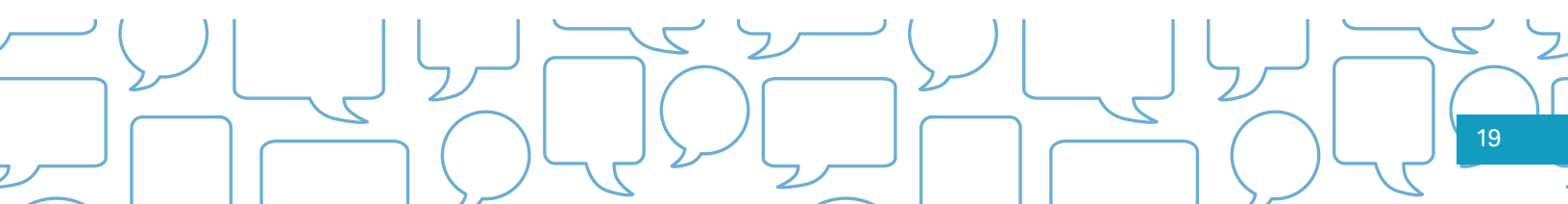
Based on her own experience, Graciela stresses the importance of families coming to visit the institute to see firsthand the services provided.

"It helped us work on Nidal's needs as a whole," she said. "I want families to see that we have all of these supports and strategies to help their child. I've gone through that. This is my life experience, and my duty is to give that knowledge to other families. Being there and feeling welcome is the most important thing."

In addition to his host of recreational activities, Nidal works part-time at Hy-Vee as a courtesy clerk. His job duties include chatting with customers and bagging groceries. He's found a great fit in the role, his mother said.

MMI is a large piece of his success, Graciela said.

"The therapists who have known him throughout the years know exactly who Nidal is, how to approach his needs, how to talk about real-life experiences," she said. "MMI provides that reinforcement and focuses on the person as a whole. It's not just when he goes into the clinic. They're thinking about how he will behave out in the community. That helps him in his job, his day program, his social life with family and friends."





“Connie was an incredible person and visionary who was instrumental in helping the MMI Recreational Therapy Department grow.”

– Nicole Giron

Connie O’Neil remembered for kindness, belief in MMI programming

Nancy loved swimming.

Connie loved Nancy.

And now, hundreds of clients of the Munroe-Meyer Institute are learning to love the water as well, in a state-of-the-art aquatic center called Nancy’s Place that stands as a legacy of local philanthropist Connie O’Neil’s love for her family and her community.

Connie, who died in May 2024, was a longtime supporter of MMI and the driving donor behind the aquatic center at MMI, which has become one of the most popular locations in the new building.

A homemaker as well as a philanthropist, Connie cared for her sister Nancy Cowdery in addition to raising two children. Nancy, who was born with cerebral palsy in 1943, was unable to walk or talk. She received rehabilitation services at MMI until her death in 2006.

Connie often shared with MMI leaders how much Nancy loved swimming in the MMI therapy pool. Swimming, she said, gave Nancy a chance to leave her wheelchair, stretch her muscles and float in the warm water surrounded by her friends.

So when it was time to create a new home for MMI, Connie wanted to be sure other MMI clients had the same kind of wonderful time in the water that her sister had.

A heated therapy pool. A cold-water pool for swimming lessons, games and activities. A water slide. A splash pad. And in the aquatic center, a plaque in front of MMI’s new warm-water therapy pool that tells clients, families, staff and visitors that this is “Nancy’s Place.”

“The aquatic center is one of the building’s gems,” said Munroe-Meyer Institute Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD. “It not only showcases

Connie’s generosity, but it shows how much she cared for individuals with disabilities. The pool brings the same joy to our clients as it did for her sister.”

Connie and her family are longtime supporters of the disability community. Peggy Cowdery, Connie and Nancy’s mother, led a campaign in the 1950s to unite critical partners for services for people with disabilities. One of the results of that campaign was the C. Louis Meyer Memorial Therapy Center for Children, established in 1959, which became one of the major precursors to the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

Connie continued her mother’s legacy by providing ongoing support for recreational activities for adults with disabilities at MMI.

