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From the Desk of Gil Fonger

President & CEO



Dear Marklund Family,

As we approach the 71st anniversary of our founding—marked by the birth of our first resident, Mark William Lund, on December 21, 1954—we reflect on how far Marklund has come. From our modest origins, we have grown into a large, mission-driven nonprofit dedicated to serving children and adults with serious and profound developmental disabilities.

As of the end of 2025:

- We employ **514** dedicated staff members
- We support **181** residents, **27** community clients and **95** students
- We provide services across **4** locations: 1 in Geneva, one in Bloomingdale, and 2 in Elgin
- Over the past 12 years, we have completed over **\$45 million** in capital expansions/renovations.
- We operate **4** Marklund Day Schools offering MultiNeeds and LifeSkills programs
- We deliver Community Day Services both onsite at our residential locations and offsite through the Bridge Builder CDS program
- Our current budget stands at **\$53.5 million**

Managing an organization of this scale and impact is a responsibility we take seriously. Since 2012, our leadership has been guided by strategic plans developed collaboratively by our Board of Directors and many key stakeholders. The current plan—Serving the Underserved-Together—focuses on five key priorities:

- 1. Investing in Our Staff** – Our people are our greatest asset. We are committed to strengthening recruitment and retention efforts.
- 2. Expanding Care** – We are seeking to pioneer a new model of group homes and create 24/7 ventilator care in Elgin, while also broadening our offsite Community Day Services program.
- 3. Securing Our Future** – We are expanding our fundraising strategies and launching new events to ensure long-term sustainability.
- 4. Enhancing Community Engagement** – We aim to elevate brand awareness, deepen community relationships, and grow our volunteer program.
- 5. Advancing Educational Impact** – We are optimizing the structure of our day schools, enhancing special education services, and investing in staff development.

Each of these priorities is supported by a comprehensive three-year roadmap. I’m proud to share that, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our team, we’ve already made significant progress.

At the heart of everything we do is a steadfast commitment to our mission of **making everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities** and our vision of a **happy, safe and purpose-filled life for every individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities**.

Our goal remains clear: to ensure that Marklund continues to be a strong, sustainable organization that meets the evolving needs of those we serve today and will serve in the future—just as our founders envisioned more than seven decades ago.

Gil Fonger, President & CEO
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BROADWAY



Curtain up, cue the lights!

Marklund proudly invites guests to an unforgettable evening where the magic of Broadway meets the heart of philanthropy. It’s the 30th Annual Top Hat Ball, Marklund’s signature fundraising event staged at the Chicago Marriott on the Mag Mile. On Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, the energy of Broadway’s iconic showstoppers will be channeled, as the spotlight shines on a milestone that deserves a standing ovation. Join us to recognize all the past chairs and Friends of the Year who have impacted our mission the last 30 years, as part of our Standing Ovation Legacy Award. Reserve tickets today and celebrate that every act of kindness is part of the grand production.

Scan the QR code to make your reservations,
and stay tuned to the website for auction details.



Get ready to lace up, Elgin!

A brand-new 5K/1-mile event is hitting the streets next April—and it’s more than just a race. The first annual Run, Walk & Roll-Elgin is Marklund’s newest fundraiser supporting the care of children and adults with profound developmental disabilities through vital residential, therapeutic and educational programs and services. The USTAF-certified course begins and ends at the Marklund Wasmond Center (formerly Little Angels), at 1435 Summit St., in Elgin, then winds through the adjacent neighborhoods, making it easy for neighbors to join in or cheer from the sidelines.

“We’re so excited to bring this family-friendly event to the Elgin community!” said Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer. “It’s not only inclusive and fun – but also a wonderful way to support children and adults with developmental disabilities living and learning at Marklund. Whether you’re ready to set a new PR, or just want to walk with family and friends, please come join us for a great time. Registration opens in December.”

Save the date for Sunday, April 26, 2026, and get ready to lace up your sneakers, rally your friends and family, and join us in kicking off Elgin’s newest community event.

Visit www.marklund.org/5K for details.



MAKING SPIRITS *bright*

The holiday season is more than a festive time at Marklund—it's magical!

This year, anyone who is looking to make the holidays even more special for Marklund residents/community clients/students can consider volunteering at Marklund or joining in the annual Giving Tree Gift Drive and Community Gift Openings.



