

# EVOLVE INITIATIVE

AUGUSTA · GA

from Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers

## Program Summary

Our groundbreaking and growing Evolve Initiative, with small community-based group foster homes, is helping alleviate the child welfare crisis faced by the State of Georgia. Evolve is a critical component in the state's effort to curtail the practice of "hoteling" in which youth with nowhere else to go are placed temporarily in hotels.

The Evolve Initiative is a targeted program providing safety, security, and healing. Murphy-Harpst partners with local communities and government agencies to open these family-styled homes. Each home supports four children with trained foster parents, behavioral aids and in-home therapeutic services. These intensive services promote resiliency, positive coping and life skills to successfully transition into communities.

The program serves children with acute trauma recovery, mental health, and behavior management needs. Without these program, many would face homelessness, incarceration, and further abuse.

## Project Update

The first home in Olde Town Augusta opened in May 2023, followed by an additional home in Harrisburg in November 2023. In 2024, two more homes were added, bringing the total to four residences currently housing youth. Looking ahead, four more homes are set for completion in Augusta by the end of 2025.



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## Outcomes

In 2024, Evolve served 20 youth and achieved the following goals:

**93%**

Program Retention

**87%**

Decreased Destructive or Self-Harming Behaviors

**92%**

Increased Life Skills and Behavior Management Capability.

**78%**

Successfully exited the program with three moving to step-down placements in the community, and four being adopted or reunified with their families.

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1924 - 2024

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# Client Success

## STEVEN'S TRANSFORMATION\*

Steven's story is a testament to Evolve's transformative power. "A 15-year-old male youth came to us after being in 19 different placements in the past 18 months," recounts Cindy Simpson, Murphy-Harpst's vice president of Strategic Initiatives. He arrived at Evolve quiet, depressed, and with an IEP (Individualized Education Program)—a legal document in the U.S. that outlines special education services and support. His report card was filled with Cs and Ds, and he was convinced he would be rejected again. "He stated no one wanted him and we would be the same as everyone else and 'kick him out too,'" Cindy remembers.

But something shifted at Evolve. With consistent therapy and the unwavering support of the staff, Steven began to open up. He found a passion for football, and with the help of a tutor, made the varsity team as a 9th grader. "Today he is happy and a leader in the home," Cindy says with pride. "He no longer has an IEP and has all As and Bs. He now wants to go to college and believes in himself."

Steven himself shares, "I faced a challenge of feeling that people wouldn't like me. Evolve has helped me overcome this feeling by recognizing that I am a good person and giving me encouragement." He cherishes the memory of the staff cheering him on at his homecoming game. "The support I received from staff when they attended my homecoming football game with posters and t-shirts was the kind of support I liked."

His goals are now clear: to go to college, play college football, and become a therapist. "The Evolve staff gives him positive feedback and allows him to learn about his interests," he explains. For Steven, having a stable home means "getting a regular home-cooked meal, having a warm place to lay his head and being respected as an individual." He advises other youth: "The program isn't as bad as people might think, and that they should make the best of it while they are here."

*\*Name changed to protect privacy.*



To learn more about the Evolve Project from Murphy-Harpst, please visit [murphyharpst.org/evolve](https://murphyharpst.org/evolve), or contact **Scott Fuller**, [sfuller@murphyharpst.org](mailto:sfuller@murphyharpst.org) or call 828.387.0752



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