



**PRESS RELEASE – Feb. 20, 2025**

**Lombard residents receive Marklund’s 2025 Friends of the Year Award**

Sue and John Wick of Lombard were recently named Marklund’s Friends of the Year, an award that the nonprofit organization has given out since 1979. Over 46 years, Marklund has honored 65 individuals, couples and groups who have demonstrated in his/her/their own way, publicly or privately, a heart of gold and the willingness to serve Marklund’s infants, children and adults in ways that will affect their lives significantly, now and in the future.

This year’s award was presented in early February at Marklund’s annual Top Hat Ball in Chicago.

Marklund is a nonprofit organization located in the Chicago-area suburbs, that serves children and adults with profound developmental disabilities.

The Wicks started their Marklund journey in December of 2003 when their young daughter, Erin, was admitted to the Marklund Philip Center in Bloomingdale. “Almost instantly, they engaged fully and began volunteering, supporting fundraising events, and donating generously; they very quickly became part of the Marklund family,” said Gil Fonger, Marklund President and CEO upon presenting the award. Their heart for Marklund residents and staff was evident in their generosity, supporting the Marklund Philip Center staff with fresh coffee, surprise meals and donations for staff appreciation gifts, to becoming Guardian Angel donors, funding capital campaigns along with various events and appeals. Beyond their monetary gifts and support, they have been dedicated volunteers serving in a variety of ways through Marklund events and committees. John also served on the Marklund Board of Directors for 10 years.

After their daughter passed away in 2014, their giving took on even more meaning, keeping her legacy alive through continuous and unwavering support and dedication to Marklund.

“Erin loved life,” her parents stated. “She was a child with disabilities who taught us how precious life is. Erin taught us about not taking things for granted. She taught us about giving, compassion, kindness, and most of all, she taught us faith and hope. Her life was not the life we imagined for her...however, through her earthly journey and joyful spirit, she impacted many lives.

“Thank you (Marklund staff) for your loving care of Erin during her 11 years at Marklund. Thank you for treating her with the utmost respect and dignity. Everything you did on her behalf, you did for us. Thank you for being our strength.”

“Through their generosity, kindness, commitment and leadership, Sue and John Wick are forever “Marklund friends” and well-deserving of our 2025 Friends of the Year Award,” Fonger said.

Past Friend of the Year recipients include Former Chicago Bears player Gale Sayers, Senator Pate Philip, Paddock Publications, Everett Van Der Molen, Jim and Bud Porter of Porter Pipe, and the Foglia Family Foundation.

Founded in 1954, Marklund offers residential, educational and day services at their locations in Elgin, Bloomingdale and Geneva. Learn more at [www.marklund.org](http://www.marklund.org).

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Photo: Courtesy of Photography by Chris Guillen