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From the Desk of Gil Fonger

President & CEO



Marklund Friends,

At the heart of our mission lies a simple but powerful belief: every individual—regardless of ability—deserves a life filled with dignity, compassion and purpose. For those we serve, that belief is brought to life every day by the coordinated efforts of our entire team.

Providing high-quality, person-centered care is a collaborative endeavor. It requires the expertise of our nurses and teachers, the compassion of our PSPs and paraprofessionals, the dedication of our therapists, and the behind-the-scenes commitment of our administrative and operations teams. Each plays a critical role in creating a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for the individuals we serve.

Since I joined Marklund in 2011, Marklund’s staff has grown from 300 to over 500, the number of individuals served in our residential sites expanded from 117 to 185, and our Day Schools have experienced exciting growth from under 30 to over 90 students served. As we look to the future and the potential for continued growth as an organization, recruiting the right people is more important than ever. We remain steadfast in our commitment to finding individuals who view this work as more than a job—people who are called to care, serve, and make a lasting difference in the lives of others.

For the past 18 months, we have placed a strong focus on recruitment and retention through a Strategic Retention Initiative. Many staff members from all departments have put in substantial work and effort to not only help select the right individuals, but to keep staff supported and engaged. I am proud to share that as a result of all this focus we increased our retention by over 30%...and we are not done yet with doing even better.

Our mission of **making everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities** can only be carried out by a unified, values-driven team supported by a culture that honors the incredible impact of every role—beginning with frontline staff and encompassing all others.

Thank you for your support as we continue to build the kind of Team that our mission—and those we serve—depend on.

God bless you!

Gil Fonger, President & CEO
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Lace Up for a Cause: Marklund’s 13th Annual Run, Walk & Roll – Geneva 5K/1 Mile is Back This October!



Get ready to hit the pavement with purpose this fall! On Sunday, Oct. 19, 2025, the Marklund community will come together for the 13th Annual Run, Walk & Roll – Geneva 5K/1 Mile event, a vibrant celebration of inclusivity, compassion, and community spirit. Set against the scenic backdrop of the South Mill Creek neighborhood, the event is packed with feel-good vibes and kicks off at 8:30 a.m. at the Marklund Hyde Center, 1S450 Wyatt Dr, Geneva.

This is more than just a race—it’s a chance to directly support Marklund’s mission to make **everyday life** possible for individuals with profound disabilities.

Designed for all ages and skill levels, this event is perfect for seasoned athletes and first-time participants alike. As an added incentive, every participant receives a commemorative medal, with exclusive award medals going to top finishers.

“I could not be more thrilled and proud to see this event still going strong – due in large part to our generous families, donors, staff and community members,” said Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer. “We’re not only able to raise critical funds, but we’re able to come together and offer a true inclusive and social fundraiser. Please consider joining us this year as we wind through the streets of South Mill Creek, enjoying the fall foliage as we get our steps in for a good cause. Afterward, stick around for great food, music and great company at our Party in the Park by one of Batavia Park District’s iconic locations – the Mill Creek red barn.”



Registration
& Fundraising
Details,
Scan Here!



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Not racing? No problem.

Volunteers and spectators are a huge part of what makes this event so special. Lend a hand, or cheer on participants to help make a meaningful impact.

Visit www.marklund.org/5k for details.
See you at the starting line!



Volunteers will receive a **FREE** “Race Crew” long sleeve tee while supplies last!

ON THE
Cover

Marklund Day School teacher Julianna Komperda and student Sarah show that learning is far from boring when they engage over fun back-to-school activities. More than 90 students receive specialized education in the Multi Needs and Life Skills programs offered at the Marklund Day Schools in Geneva, Bloomingdale and Elgin.

A new name, location *FORE* our 43rd Golf Classic!

More than *250* supporters enjoyed a beautiful summer day at the White Eagle Golf Club in Naperville for the Marklund Golf Eventure, our *43rd* annual golf classic.

Together, they helped raise over *\$266,000* in net proceeds for Marklund!

“For Marklund to carry on an event for over *four* decades is truly remarkable,” noted Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer. “We are very grateful to all who spent the day with us, enjoying our beautiful new site, the fun Eventure games, as well as a special dinner party afterward, all in support of our mission!”

Check out all the photos on the Marklund website at www.marklund.org/golffclassic

Congratulations to FE Moran’s foursome for winning the PORTER CUP Trophy *five* years in a row!