Give the Gift of Time

Volunteering at Marklund is appreciated year-round but during holiday season it's even more welcome. Groups and individuals are invited to sign up for special events or festive activities, including but not limited to:

- Giving Tuesday Holiday Decorating, Dec. 2
- Annual Giving Tree Gift Drive now through Dec. 17
- Community Gift Opening, Dec. 20
- Caroling
- Arts and Crafts Fun



Scan the QR code to sign up today!



Community Gift Opening

We are welcoming volunteers to join us on Saturday, Dec. 20, at the Hyde Center in Geneva and Wasmond Center in Elgin to assist our residents with opening their donated holiday gifts. This special event has been enjoyed by all for many years.



Scan the QR code to register in advance!



Marklund's Annual Giving Tree Gift Drive

Marklund's Volunteer Department coordinates the Annual Giving Tree Gift Drive and Gift Opening Day at Marklund's Elgin and Geneva residential locations. Each resident's personal wish list is showcased on tags attached to Marklund's holiday trees, as well as on trees displayed in the community by local businesses and organizations.

How to get involved:

In addition to Marklund's own trees, businesses, teams, churches and groups can create a Marklund Giving Tree by requesting gift tags from the Volunteer Department. Help "un-decorate" a tree and grab a tag from trees at our locations or the participating locations. Purchase one or more gifts from the tag list, then wrap and return them to the appropriate Marklund location (as noted on the tag) by Wednesday, December 17.



A Conversation with Hope Schmidt

Occupational Therapist, Registered and Licensed (OTR/L)

Hope joined Marklund in October 2020 as an Occupational Therapist (OT) for the Day School in Geneva. She currently serves residents and students at both the Wasmond Center and Nathan Education Center in Elgin, supporting individuals with differing diagnoses of Autism and Cerebral Palsy. With a vibrant personality and a deepening expertise in occupational therapy, Hope brings creativity and enthusiasm to every session. Her innovative approaches include using sensory-based techniques, imaginative Point-of-View activities to teach new skills, fostering independence through aquatic therapy, collaborating with recreation therapists during community outings, and evaluating and ordering customized hand and wrist splints.

Background

Education:

Bachelor of Science in Education (BSE) with major in Health, Human Performance at University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (UW-W), **Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD)** at Midwestern University in Downers Grove, **Member of American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT), Certified Fieldwork Educator (CFWE).**

Work Experience:

- Case Manager for the SSVF (Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families)
- Bachelor's internship at Easter Seals Wisconsin Respite Camp in Wisconsin Dells, working with individuals across the lifespan with disabilities and various diagnoses.
- Doctoral internship with Pioneer Center for Human Services' SOAR (Stepping Out, Adult Recreation) program for seniors with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities.
- Outside of Marklund, also works part-time for Illinois' Early Intervention program, providing OT services for the birth-3 years population with diagnosed or suspected developmental challenges.

See more at
www.marklund.org/ourstories

"I knew I wanted to be an OT since I was 16 years old; when I was babysitting a little boy with Autism who was undergoing therapies through Early Intervention. At the time, OT just looked FUN to me!"

What made you get involved in healthcare?

I have always been interested in and passionate about devoting my time to serving others in need. I originally imagined myself working in the hospital setting; however, it was during my time in OT school throughout fieldwork experiences that I realized I prefer a setting in which I can build greater relationships with my patients and not be limited to how I provide my services (billing guidelines, patient quotas, etc.).

What attracted you to Marklund?

After I researched about Marklund, I was impressed about several things: first it was a nonprofit, and I wanted to be a part of an organization with a strong mission. Then, I learned Marklund hires therapists, not just contracts with outside therapists. I wanted to find a career and position that I loved and could grow in. When I saw it had an opening in their day school, although I was passionate about working with the older population, I also love working with the younger population...seeing students grow so much over the past 5 years and gain many new skills is so rewarding.



Best part of your job is _____.

Being part of individuals' "everyday life," is the essence of my profession as an occupational therapist. One particular, recent event that stands out in my mind is a young student of mine who, with supportive seating and an adapted feeding utensil, just recently fed herself for the first time in her life!

Favorite memory so far from your work at Marklund?

My favorite memory has to be spending the day at the Museum of Science and Industry with a resident from MWC during a group recreational therapy outing. Her permanent smile, exploring the exhibits, navigating the crowd, and giggling at the nuances of the day while taking in and managing all the sensory stimulations etched a core memory for me.

What would you say to a therapy professional considering taking a job at Marklund?

I would encourage them to grab the opportunity – The Therapy team is so wonderful and very supportive. Marklund has helped shape me into the OT I am today; well-rounded, confident and motivated!



