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From the Desk of Gil Fonger

President & CEO



Marklund Friends,

At Marklund, one of my key responsibilities is to seek to fulfill our **Vision** of *A Happy, Safe, Purpose-Filled Life for Every Individual with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* while maintaining our **Mission** (our Promise!) to *Make Everyday Life Possible for Individuals with Profound Disabilities*. The primary way we do that is by creating and executing strategic plans to maintain our focus and maximize our efforts—a practice that we have continually done since 2012.

Five years ago, our senior management team developed the M2030 strategic plan, *Serving the Underserved*, to lay out a decade-long road map for our organization's future. Since then, we've endured the effects of a global pandemic, staffing challenges, and other unforeseen situations. While the foundation of the M2030 plan helped guide us through it all, it became clear that we needed to update our plan.

This spring, Marklund's Board of Directors unanimously approved moving forward with an update to our M2030 Strategic Plan, now named *Serving the Underserved—Together*. We adopted an expanded approach to this plan and included thoughts, ideas and feedback from a wide range of our stakeholders—staff, families, volunteers, community leaders, Board members and donors—which were provided over a five month-process of focus groups and surveys. All of this valuable feedback was then assessed through strategic meetings, ultimately resulting in the outline of the updated plan.

This outline is being built around five Strategic Priorities (*see box at right*). The strategic plan teams are now working to develop specific action steps for each of the goals and measurable results. I plan to present the Action Steps for Fiscal Year (FY) 26 at the upcoming June Board of Directors meeting as well as our initial thoughts on steps to take in FY27 and FY28 at the Board's day-long retreat in August.

I will share more details of plan in the future. I am excited about how it is going to continue to move our organization forward to build a stronger, more impactful organization for those we serve today and will serve in the future.

God bless,

Gil Fonger, President & CEO

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Strategic Priorities 2025-2028

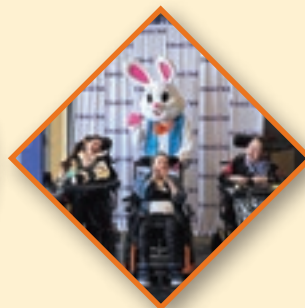
To Strengthen and expand our Investment in:

- Our Staff – our most important asset
- The Expansion of Care
- Our Community Engagement
- Sustaining the Future
- Our Educational Impact



ON THE
Cover

Marklund resident Kitt Z. enjoys a day of selecting the perfect garden flowers at a local nursery with Dee Farrey, left, Marklund Community Integration staff member, and Pat Lowe, longtime volunteer.



*This isn't just a story of **spring**—
it's a story of the **joy** you make possible*

Spring is a time of new beginnings – we come out of winter with a renewed excitement to share experiences with friends and loved ones. At Marklund, Spring bloomed in the form of laughter and smiles during a recent outing. Together, students and residents went to the movies where they were surprised with an egg hunt and a visit by the Easter Bunny. These shared experiences aren't just seasonal traditions for those at Marklund – **they're moments of belonging, inclusion and pure joy, made possible by your support.**

In that private screening at the theater, something special happened. They didn't just watch a movie – the space allowed everyone to connect and celebrate their individuality and unique gifts. During the show, communication devices were used, wheelchairs moved around easily, and everyone sat where they were most comfortable. The space was theirs! The moment's focus was on pure enjoyment, friendship and fun – a completely relaxed and everyday life experience. Wearing bunny ears and holding spinning pinwheels, there was a rejuvenated energy and springtime spirit that filled the space. Isn't that what we all crave this time of year?

These meaningful moments happen because of YOU! Your generosity makes it possible for the children and adults we serve to enjoy life's simple pleasures. As we step into this season of growth and renewal, **will you make a gift to support the daily care, connection and joy that defines life at Marklund?**

*P.S.— Your donation will be doubled
at no extra cost to you, thanks to
a generous \$16,000 match by an
anonymous donor.*



*Scan to
donate or
update your
information.*



MEET *Gunjan Patel*

Marklund's New Chief Operating Officer



When Gunjan Patel joined Marklund in 2004, she was excited about the prospect of taking on a part-time job as a physical therapist working at the Marklund Children's Home in Bloomingdale. She found the job challenging, working with children with severe and profound developmental disabilities, but also immensely rewarding.