Mark your calendar for our upcoming special events and appeals:






December 2, 2025

BROADWAY
CHICAGO MARRIOTT MAGNIFICENT MILE



FEBRUARY 7, 2026



Scan the QR code to learn more about upcoming events and fundraisers!



A word from
JERRY FINIS, Chair,
Marklund Board of Directors

Jerry Finis officially took on the role of Board Chair this summer, succeeding Mike Herlihy, who is remaining on the board as Immediate Past Chair. Finis has been with the Marklund Board of Directors since June of 2020.

“Marklund has a very proud history and has achieved much because of its great leadership over the recent past,” Finis said. “Our board recently collaborated with senior management on an update to the organization’s M2030 Strategic Plan, so as the new Board Chair, my goal is to have the Marklund team utilize the plan to help the organization continue down this path of providing great and compassionate care and service to our residents.”

Shown at this year's Board Retreat held at Marklund's Nathan Education Center in Elgin:
Back Row (Left to Right): Frank Murnane Jr., Gerry Estes, David Van Daff, Jim Armbruster (Secretary), Dan Foley, Ari Smith, Dan Whiston, Karyn Fitch, Mike Herlihy (Immediate Past Chair)
Front Row (Left to Right): Dr. Maleeha Basha, Carie Carney, Yaneth Medina (Vice Chair, Treasurer), Jerry Finis (Chair), Julie Schrager, Carol Donahue, Laura Karlins (Development Committee Chair)

The Marklund Board of Directors serves as the highest governing body of the Marklund organization. The Board, all of whom are volunteers, is made up of men and women who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Some are the parent/guardians of current or past residents. Others learned of Marklund through professional associations.

Membership is elected by the members of the Board through an extensive nomination process, with the Chair being recommended by the Governance Committee, and approved by the Board. Members serve a three-year term and may serve up to three terms consecutively.

“We appreciate the wealth of knowledge and expertise that the members bring to the board, their passion for our mission and their unwavering commitment to keep the organization strong and advancing forward,” said Gil Fonger, President and CEO.

The Board of Directors have four regular meeting during the year and an all-day retreat in August. In addition to participating in regular meetings, members also serve on regular and special board committees, and regularly attend Marklund special events.



SAVE THE DATE for our Next Eventure!
Monday, June 15, 2026, at White Eagle Golf Club in Naperville.

Connect with Jeannine Zupo, Signature Events Director, at jzupo@marklund.org if you want to be part of the 2026 planning committee.



Meet Melissa Lloyd,
Nurse Case Manager

When you talk to Melissa Lloyd, one thing becomes clear almost immediately—her career has been fueled by a rare mix of skill, purpose and love. Over the past 10 years at Marklund, she’s worn many hats: starting as a CNA at one of the residential homes located on Marklund’s Geneva campus, serving as Lead CNA, moving into leadership roles as Lead PSP (Personal Support Professional) Coordinator and Lead PSP, before following her heart to nursing. Today, she serves as Nurse Case Manager for two of the residential homes, a role she embraces with the same passion she brought to her very first shift.

Her journey to healthcare began long before she ever put on scrubs. Growing up, her grandmother was deeply involved in Special Olympics—helping, celebrating, and forming bonds with individuals with disabilities. “I wanted this,” she recalls.



“It’s one of the
best decisions
I ever made.”

“I wanted to be part of something bigger than myself, something that made a difference.” That drive led her to become a CNA in high school, and then work in memory care, where she discovered the joy of connecting with people through compassion.

But her most personal inspiration came from her first son, Austin, who was born with Trisomy 18 and passed away shortly after birth. “When it was time to return to work full time, I knew I wanted to take care of people who would remind me of him, if he had lived,” she says. A job posting at Marklund caught her eye, and after her interview and tour, she was sold. “My heart doubled in size. The most beautiful smiles greeted me, and I knew this was where I should be. I started the next week and never looked back.”



Her life outside of work is just as full. She lives in North Aurora with her husband—whom she first knew many years ago, reconnected with decades later, and married in 2018—and their “big beautiful blended family.” Together they share five young adult children, a few “special add-ons,” two cats, and a dog. She lovingly calls their home “functioning chaos.”

When asked about the best part of her job, her answer is immediate: “Connections. These residents aren’t just residents—they are family. Their families are loved ones. And co-workers become family too. When you love what you do and where you work, there’s an undeniable connection that’s hard to describe.”