“Connie was an incredible person and visionary who was instrumental in helping the MMI Recreational Therapy Department grow,” said Nicole Giron, department director.



"Connie's generosity, passion and heart, coupled with a belief that every person deserves dignity and respect, regardless of their differing abilities and physical limitations, has allowed us to provide exceptional social and therapeutic recreational activities at MMI and in the community," Giron said. "At MMI, we are ever grateful for Connie's vision, her kindness and belief in our programs, and we will honor her legacy by continuing to care for people for decades to come."

Through Connie's generosity, Giron said, MMI has been able to provide activities well beyond aquatic therapy, including visual arts, music, cooking and adaptive cycling programming, all aimed to enrich quality of life for participants throughout the lifespan.

Brian Anderson of the University of Nebraska Foundation said Connie's "boundless generosity illuminated the path of the mission of the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

"Connie has cemented her family's legacy of compassion and commitment to individuals with disabilities in the Omaha area," Anderson said. "The joyful memories of Connie live on in every person, in every smile and every splash at Nancy's Place, the aquatics center at the Munroe-Meyer Institute."

A committed though always self-effacing advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Connie served on several charity boards dedicated toward enriching the lives of those living with disabilities and their caregivers.

Supporting individuals and children with disabilities, as well as their families, could be seen as one of Connie's lifelong goals, said longtime friend Annie Bird, former president of the Munroe-Meyer Institute Board of Directors.

"She had a real zeal for giving from the heart," Bird said.

Connie had a soft spot for MMI, in particular, Bird said, in part because of the services her sister received there.

"She knew firsthand the value MMI offers to families, that they care not just for the individual but the family and try to provide respite," Bird said.

Omaha has many well-known leaders and philanthropists who have done wonderful things, Bird said. But, she added, Connie's impact shouldn't be underestimated merely because she stayed out of the limelight.

"We have a few people who are quiet leaders and quiet philanthropists. That was Connie," Bird said. "She didn't want anything focused on herself. She just wanted to take what she had and make things better."





REMEMBERING PAUL LAIKKO

Paul Laikko had a hand in many success stories at the Munroe-Meyer Institute over the course of his 35-year career.

Through his patient-centered approach, he got children to say their names or tell their parents “I love you” for the first time.

Laikko, a longtime speech-language pathologist, died in July 2024 at age 71.

MMI Director Karoly Mirnics, MD, PhD, said: “Paul was an incredible, caring professional and a wonderful human being. He and his work embodied everything that MMI stands for. We are deeply saddened by this loss, but we will keep his memory, work and dedication alive.”

Laikko left a lasting impact on patients and their families, as well as the MMI community and the larger speech-language pathology community across the state, said MMI Associate Director Amy Nordness, PhD.

He will continue to leave an impression thanks to the newly created Paul Laikko Memorial Endowed Fund through the University of Nebraska Foundation. The Scottish Rite Foundation of Nebraska committed \$50,000 to the endowment that will be matched by available dollars.

In later years, the bulk of Laikko’s caseload was made up of patients with childhood apraxia of speech.

He treated children – typically between 2 and 4 years old – who weren’t making progress in therapy or school. Laikko forged strong connections with these young patients, who called him “Mr. Paul,” Dr. Nordness said.

“He had a way of helping that opened new doors for kids,” she said. “They loved coming to see Mr. Paul for speech therapy.”

Laikko was good at pausing and letting treatment ride for a few sessions rather than rushing into a therapy. More often than not, sitting on the floor and letting the communication come was a successful approach.

Hearing a child say their name – or call out a sibling’s name – for the first time. Seeing Mom and Dad light up when their child could finally say, “I love you.” These kinds of highlights – plus feedback from kids and families, as well as colleagues – kept Laikko coming back to work at MMI every day.

Laikko mentored many colleagues in pediatric feeding and swallowing pertaining to speech-language pathology in the NICU, as well as outpatient services and childhood apraxia of speech, Dr. Nordness said.