Over the years, Patel has followed a career path that has taken her into administration and management roles while always keeping her connection with physical therapy.

More than two decades later, the Carpentersville resident looks ahead toward a new role—that of the newly named Chief Operating Officer for the Marklund organization.

"It's with great pride and excitement that I announce Gunjan Patel as our new Chief Operating Officer," said Gil Fonger, President and CEO. "Over the past 20 years, Gunjan has demonstrated commitment, compassion, and passion for those we

serve and our vision for a happy, safe and purpose-filled life for every individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This promotion is not just a recognition of past achievements, but a celebration of the leadership and integrity Gunjan continues to bring to the Marklund family every day."

"Marklund is a magical place," Patel said. "Not only do you grow professionally, but personally and emotionally."



Gunjan visiting with resident Alex

With the organization continuing to grow and evolve—with residential, educational and day services locations in Bloomingdale, Elgin and Geneva, Patel will not only continue to oversee the Residential Services but will provide management oversight to Facility Services and the support services areas as well. As Marklund finishes up an extensive renovation and expansion project at its Wasmond Center in Elgin, which includes moving the residential program from the Philip Center in Bloomingdale to Elgin, Patel is prepared for more challenges. "With our anticipated growth, we have a lot of work to do but I'm excited about what the future holds for Marklund."

A native of India, Patel moved to the United States as a child. Growing up in Elk Grove Village, IL, she and her family became citizens when she was still young, a moment she still recalls with pride and excitement.

She graduated from University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and from Northwestern University with a Master of Science in Physical Therapy. She and her husband, William, have two adult children, Nishal and Naya.

Prior to joining Marklund, she worked and managed therapy departments at a variety of hospitals and out-patient settings in the Chicagoland area.

"Marklund has changed my life," she said.

"Not only did the organization give me opportunities for growth and development, but I met so many wonderful residents, families and colleagues who are the bravest people I know!"

A 21-year Career Path:

2004 — Part-time Physical Therapist ▶ Full-time PT ▶ Therapy Manager ▶ Administrator ▶
Director of Therapy ▶ Director of Residential Services ▶ Chief Operating Officer — **2025**

Batter Up

Summer baseball is a hit with residents!

Baseball is a national pastime in America, an activity in which our residents love to participate.

Thanks to a combination of efforts from our Volunteer, Therapy, Residential Services and Development teams, our residents can take part in this fun outdoor sport on our newly upgraded Miracle League Field on our Hyde Center campus in Geneva.

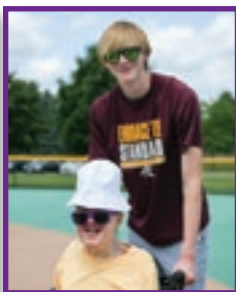
Through the Marklund Major League fundraising campaign held last year, we raised \$257,340 to improve the flat-surfaced field. The Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley led off the giving with a \$100,000 gift. The 2025 Summer Baseball Season kicks off on June 10, and games are played at 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays through August.

With a modified structure to fully incorporate residents in wheelchairs, these fun T-ball style games need 16-20 volunteers (ages 14 and up) who pair up with residents helping them bat, walk the bases, and field the ball.

This is a kid/family-friendly opportunity as well as a fun team-building activity for companies, clubs and sports teams. Community members are welcome to watch the games and **root, root, root** for their favorite team!



To register, simply scan this QR code and sign in on your preferred date!



OPENING DAY

Thank you to all of the amazing donors that helped make this renovation possible!





Appreciating

Alison Smith, 2024 Volunteer of the Year



Alison & Dolan

When Elgin resident Alison Smith was a teenager at Larkin High School, she took a class to learn more about students with special needs. One student in particular, who was a resident of the Little Angels Center for Exceptional Care facility in Elgin—now known as the Marklund Wasmond Center. Alison got to know Matt really well and it turned into a special friendship.

Fast forward more than a decade, and Alison, now an elementary special education teacher herself, was named Marklund's 2024 Volunteer of the Year. In fact, her old chum Matt helped present the award using a specialized communication device at Marklund's recent volunteer Appreciation Brunch.