Her favorite memory? A water fight between the staff and residents of the Tommy and Sayers homes during the height



of COVID. “Slip ‘n slides, water balloons, foam sprayers—the residents laughed so hard. We all needed that joy, and it was the perfect day.”

To nurses considering joining Marklund, her advice is simple: “Do it! You won’t regret it. You don’t just ‘take care of people’—you love, connect and grow. It’s one of the best decisions I ever made.”

After a decade of service, her story is proof that nursing at Marklund isn’t just a job—it’s a calling. And for those who have been served by her, it’s clear that her calling has touched countless lives.

Being a Marklund Nurse: In Their Words



“It takes a village to care for children and adults with disabilities. To watch everyone from all the departments be passionate about this mission, it’s a beautiful thing.”
— Tami Kraus, CDS RN



“When I come in and see the residents, it puts a smile on my face. It’s so fulfilling to be their advocate, and to be there when they need me, and to be able to deliver an absolute great level of care.”
— Joyce Ogun, LPN,
Marklund Hyde Center



“I was very fortunate to start my healthcare career at Marklund. With our continued growth, there are so many avenues for nurses of various skill sets. I would encourage any nurse looking for a meaningful connection in their career to check us out.”
— Bev Gallagher, Nurse,
Marklund Hyde Center

»» Advocacy Update



Marklund Administrator Selected for Advisory Council

Krissy Dolen, RN, LNHA, has been named to a Congressional Advisory Council that has recently been established for Illinois residents to make their voices heard. The council will provide feedback on eight areas of importance, including agriculture, higher education, K-12 education, labor, nursing, science, technology and environment, small business, and veterans.

As a nurse and administrator of the Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva, Krissy said she looks forward to shedding light on the lack of services, funding, and staffing within the developmental disabilities arena. The Council will meet quarterly to provide feedback, recommendations or reports on issues of concern to state and federal legislation.

Attending Meetings in Washington DC

Earlier this spring, Marklund's Government Relations Manager, **Mary Kobbeman**, took a powerful step for the Marklund community—walking the halls of Congress in Washington DC during the National Association of Private Special Education Center's (NAPSEC) 2025 Legislative Day.

Mary met with seven Congressional offices and two Senate teams to talk about the issues that matter most to the individuals served by Marklund, including:

- Protecting special education rights
- Increasing federal education funding
- Ensuring access to Medicaid
- Supporting paths to education, employment and independence



Advocate From Home

Join the Marklund Action Network to get simple updates and tools to contact your lawmakers when it counts. It's easy, impactful, and helps amplify the voices of those we serve.

Every day, politicians and regulators make decisions that impact care for those with profound disabilities. However, Marklund supporters have the ability to influence those decision makers as part of the **Marklund Action Network**.

Marklund's Government Relations team will do all the legwork to keep track of the legislation that will have the greatest impact to the organization. When the time is right, Action Network members are called upon to reach out to elected officials on Marklund's behalf.

"The Marklund Action Network helps you find a comfortable, effective way to become an advocate," noted Mary Kobbeman, Government Relations Manager. "When you join the Action Network, we ask you to respond to action requests by contacting your elected officials on key issues. We will provide you with everything you need to know to help you make an informed decision."



LEARN MORE & SIGN UP:

www.marklund.org/marklund-action-network/
or contact Mary Kobbeman at mkobbeman@marklund.org.

Building Connections, Building Community

The best part of community is the way it connects everyone—through experiences, friendships and opportunities to share life together. For the individuals supported by Marklund, every outing and every visit is a chance to not just see the community, but to become part of it.

This year, we've had some truly unforgettable moments. Together, we are not just neighbors—we are connected.

Meeting His Heroes

Chaquan has always been fascinated by anything related to police officers, and the staff at the Marklund Wasmond Center in Elgin know this. Case manager Kelly Laird had previously participated in the Elgin Police Department's (EPD) Citizens Police Academy, and had formed connections with EPD staff. Together with a Marklund team, they decided to do something very special for Chaquan – take him on a visit to the police department for a behind-the-scenes tour.

From the moment he arrived, he was welcomed like family but given the VIP treatment. A Community Service Officer showed him around, and gave him a look at what it takes to serve and protect. He explored meeting rooms, the gym, 911 telecom center, met some of his heroes including a detective, and peeked at the holding cells and police vehicles. But the highlight of the visit came when he met Police Therapy Dogs Chance and Charm up close. His eyes lit up with excitement, and he couldn't stop smiling.