A ribbon cutting event celebrates \$17.4 million expansion/renovation at the Marklund Wasmond Center



Gil Fonger, President & CEO

On a late afternoon this past fall, staff, board members, donors and honored guests gathered together to celebrate the newly expanded and renovated Marklund Wasmond Center residential facility and school for individuals with developmental disabilities.

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

"This is the finest facility in Illinois serving individuals with medically complex developmental disabilities," said Gil Fonger,

Marklund President and CEO. "It 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.

Among the speakers at the September 11th event was IL State Sen. Cristina Castro, and a member of Congresswoman Delia Ramirez's staff. Members of the Marklund Board of Directors and major donors to the project's capital campaign took part in the official ribbon cutting, that was then followed by tours of the facility.

Sen. Castro 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. As one of just 8 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, and presented a letter of commendation for the board of directors and the management team.

"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 added. "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."



Ribbon cutting guests write messages to Wasmond Center residents on the sign-in board.



Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer

What's new, by the numbers

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
- 2 Additional Nurses Stations
- 2 New large, Private Living Room Areas for parents/guardians to visit with their loved ones
- 2 Accessible Courtyards including sensory garden
- More than double the number of Parking Spots to 131
- More restrooms for staff & visitors
- Dedicated Therapy Area including onsite aquatic therapy pool
- Additional Marklund Day School classroom bringing total to 3
- Increasing the number of new or renovated Community Day Services classrooms to 7
- Renovated Community Day Services multipurpose room
- New paved sidewalks around entire building and connecting to adjacent neighborhood
- Dedicated storage and receiving areas



Little Angels Founders Pat and Bob Wasmond Sr.

A History in Elgin

The Marklund Wasmond Center originated in 1958 as Little Angels Center for /Exceptional Care when Nurse Pat Wasmond, her husband, Bob, and their children began providing care in their home to children with profound disabilities. Their home was located on the property where the Wasmond Center is situated. Expansions and renovations occurred over the years, then in 2016, the Little Angels board made the decision to merge with Marklund. The building was renamed the Marklund Wasmond Center to honor the legacy of care started by its founders.



Senior Lead Maintenance Technician Bob Wasmond Jr., and his sister Shelley Lewis, former Wasmond Center Administrator



Marklund's December Appeal



At the top of a slope, skis strapped to an adapted sled, Peter was ready. It wasn't the summit that daunted his parents, it was everything it took to get there. This symbolized the life they had worked so hard to pursue for Peter: one without limits. Peter has cerebral palsy. His disabilities affect every part

of life and all activities of daily living. His mom, Cathryn, shared that "from the beginning, it's been about partnering with great people and organizations to remove barriers and support Peter in developing his strengths to succeed and live as independently as possible."

As Peter grew, his parents wondered how they would continue to meet his needs, and how disability would affect their hopes and dreams. His dad, David, shared that "we did our best every day, knowing there was a long road ahead." Encouraged by their therapy team to set no limits, they poured themselves into his early development. "We ran really hard with therapies and treatments in the early days... I think Peter is where he is now because of that early investment and support he received," Cathryn said.

Caregiving became more physically and emotionally demanding, extending to Peter's two younger brothers. His parents sought balance through family adventures. Skiing became a symbol of possibility. "We've tried to push the boundaries with Peter, to create as many opportunities, experiences, and memories as we can," Cathryn said. But pursuing these came at a personal cost.

When they lost a long-term caregiver, the family hit a breaking point. "Our Christian faith and the

disability ministry at church was an anchor for our family." Still, they knew they would need a transition to residential placement. They were not familiar with Marklund, but a high school field trip with one of their other sons brought them for a visit. Cathryn was struck with a powerful and emotional realization: "Here are our people. This could be Peter's next step toward independence." Partnering with Marklund meant finding trusted residential support to ensure Peter's needs would be met, while finding a place of peace and encouragement for his family.

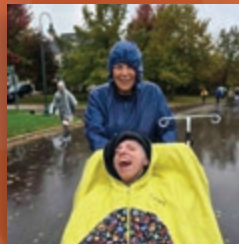
Before Marklund, Peter's parents were extreme caregivers. Now, they can focus on being mom and dad again.

"I'd say he's my hero... Peter gets up every day with so many challenges, but finds joy in life," said David. This is the life many of our Marklund residents live. Your holiday gift ensures individuals like Peter receive the support they need, while helping families breathe, reconnect, and thrive. Your generous support is an investment in people's lives. It powers personalized programs, care, and resources, helping families feel safe to seek support and focus on what truly matters: loving one another.