“He was so proud to see the growth in his colleagues and was happy to pass along opportunities to let

them shine,” she said. “He always had time to problem-solve with others and was so thoughtful and intellectual about getting to the heart of cases.”

Laikko expanded his reach beyond MMI by collaborating with providers in schools. His expertise was so respected, Dr. Nordness said, that many providers called him directly to discuss cases or made referrals specifically to him.

Laikko established the core MMI pediatric feeding and swallowing services in the NICU at Nebraska Medicine and wrote a pediatric feeding and swallowing guidebook. He also established collaboration

with Westside Community Schools to support children with childhood apraxia of speech.

Laikko was an advocate for RiteCare and worked alongside the Scottish Rite Masons to ensure that children received the care they needed regardless of ability to pay for services. He helped to grow the RiteCare program to what it is today, Dr. Nordness said.

“We are so lucky that he shared his time with us all these years,” she said. “We will miss him tremendously and will continue to work toward improving the outcomes of the children we serve.”



Garrett Nathan remembers that he was a late bloomer when it came to talking.

And, even though he was just a toddler, he also remembers the therapist who helped him find those first words.

It was the Munroe-Meyer Institute’s Paul Laikko, a man Nathan calls “the springboard to my communication.”

It was Laikko’s lasting impact that led Nathan to return to the Munroe-Meyer Institute years later as a speech-language pathologist, going from Laikko’s patient to Laikko’s colleague.

Laikko died in July 2024 at the age of 71, after spending 35 years at MMI treating children with severe

speech sound disorders. But his legacy lives on through his patients and colleagues, Nathan said.

“Paul was an inspiration to many patients, families and colleagues,” Nathan said. “Although he will be greatly missed, his legacy will live on through the lives he touched.”

Nathan started attending speech services at MMI when he was about 2 years old. He saw Laikko for only two years, but his parents still reference Laikko in Nathan’s speech-therapy success.

Nathan said Laikko was one of several speech-language pathologists who inspired him to go into the field. While he was in college, Nathan came back to MMI to volunteer at Camp Munroe. During those stints, he would visit with Laikko and discuss speech-language pathology as a career.

“That was an inspiration to me as a student,” Nathan said. “He was monumental in guiding me through being an undergraduate and graduate student.”

Nathan was hired full-time at MMI in 2021. Working at MMI – and alongside Laikko – was an honor, he said.

“I felt like I had achieved what I’d always wanted,” Nathan said.

Laikko served as a natural mentor not only to Nathan, but to other colleagues in the department, as well.

He was always good for a reminder that “we have work to do,” Nathan said, adding that everything he did was for the betterment of the patient.

Nathan still channels Laikko when he treats patients. That means focusing on what’s relevant to his patients and taking a comprehensive approach.

“His memory will always be a driving force in my career, reminding me of the profound difference one person can make,” Nathan said. “Paul’s influence and inspiration will live on through the countless lives he touched.”



Recognizing Excellence

The heart of MMI is its people. In early 2024, the following individuals were recognized by the institute and the university for sustained efforts and excellence above those required by daily job functions in service of MMI and its clients.

Celebration of Excellence winners:



Staff Clinical Services Phoenix Award: Erin Brandenburg, Department of Recreational Therapy

Brandenburg has been instrumental in the recreational therapy department's growth from a niche program to the bustling unit it is today, nominators wrote. She assists participants while providing exemplary mentorship to 80 technicians and more than 350 volunteers. Brandenburg also helped to spark a partnership that created the first Augmentative and Alternative Communication camp embedded into Camp Munroe.

"Her leadership, engagement and drive to continually find efficiencies and improved operations are key reasons why our programs run smoothly," one nominator wrote. "Erin is one of the most motivated, dedicated, reliable and highly regarded employees at MMI."



Faculty Clinical Services Phoenix Award: Brenda Bassingthwaite, PhD, MMI Department of Psychology

Dr. Bassingthwaite has given students a chance at success in the classroom through her work directing the Applied Behavior Analysis Services contract with Omaha Public Schools, nominators wrote. She's challenged schools to build teacher capacity and broaden services provided to students. With a focus on staff training, more students can receive necessary services.