"When considering this honor, we look for individuals who do more than just volunteer at Marklund," said Melanie Toth, Marklund's Volunteer Engagement Specialist. "Previous winners of this volunteer of the year award actively recruit others to join in the Marklund Magic. This year's winner does that and more. She always answers the call to our needs at Marklund not just at our Elgin location

but also at Bloomingdale and Geneva. She not only provides twice monthly pet therapy with her beautiful dog,



Dolan, she volunteers for activities, holiday decorating, baseball games, and has made volunteering a family gathering, incorporating her church and even 4th and 5th graders from the Service Club at her school, which she co-leads. This spring, she invited Marklund residents from Geneva and Elgin to participate in an egg-strordinary Easter egg hunt

organized by herself and her church for individuals with disabilities. I could go on and on about this selfless volunteer and what she means to Marklund."

"I am so honored to accept this today, especially with Matt being here," Alison said. "He was the one who first introduced me to Marklund, and the Marklund Magic we all experience when we're there."

In accepting her award, Alison noticed that her dog Dolan received a special "Volunteer of the Year" bandanna. "I truly appreciate all the staff does and being able to share the love and joy I have for him with my friends at Marklund."

"Once they touch your heart, there's no going back."

— Alison Smith

2024 Special Honors



Become a Marklund volunteer – Scan to learn more!

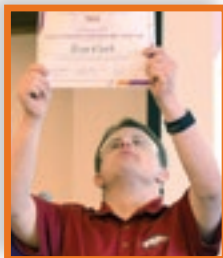
Top Volunteer Hours Served:

Ami Dalwadi – 96 hours
at Marklund Wasmond Center, Elgin

Tom Hahn – 130 hours
at Marklund Philip Center, Bloomingdale

Reese Peck – 155 hours
at Marklund Hyde Center, Geneva

Evan Clark – 577 hours →
at Marklund Hyde Center's CDS Program, Geneva



Anniversary Milestones:

Laura Karlins - 5 years of service

Pastor Sterling Moore - 10 years of service

Jerry Jania - 10 years of service

Gwen Loes - 10 years of service

Rainbow Pet Therapy - 30 years of service

our Volunteers

Annual celebration honors donations of Time and Effort

A special ed teacher, a group of high school wrestlers and their coaches, a retired teacher, and two sisters-in-law were among those who received high praises this spring at Marklund's Volunteer Appreciation Brunch.

Held at St. Andrews Golf and Country Club in West Chicago, the event celebrated those who volunteer at any of Marklund's residential or school locations in Bloomingdale, Elgin and Geneva.

"This special gathering is our way of saying thank you—from the bottom of our hearts—for the incredible generosity, time and compassion you bring to Marklund," said Nikki Osterloh, Manager of Volunteer Engagement. "Volunteers are the heartbeat of our mission, and the impact you make reaches far beyond the hours you give."

"As we celebrate National Volunteer Appreciation Month, we reflect on how your dedication brings community connection and moments of genuine happiness to the remarkable residents and students at Marklund," added Melanie Toth, Volunteer Engagement Specialist. "In 2024, you have contributed over 12,000 hours of your time across our Marklund campuses. That is a remarkable gift that deserves to be honored and celebrated not only today but every day."



2024 Resident's Choice – Barb Harper

The Residents' Choice Award was a new addition this year because this awardee was nominated by a Marklund resident. "This award reflects not just time or effort, but the kindness, connection, and genuine care that this individual brings into this particular resident's life," noted Osterloh. Using a special eye gaze communication device to share her message, Marklund resident Heather D stated "Some words I would use to describe the person receiving this award are fun, great, interesting, kind, nice, and smart. I have been working with her for 3 years and she has been helping me learn to read." Harper, a resident of Geneva, has volunteered at Marklund's Hyde Center in Geneva for more than eight years, helping on outings, with resident activities and even wrapping gifts that arrive unwrapped for the annual gift drive.