Please donate today to help make everyday life possible for people like Peter, who continue to overcome challenges, find joy, and pursue a life without limits.



To give online or make changes to your information, please scan the QR code or visit <https://www.marklund.org/give>



Thank You for Making Marklund's Run, Walk & Roll-Geneva a Success!

A huge thank you to our participants, teams, volunteers, donors, and sponsors for supporting this year's 5K/1-Mile event!

The weather wasn't perfect, so an extra thank you to everyone who braved the rain and showed up for Marklund! We were inspired by the enthusiasm and commitment from all who attended—participants, volunteers, and sponsors alike. Your dedication helps make everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities.

We couldn't have done it without you!



Over \$133,000 in net proceeds - another record-breaking year!

View photos and race results at www.marklund.org/5k or scan the QR code below.





Meet Julie Schrager

Member, Marklund Board of Directors

Background

Education: Harvard College/ University of Chicago Law School

Career: Legal Writing Coach and Advisor, Faegre Drinker; Former positions include Assistant US Attorney, US Department of Justice; Professor, Chicago Kent College of Law; Special Associate White House Counsel, Office of the White House Counsel, Deputy Chief of Staff, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Governor's Office.

Community Involvement: Volunteering at Marklund!

Role(s) on the board:

I'm on the Development Committee, and as a parent of a new(ish) Marklund Hyde resident, I hopefully provide a certain perspective on the organization.

See more at www.marklund.org/ourstories

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

Where should I start?! I believe that all people have value and the right to be treated with dignity and care and to live the best lives they can. Marklund shares that vision and has put it into practice.

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

I knew nothing about people with developmental disabilities until my daughter Claire was born 25 years ago. Claire's journey has opened my eyes to the amazing people and organizations who devote their lives to making Claire's and others' lives better. When we learned about Marklund and there was an opening, we embraced the opportunity for Claire to live here with her peers and be cared for by people who are 100% committed to ensuring people with disabilities are able to live a full and rewarding life. And after Claire moved to Marklund, I was excited to have the chance to contribute by serving on the Board.



What are your goals/priorities as a board member?

My top priority is ensuring that all Marklund professionals feel valued and supported and know that they are the most important part of what makes Marklund special. I also want to spread the Marklund magic and let others throughout the state of Illinois know what a special place Marklund is.

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

I love learning and gaining new perspectives and have truly enjoyed learning about Marklund's facilities and services, its history, and its plans for the future. I'm now better prepared to contribute to Marklund's mission.

Holiday Giving



As the holidays approach, many will take time to reflect, reconnect and give back. This is an especially meaningful time for every individual at Marklund. It's not only a time of joy and traditions, but a celebration of a community that comes together in extraordinary ways. More than 60% of Marklund's annual fundraising happens during this time of year and directly supports children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Stocking Up on Impact

Has your stock portfolio seen growth over the last year? Giving appreciated stock (held for over a year) can be a win-win and is one of the most tax-smart ways to give. By donating stock directly to Marklund, you potentially avoid capital gains taxes, while receiving a charitable deduction—making your gift go over 20% further than a cash donation.



Simplify Giving with a Donor Advised Fund

Donor advised funds have gained popularity in recent years, allowing individuals at various income levels to streamline their charitable efforts. A sort of philanthropic piggy-bank, donors can contribute cash, stocks and other assets to these funds within sponsoring organizations. This allows for tax free growth of all assets within the fund, allowing donors time and space to develop a giving strategy and thoughtfully select charitable organizations, like Marklund!

Over 70½? Make Your IRA Work for Good

If you're 70½ or older, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) - a direct gift from your IRA to a nonprofit like Marklund. In 2025, you can give up to \$108,000 this way, and it won't count as taxable income or require itemizing deductions. If you're 73 or older, these gifts can also help satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

When determining which giving strategy works best for you, Marklund encourages you to speak with your tax advisor or other financial professional. As always, we are grateful for your friendship and support. Wishing you and yours a happy holiday season.

Questions for making a stock gift to Marklund? Contact Natalie Sarby, Major Gifts Manager at nsarby@marklund.org or 630-593-5461

Contact Us



▶ Marklund Hyde Center

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

▶ Marklund Wasmond Center & School

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

▶ Ann Haskins Center at Marklund Day School - Bloomingdale

164 S. Prairie Avenue, Bloomingdale, Illinois 60108 | Phone: 630.307.1882

▶ Foglia Education Center at Marklund Day School - Geneva

1S376 Wyatt Dr., Geneva, IL 60134 | Phone: 630.953.5500

▶ 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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