"Brenda is student-centered, compassionate and nonjudgmental," a nominator wrote. "These characteristics, along with her skill, experience and creativity, have caused students and teachers to demonstrate success in the school environment."



Support Staff Phoenix Award: Kathlene Egbers, MMI Department of Psychology

Egbers' role has shifted several times during her 15 years at MMI. Nominators recognized her willingness to tackle those new endeavors and challenges. In her current role, Egbers has reduced administrative burden for many faculty and trainees by sending telehealth links, reaching out to new patients and assisting patients over the phone.

"Kathlene's strength is her ability to be flexible, try and learn new tasks, ask questions and do it all with patience and grace for herself and others," one nominator wrote.



Community Engagement Phoenix Award: Sherri Kallon

Nominators called Kallon a “respected community partner” who excels at breaking down barriers to employment and improving the quality of training programs for individuals with disabilities. Kallon has been instrumental in a number of partnerships, including with Metropolitan Community College, Omaha Public Schools and the AIM Institute.

“She is always responsive, ready to help, and ensures that our participants and programs have what we need to be successful on campus,” one nominator wrote. “We truly appreciate Sherri and the work she does for our program as well as the many other programs she assists with.”



Diversity and Inclusion Phoenix Award: Laura Fritz, MMI Department of Education and Child Development

Nominators applauded Fritz’s dedication to leading and serving with equity. Fritz excels at researching, finding strategies and being a team player. She’s worked on the statewide Preschool Development Grant and taken part in statewide conferences. Through her experiences, Fritz has brought back ideas and resources for the department to consider.

“Laura exemplifies the qualities of a champion for diversity and inclusion,” one nominator wrote. “She is humble, consistently gathers best practices, advocates for those who are underserved and seeks to understand those with different lived experience.”



Research Phoenix Award: Regina Carroll, PhD, integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders

Nominators recognized Dr. Carroll’s impressive number of peer-reviewed articles, many of which have been published in the flagship journal in her field of applied behavior analysis. More recent publications include her students as authors, demonstrating her commitment to developing the research acumen of her trainees. She’s also headed several state and regional conferences and was selected as an associate editor for the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis.

“These accomplishments demonstrate her research productivity, innovation, and impact, as well as her dedication to mentoring others in their research endeavors,” a nominator wrote.



Spirit Phoenix Award: Garrett Nathan, MMI Department of Speech-Language Pathology

Nathan is a leader in planning activities that connect the institute, nominators wrote. He is an ambassador of MMI in the community and he’s a regular at MMI and UNMC events. Nathan also encourages his colleagues to get involved. In the last year, he and a colleague in the MMI Department of Recreational Therapy created a group social skills program.

“Garrett fully embodies the term ‘spirit’ when it comes to MMI,” a nominator wrote. “He always has a smile on his face, along with a cheerful demeanor when interacting with others. When it comes to his patients, his ‘Come on, let’s go’ attitude always lifts them.”



**Education Phoenix Award – Faculty: Kerry Miller, PhD, MMI
Department of Education and Child Development**

Dr. Miller has made outstanding contributions to teaching and education, particularly in developing an innovative rubric for all third-year UNMC students, a nominator wrote. Her efforts have enhanced the educational experience for students, and her commitment to fostering interdisciplinary appreciation is evident. She often presents to statewide and national organizations.

“Dr. Miller’s positive attitude and passion for teaching are consistently reflected in her interactions with students and colleagues,” one nominator said. “Her dedication to educational excellence is further underscored by her invitations to present on her teaching methods and the programs she has developed.”



**Education Phoenix Award – Staff: Jeena Kouris,
MMI Department of Speech-Language Pathology**

Nominators commended Kouris for providing top-tier clinical supervision for graduate students and clinical fellows. She’s advocated for updates to the RiteCare Preschool Group syllabus and routinely adapts her methods to meet the needs of individuals she teaches. Kouris makes things student-centered, often asking what she can do to make it a better experience or how she can best help in the future.