Thanks to the support of caregivers and commitment of the EPD to disability inclusion and community connection, Chaquan experienced something he'll never forget.



Let's Go White Sox!

Another longtime resident, Brad, had his own lifelong dream fulfilled this summer. As a devoted White Sox fan, he loved watching his team on TV. During a special Disability Awareness Night presented by Intersect for Ability at Rate Field, he experienced the thrill of his favorite team in a whole new way, thanks to a group effort. Various Wasmond Center staff members all worked together to plan the trip to ensure that Brad and his friends could attend safely and comfortably.

From the drive into Chicago to stepping into the stadium, Brad was beaming with excitement. He soaked in every moment—the roar of the crowd, the crack of the bat, and the thrill of cheering on his favorite team.

With tears in his eyes, surrounded and supported by his care team, Brad experienced not just a baseball game, but a night of pure joy and belonging.



Cross Country Team's Special Meet

Connection is a two-way street. Just as we bring our residents into the community, we also invite the community to us. These moments create bridges of understanding, where differences fade and genuine connections shine.

Each year before beginning its season, the Kaneland High School Cross Country Team conducts a special team-building experience that is a different kind of "meet." Arranged by their coach, longtime Marklund volunteer Chad Clarey, the team spends a day at the Marklund Hyde Center campus in Geneva, volunteering with residents. They played adaptive baseball games, and learned how to team with the residents on engaging arts and crafts activities.

By the end of the day, everyone made new friends!

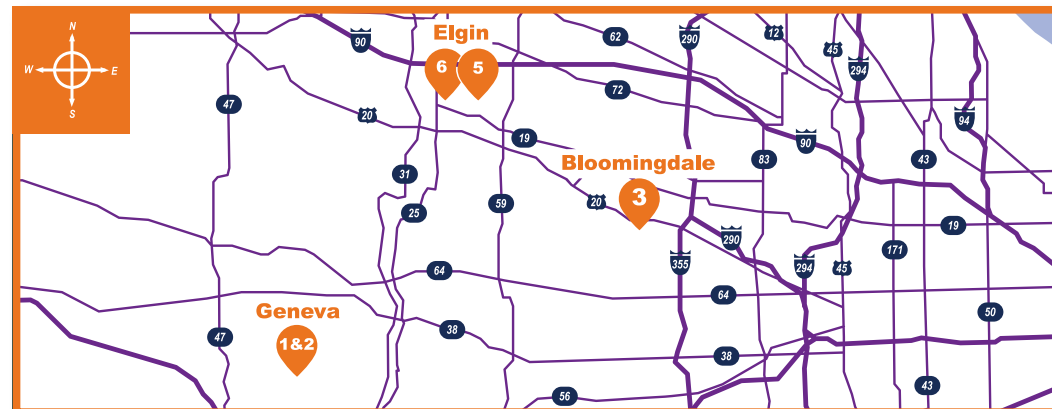


Making Marklund Memories filled with Sunshine & Joy

From spirited Marklund-style baseball games and relaxing strolls through club walks, to fun-filled trips to farms, zoos, pools, museums, and malls, as well as welcome visits from friends and family, our residents, community clients and students have truly got the best out of summer, all made possible by the care and energy of our amazing staff and volunteers.



Find Us in Person & Digitally



1



1&2 ▶ Marklund Hyde Center & Marklund Day School - Geneva
1S450 Wyatt Drive, Geneva, Illinois 60134
Phone: 630.593.5500 | Fax: 630.593.5501

2

3



3 ▶ Marklund Day School - Bloomington
164 S. Prairie Avenue, Bloomington, Illinois 60108
Phone: 630.307.1882 | Fax: 630.397.5624

4



4 ▶ Marklund Wasmond Center & School
1435 Summit Street, Elgin, Illinois 60120
Phone: 224.523.7530 | Fax: 847.622.5523

5



5 ▶ Nathan Education Center
1210 Hunter Drive, Elgin, Illinois 60120
Phone: 630.953.5230

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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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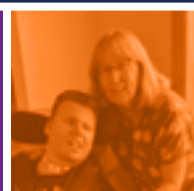
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and get involved!**



CARELETTER A newsletter for those who care about **Marklund**.



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