

Marklund celebrates expanded, renovated Wasmond Center, home for individuals with disabilities

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Marklund Board members Yaneth Medina, left of Hoffman Estates, and Ari Smith of Palatine, celebrate after the ribbon cutting at the newly expanded and renovated Marklund Wasmond Center in Elgin, an 85-bed long-term-care facility and school for children and adults with profound developmental disabilities
Photo courtesy of Tiffany Zurek.

The newly expanded and renovated Marklund Wasmond Center residential facility and school for individuals with developmental disabilities was celebrated with gold scissors and a red ribbon with an official ribbon-cutting event held Thursday, Sept. 11, at its location 1435 Summit Ave., Elgin.

The \$17.4 million project included an 20,000-square-foot addition and took approximately 18 months to complete.

Among the speakers at the event was state Sen. Cristina Castro, and a member of Congresswoman Delia Ramirez's staff, along with Marklund President & CEO Gil Fonger and Chief Development Officer Heather Graves.

Members of the Marklund board of directors, major donors to the project's capital campaign, and Marklund staff and families shared in the excitement at the official ribbon-cutting, which were followed by tours of the facility.

Previously known as the Little Angels Center for Exceptional Care, the Wasmond Center was founded in 1958 by nurse Pat Wasmond in her Elgin home, providing care to children born with severe and profound developmental disabilities.

Nearly 60 years later in November of 2016, Little Angels merged with Marklund, a nonprofit organization located in DuPage and Kane counties with over seven decades of service to individuals with developmental disabilities. Marklund, founded in 1954, is named for its first resident, Mark William Lund.

"This is the finest state-of-the-art facility in Illinois serving individuals with medically complex developmental disabilities," Fonger said. "It now features state-of-the-art equipment to help provide very specialized 24-hour care to adults and children, combined with spacious, modern living and visiting areas.

“We are very proud to have developed this incredible facility on this location to continue to expand upon its history within the Elgin area, while we continue to meet our mission — our promise — to make everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities,” Fonger said. “Like our founders back in the 1950s, it is in our DNA to go toward the need — the need to serve those seeking the very specialized care we can provide here.”

Sen. Castro, whom Fonger referred to as a tireless advocate for persons with developmental disabilities, thanked Marklund for continuing the vision to meet the needs of those in this population.

“You have been the cornerstone for many suburban families with the newly expanded center here in Elgin which is another investment in enhancing the lives of people and futures with developmental disabilities in our communities,” Castro said. “As one of just eight organizations statewide providing specialized services for those living with profound disabilities and complex medical needs, the impact of an additional 20,000-square-foot expansion cannot be overstated. I want to thank you again for the extraordinary work you do day in and day out to support your residents’ dignity, independence and sense of community.

Magda Herron, on behalf of Congresswoman Ramirez, noted that the Congresswoman stated she is grateful to have an organization/facility like this in her district, presented a letter of commendation for the board of directors and the management team.

Previously able to serve 61 residents, the building’s new features include:

- Additional 24 beds, bringing the total to 85
- Each bed will be fully vent capable 24/7
- New recreation room
- Two additional nurses stations
- Two new large, private living room areas for parents/guardians to visit with their loved ones

- Two accessible courtyards including sensory garden
- More than double the number of parking spots to 131
- Dedicated therapy area including on-site aquatic therapy pool
- More restrooms for staff and visitors
- Additional Marklund Day School classroom bringing total to three
- Increasing number of new or renovated Community Day Services classrooms to seven
- Renovated Community Day Services multipurpose room
- New paved sidewalks around entire building and connecting to adjacent neighborhood
- Dedicated storage and receiving areas

The current Marklund Wasmond Center building was constructed in various stages, beginning in 1964. Two additions were constructed over the years.

The merger with Marklund in 2016 resulted in upgrades made to staff support, security and IT systems, an updated therapy pool, main entrance/lobby, as well as the addition of special education Day School classrooms, specialized medical/therapy equipment, new vehicles, and other various structural improvements.

At its locations in Geneva, Elgin and Bloomingdale, Marklund provides residential services to 178 adults and children with severe and profound disabilities, as well as special education to more than 90 students, and prevocational/life skills day services to an additional 28 community clients.

Learn more about Marklund at www.marklund.org.