“Jeena is an incredibly organized, thorough and dedicated supervisor,” a nominator wrote. “She teaches by modeling, explaining, providing empirical evidence and giving specific, timely feedback.”

2023 Gold U Awardees

The Gold U is a UNMC-wide award, given to employees who consistently deliver outstanding performance and service.

April: Paul Laikko

2023 Silver U Awardees

The Silver U is a UNMC-wide award, given to employees whose overall performance is above and beyond the scope of their position. Recipients are nominated by co-workers or supervisors, and awardees are selected by a panel of judges led by the UNMC Department of Human Resources.

January: Brianna Rezich

March: Sara Garcia

April: Sierra Clark

June: Kristina “Tina” Meinecke

August: Hannah Steber

September: Hannah Jackman

October: Abbie Nelson

November: Sidni Trotter



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER
MUNROE-MEYER INSTITUTE



MMI Facts & Figures

More than

17 Disciplines

5 supporting philanthropic boards

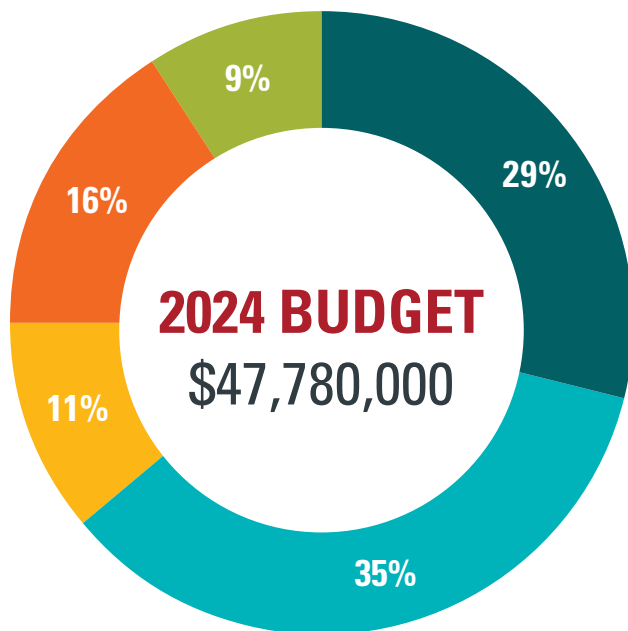


Approximately

600 Employees

One of 68 federally designated University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD).

One of 60 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) programs.



Revenue Sources

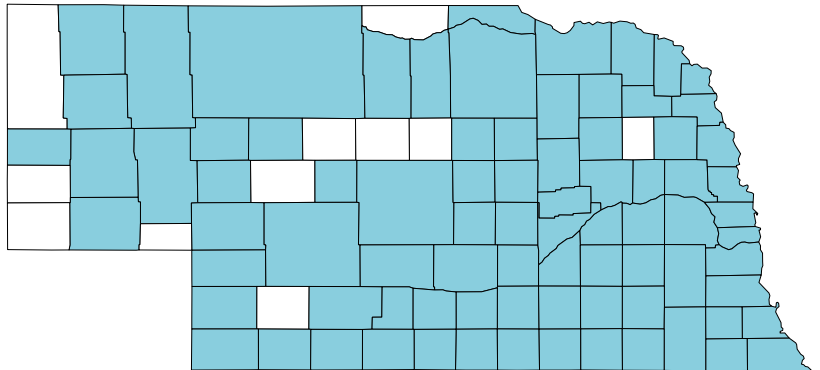
- Clinical service reimbursement
- State/local/school grants & contracts
- Philanthropic/other funds
- Federal grants & contracts
- State appropriation

Annually, more than **\$47 million** budget, with more than **\$24 million** in federal, state and local grants and contracts and **\$5.3 million** in philanthropy.

CLINICAL SERVICES

MMI provides services in

82 of 93
Nebraska counties



*In addition to Nebraska, MMI serves at least one county in more than **15 states**.*

Approximately

109,000
Yearly Services



25% receiving services were 21 or older.