Ana with Jeannine Zupo,
Dir. of Signature Events



Abbie and husband Jon

2024 Event Volunteers – Ana Armbruster and Abbie Armbruster Winfrey

Chief Development Officer Heather Graves announced the winners of the Event Volunteer Award to "the amazing "duo" of Ana Armbruster and Abbie Armbruster Winfrey. They have served for many years on our Top Hat Ball committee, while introducing many other friends, volunteers and donors to Marklund and Top Hat. Abbie also helps assemble a Run, Walk & Roll 5K/1M team for ATMI, bringing out over 60 people each year! Ana and the rest of her family join in on the fundraising fun which has become an October Sunday tradition for the Armbrusters. We are grateful to Ana and Abbie for their dedicated service, leadership and friendship.



2024 Volunteer Group of the Year – Glenbard West Boys Wrestling Team, and coaches Pat McCluskey and Darien Kaufmann

Teamwork means working together with others to reach a common goal. The 2024 Volunteer Group of the Year not only help each other in their sport, but came together several times to work with the staff and residents of the Philip Center. They served as course marshals during Marklund's 5K event, decorated the interior of the building for the winter holidays, worked on crafts with the residents and even came back to open holiday gifts with the residents. "It's a joy to celebrate the kind of teamwork that transforms ambition into impact. It is an honor to name the Glenbard West Boys Wrestling Team, and their coaches – who encourage teamwork on and off the mat – as our 2024 Volunteer Group of the Year!"



Annual Bloomingdale 5K/1M event crosses the finish line

With more than 430 participants running, walking or rolling in wheelchairs down the streets, the 8th Annual Run, Walk & Roll-Bloomingdale triumphantly wrapped up netting over \$47,000 for Marklund.

"We were blessed with the most beautiful day this year and such a great turnout of Marklund community and family members," said Lauren Spitler, Race Director. "We are grateful to everyone who made this event such a positive experience for 8 years, and are proud of the impact the Run, Walk & Roll-Bloomingdale event has made!"



Scan here to view photos and race results.

To date, the total raised by the Run, Walk & Roll series of events held in Geneva and Bloomingdale since 2013 is over \$1.3 million, in support of Marklund.

A New Location

Marklund will be moving this fun fitness fundraiser to Elgin next year, hosting it from its newly expanded and renovated Wasmond Center, at 1435 Summit St. Save the date for the 1st Annual Run, Walk & Roll-Elgin on April 26, 2026.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Run, Walk & Roll - Geneva
October 19, 2025

Run, Walk & Roll - **ELGIN**
April 26, 2026

NEW
LOCATION
FOR
2026!

Generous grant support fuels our Mission

As a nonprofit organization, Marklund relies on the generosity of foundations, companies, and community organizations to provide the funding needed to serve children and adults in our care. The funders listed below are just a few organizations that have generously supported us over the past year. These grants have been instrumental in helping us deliver vital programs, therapies, and support services, purchase essential equipment, and fund capital projects—all of which further Marklund's mission of making everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities.

Batavia Rotary Club, Therapy Equipment for Marklund Day School's Foglia Education Center – Batavia

Hanover Township Mental Health Board, Residential Program at Marklund Wasmond Center – Bartlett, IL

Bloomington Township Mental Health Board, Residential Program at Marklund Philip Center – Bloomington

Harvey and Ethel Daeumer Foundation, Communication Device Library – Elgin, IL

Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley, Marklund Major League baseball field – Aurora, IL

INC Mental Health Alliance, Therapeutic Services at Marklund Hyde Center – Aurora, IL

Compassion Foundation, Functional Academics curriculum for Foglia Education Center – Aurora, IL

Jewel Osco, Community Day Program at the Marklund Wasmond Center – Itasca, IL

Dunham Foundation, Functional Academics curriculum for Foglia Education Center – Aurora, IL

Naperville Jaycees, Recreational Therapy equipment at Foglia Education Center – Naperville, IL

FT Cares Foundation, Communication Device Library – Wheaton, IL

Seigle Foundation, Nurse Call System at Marklund Wasmond Center – Elgin, IL

Geneva Community Chest, Aquatic Therapy Program at Marklund Hyde Center – Geneva, IL

St. Charles Kiwanis Club, Therapy Equipment at Foglia Education Center – St. Charles, IL

Wheaton Lions Club, Functional Academics curriculum for Ann Haskins Center – Wheaton, IL





Meet David Van Daff

Member, Marklund Board of Directors

Background

Education: MS in Sport Administration, University of Tennessee; BA in Communications, University of Kansas.