*In 2024, more than **324 volunteers** provided approximately **11,463 service hours**.*



MMI has more than **38 provider locations** with 18 outside Omaha and more than 120 types of services provided.

31

Recreational Therapy Programs and Clubs

*Serving approximately **700 families and participants** annually.*

*Providing more than **30,678 hours of service**.*

New clinical services

- Opened the **PAES Lab**, which has served almost **100 students in the first six months**.
- Offered autism diagnostic evaluations using the **EarliPoint eye gaze system** to reduce the wait for an autism diagnosis, reduce the time it takes to get a diagnosis and serve more children across Nebraska.
- Added a **resource center** for families and caregivers in MMI's main lobby.
- Added **audiology services** in collaboration with **Boys Town**.
- Opened the **Transition to Lifespan Care Clinic** for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are transitioning to adulthood. The clinic offers evaluations and ongoing recommendations as individuals transition to adult health care providers.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



MMI provided **49** continuing education events to **3,623 participants**. MMI provided **112** community trainings for **6,303 participants**.



More than **500 people** attended MMI's annual **Trick or Treat** event in 2023.



Approximately **400 campers** at **MMI summer and winter camps**.

EDUCATION



MMI annually provides clinical training rotations for more than **300 students**, drawn to MMI from more than **40 colleges and universities** across the U.S., for training in **17 different disciplines**. MMI currently has nearly **\$4 million** in federal training grants to expand the behavioral health workforce in Nebraska and the surrounding region.

Disciplines trained – Applied behavior analysis, dentistry, education/special education, feeding disorders, genetic counseling, integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorder, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, recreation therapy, research, severe behavior disorders, speech-language pathology, social work.

Participants in workshops

- Provided community-based training to more than **7,000** family members/caregivers, adults with disabilities, children/adolescents with disabilities and public/community members.
- Provided approximately **990 hours** of technical assistance to numerous individuals and agencies.
- Facilitated **182** continuing education/community training activities for community-based agencies (both general and disability-specific).



Approximately

990 Hours

of technical assistance through 313 activities.

MMI representatives staffed informational tables at **36 community partner events**.

683 adults with disabilities participated in community training.

RESEARCH



Major Initiatives/Projects

Nebraska EmployABILITY Project

Principal investigator Rachel Ray will explore job placement strategies for adults with IDD in this grant, the largest in MMI history, funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Addressing Student Mental Health in High Need Schools: Nebraska Student Mental Health Training Program

Principal investigator Brandy Clarke, PhD, will grow the number of school health providers to better meet the mental health needs of Nebraska students with this grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Sex differences in BNST (bed nucleus of the stria terminalis) networks during early abstinence in alcohol use disorder

Principal investigator Jennifer Blackford, PhD, will investigate whether there are sex-specific difference in brain function in people during early abstinence from an alcohol use disorder with funding from the National Institutes of Health.

A Prospective, Multi-Center Study of Dynamic Quantification of Social-Visual Engagement in Autism Spectrum Disorder: Diagnosis and Assessment For Children Ages 31-84 Months

Principal investigator Alice Shillingsburg, PhD, will study the efficacy of the Earlipoint autism diagnostic tool in children from ages 16-30 months, with ongoing research from 31-84 months, with funding from EarliTec Diagnostics, Inc.

Expanding the Behavioral Health Workforce to Meet the Behavioral Health Needs of Children, Adolescents and Young Adults in Rural and Underserved Areas

Principal investigator Jennifer Burt, PhD, will expand the workforce of behavioral health providers trained to work in integrated settings in underserved rural and urban areas with vulnerable populations with funding from the Department of Health and Human Services/ Health Resources and Services Administration.

MMI receives approximately

\$5.8 MILLION

in federal research funding annually.

79 Active Projects

Funding Type

19 Federal

25 State

17 Foundation/ Non-Profit

6 External University/Hospitals

12 Internal to UNMC/ NU Foundation

Departments with ongoing research projects

- Administration
- Education and Child Development
- Pediatric Feeding Disorders
- Genetic Medicine
- integrated Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders (iCASD)
- Physical Therapy
- Psychology
- Recreational Therapy
- Severe Behavior Program
- Speech-Language Pathology
- UCEDD Program

Major education initiatives

- The UNMC/MMI doctoral program in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is currently ranked as the best PhD Behavior Analysis program in the nation.
- The Occupational Therapy Fellowship program became one of only nine accredited Fellowship Programs for pediatrics in the nation.
- Both the Genetics Counseling MA program and the ABA Masters program continue their record of 100% employment rate for graduates.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

Hattie B. Munroe Foundation

The Hattie B. Munroe Foundation donated a record 115 gift cards totaling \$17,250 during the holidays to MMI client families facing specific challenges. The foundation, which has been a mainstay of support for MMI for more than a century, provides a total of more than \$850,000 annually in funding to support mission-critical initiatives, including Camp Munroe and related programs, and two professorships – for the MMI director and the MMI director of research – among other efforts.

The Meyer Foundation for Disabilities

The Meyer Foundation for Disabilities held its Walk & Roll for Disabilities on March 3, 2024, drawing more than 400 people and raising \$42,000. The foundation worked with the MMI Department of Recreational Therapy in 2024 to increase programming for adults with developmental disabilities.

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 advances to the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation board.



Supporters cruise around Oakview Mall during the 20th annual Walk & Roll for Disabilities, held in March.



The Munroe-Meyer Guild

The Munroe-Meyer Guild held its 55th Garden Walk in June 2024. The annual tour of select neighborhood gardens raised more than \$23,700 to support grants for innovative projects and highly impactful training endeavors. Grants for 2023-24, for which funding was supplemented by the Ruth and Bill Scott Foundation, totaled \$71,743.36 and included projects such as "Inclusive Trauma Care: A Treatment Program for Youth with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities," "AAC Life Transitions Lab" and "A Rising Tide Raises All Ships: Empowering Families to Increase Wellbeing of Youth with Developmental Disabilities."

The Scottish Rite Foundation of Nebraska

Last year, Scottish Rite Masons and RiteCare clinicians hosted WalkRite for RiteCare at Chalco Hills Recreation Area, which raised \$2,000 for speech therapy services. In September, the RiteCare Classic raised \$21,000 for speech therapy. Also in September, the Scottish Rite partnered with MMI to host the 2024 National Rite Care Conference, welcoming speech language pathologists and Scottish Rite Masons from across the United States for continuing education, to share ideas and network, and to continue to find innovative ways to expand speech therapy services

for children. In October, Steven McWhorter, president emeritus of the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation was recognized by the Masons for more than 40 years advocating for services for Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Friends of RiteCare Dinner raised more than \$30,000 to support speech therapy services. In total, Nebraska Scottish Rite Freemasons donated approximately \$850,000 for speech therapy through the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute and the University of Nebraska at Kearney for speech services.

The Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee, which is made up of seven external members and nine MMI leadership members, continued to provide critical input on MMI initiatives. 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. They have provided a critical sounding board in shaping both the current and future path of MMI.



Campers pet a kangaroo and an armadillo during one of Camp Munroe's sessions this summer. The camp, in its 42nd year, drew more than 230 attendees over seven weeks.



University of Nebraska FOUNDATION

Individuals and families who contribute to the mission of the Munroe-Meyer Institute care and believe in the potential for change.

Through philanthropy, donors are investing in transformational research, supporting programming that's near and dear to their hearts, or honoring a beloved provider.

Each time someone gives to MMI, they're helping to change the world for the better.

The University of Nebraska Foundation is honored to support the Munroe-Meyer Institute through our "Only in Nebraska" campaign, and we look forward to partnering together with you to sustain the legacy of care and transformation at the Munroe-Meyer Institute.

Jessica Janssen Wolford

University of Nebraska Foundation

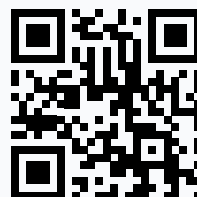




ONLY 
in **NEBRASKA**

A Campaign *for Our University's Future*[™]

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
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for Genetics and Rehabilitation**

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