Career: Vice President, Industry Development & Public Affairs – National Academy of Sports Medicine. I've spent my entire professional career (30 years) in the global fitness & sports Industry.

Community Involvement: I've coached youth baseball, basketball, softball & football for over 12 years.

Role(s) on the board: I am a recently appointed board member at Marklund. I contribute a parent's perspective as my son, Matthew, has been a resident for over 11 years. Alongside this role, I participate in the finance committee to help oversee the organization's financial operations, ensuring resources are used efficiently to support Marklund's mission.

What do you admire most about the Marklund mission/vision?

Everything! I am in great admiration of Marklund's commitment to providing exceptional care and support for individuals with developmental disabilities. Their focus on promoting independence, dignity, and quality of life for those they serve is truly inspiring. Marklund's mission and vision reflect a genuine compassion and dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of others.

What led you to get involved with the developmental disabilities arena and specifically the Marklund Board of Directors?

Having my son, Matthew, as a resident at Marklund has allowed me to witness firsthand the profound and transformative effects of the care and support provided by the organization. This personal exposure to "Marklund Magic" has consistently motivated me to do everything within my power to support Marklund's vision and mission.

What are your goals/priorities as a board member?

As a board member of Marklund, my primary goal is to contribute, in any way possible, to the continued success and growth of the organization in fulfilling its mission of providing exceptional care and support to individuals with developmental disabilities. One of my top priorities is to ensure that Marklund's services reach as many as possible, thereby expanding their impact and making a positive difference in the lives of more individuals in need.

What have you enjoyed most about serving on the Marklund Board of Directors or favorite experience so far?

As a member of the Marklund Board of Directors, one of the most rewarding aspects has been working alongside such dedicated and passionate individuals who are committed to upholding Marklund's mission and vision. The commitment and compassion exhibited by everyone involved in furthering Marklund's mission is inspiring and has made my time on the Board a truly fulfilling experience.

How you happen to learn about Marklund and what was it that helped your family make the decision to have your son admitted at the time he needed it?

One of Matthew's at-home nurses spoke very highly of Marklund and recommended we visit. We scheduled a visit that left us incredibly impressed and deeply moved leading us to quickly consider the option of Matthew becoming a resident. This decision has turned out to be the most rewarding and fulfilling we have ever made!



See more at
www.marklund.org/ourstories

Find Us in Person & Digitally



1&2 ▶ Marklund Hyde Center & Marklund Day School - Geneva

1S450 Wyatt Drive, Geneva, Illinois 60134
Phone: 630.593.5500 | Fax: 630.593.5501

3 ▶ Marklund Philip Center

164 S. Prairie Avenue, Bloomingdale, Illinois 60108
Phone: 630.529.2871 | Fax: 630.529.3266

4 ▶ Marklund Day School - Bloomingdale (same address as Marklund Philip Center)

Phone: 630.307.1882 | Fax: 630.397.5624

5 ▶ Marklund Wasmond Center & School

1435 Summit Street, Elgin, Illinois 60120
Phone: 224.523.7530 | Fax: 847.622.5523

6 ▶ Nathan Education Center

1210 Hunter Drive, Elgin, Illinois 60120
Phone: 630.953.5230

CARELETTER

The Marklund CareLetter is a quarterly newsletter created and distributed by Marklund, a nonprofit organization that provides residential, educational and day services programs for children and adults with severe and profound developmental disabilities.

To receive extra copies, email Dawn Lassiter-Brueske, Chief Communications Officer, at dlassiter@marklund.org.

For digital copies, visit www.marklund.org/newsletters.

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Call 630.593.5500



**Scan here to learn more
and get involved!**



CARELETTER A newsletter for those who care about Marklund.

**We're looking for helping hands
& big hearts. Become a teacher
at Marklund today!**

**Scan here and
apply now!**



Supportive mentoring program that includes:

- In-room coaching
- RBTP in Life Skills classrooms
- and more!