“Our Gala at Ardrossan”
Dear Friends,

When I discovered what the main theme was for this Messenger, “How Melmark Changed My Life” – I immediately thought to myself – I could write an entire book on it. Since that day that Melissa was born on September 3, 1963, it was our life. It was the air we breathed, the atmosphere we lived in, the vision that we dreamed. It was home.

We cried with so many of you dear parents. We agonized over each rejection when our beds were full to overflowing. And we triumphed with each victory of your child. It was heady stuff – the very fabric of our lives was Melmark. Day by day the problems of staffing and operating a facility as large as Melmark challenged our creativity. But we served a wise and all-knowing God. He was the one who saw us hurdle over obstacles and helped us find solutions we never dreamed were appropriate answers.

What you see, what your child calls home, what our staff calls rewarding (at times), challenging (daily), and frustrating (often)... this is Melmark. A work in progress. Melmark will always be striving to get to the next level of excellence, steadily improving each avenue of service and sometimes honestly admitting that something does not do the job they expected and should be abandoned. Constantly changing to accommodate new teaching approaches, not afraid to test new waters, and wildly exulting in the successes of your child.

Melmark has changed each one of our lives. Each member of my family has made contributions to Melmark, and each has, in turn, been touched to the core by the experience. When my Paul died, there was a large empty space in my heart, made larger when I moved away last year to a retirement community. But I know Melmark and Melissa are safe, in good hands. Today Dr. Joanne Donovan heads Melmark as the President and CEO. And although she is uniquely qualified for this position, I know from former experience, it is not easy. Sometimes it is lonely at the top, sometimes you feel that people complain more than they encourage, and you receive more love from our special children than you do from any other person.

My hearty recommendation would be for all of us to pray for Joanne. Go out of your way to say something kind. Pray for our staff at Melmark. They need all the support and encouragement we can give them. These are perilous times we are living in. Sometimes our hearts fail us, but our faith in God is the only thing that will carry us through.

From the mother of Melissa,

Mildred E. Krentel, Co-Founder
Dear Families and Friends,

The world as we know it changed significantly this past year. From the tragedy of September 11 to the war in Afghanistan and the economic recession, these changes cast a shadow over our lives. Through this shadow, however, the light of our human spirit, courage, determination and resiliency shows through, transforming our notions of what constitutes a heroic act or person. In this magazine-style Messenger, we focus on the heroism intrinsic to Melmark, for our children and adults and the staff who work with them triumph over adversity everyday. Our theme is, “How Melmark Changed My Life.”

The personal stories of our children, adults, families, staff and volunteers that follow remind us again that life-enhancing changes continue to occur in our lives everyday—even amidst the threatening challenges around us.

To begin with, I can say without question that Melmark changed my life forever. Although my beloved younger sister, Marilyn, has Down syndrome, I had never thought once of pursuing a position with an agency that cares for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities. Prior to coming to Melmark, I spent my professional life in higher education, nursing, psychology and business. I loved the diversity of challenge and opportunity that these varied pursuits afforded me. I never would have imagined that any one organization could have provided me with an opportunity to apply all of my experiences and skills, and to do so in the pursuit of such a worthy and rewarding mission.

Your life cannot remain untouched by even a single visit to Melmark. Everywhere you go, our children and adults greet you warmly, smile at you and make you feel welcome. You experience their joy and courage, highlighted by the daunting challenges of their lives. You encounter friendly, skilled and dedicated staff everywhere you turn. In short, you are transported into a world dedicated to nurturing and developing the human spirit in all its complexities – and it touches your heart in a way that changes you forever. Melmark is a gentle, loving world that operates on a different set of values about what is important in life.

I invite you to sit back, relax and enjoy the stories that follow. Read Miggy’s personal account of her and Paul’s triumph over tragedy in the founding of Melmark. Hear about the outstanding progress that transforms Edwin’s life, how Joy Pott came to Melmark for a fashion show and stayed 27 years, how our instructors in many areas feel their own basic love of what they teach enhanced by seeing it touch our children and adults. Enjoy the fun of our spring festival, and our first-ever friend- and fund-raising Gala. And, with a story on Bob Marcus, the Chairman of our Board of Directors, we initiate a series of articles that feature one of our wonderful Board or Advisory Board members.

I thank each and every one of you who continue to support our mission.

Joanne Gillis-Donovan
President & CEO
By Mildred Krentel

The year was 1963, the place Bryn Mawr Hospital. Holding my new baby, I looked with wonder, trembling as I counted – ten fingers, ten toes – every mother’s routine. I touched her smooth cheek and button nose, then noticed her eyes slanted up at the corners, kind of a windswept look. As I shifted her weight, she collapsed in a small heap in my arms. “Definitely no starch!” I whispered in her ear.

At her noon feeding I could not get her to nurse for any length of time. I had breastfed all our other babies, but when the nurse appeared at the door, I had to admit complete failure. She was taken and given a supplement bottle. A small cloud of worry appeared on my horizon. When the pediatrician arrived, my fears began to take over.

“We have performed some tests on your baby,” he hesitated. “The news is not good.” That sunk in. “We suspect your baby has Down syndrome…” His voice trailed off.

I began to weep. “What does that mean? How? What do I do?”

In 1963, the term Down syndrome had scarcely replaced the term mongoloid. Knowledge was scanty, poorly disseminated. I knew no one with Down syndrome. And the medical profession in that era prescribed institutionalization. “Put them away” for someone else to love and educate them if possible. So we did – for her first fifteen months, losing the good derived from today’s early intervention programs. Blindly, we trusted our doctor’s wisdom, what he thought was the best program at that time. I do not blame him.

At fifteen months of age, we brought Melissa home. She would sit in her playpen, surrounded by toys, nothing causing her to creep or crawl, seemingly content just to sit there. There were no worlds for her to conquer.

We went to see a famed neurologist. He was direct and heartbreakingly blunt. “That she is afflicted with Down syndrome is obvious – a chromosome count is not necessary.”

“Is there anything we can do to help her?”

“Throw away her playpen, let her creep and discover things for herself. Offer her all the stimulation you can. Treat her as your other children.”

“What about her rocking, banging her head against the end of the crib?”

“Do not permit it. This motion traps her in a world of her own making. She will not relate to her surroundings. Try to divert her.”

Divert we did, consistently and exhaustingly. And something began to happen. Melissa came alive. She started to creep and discover things on her own. Each accomplishment was greeted with wild approval. Melissa was leaving her valley of
apathy. We were crazy in love, filled with adoration of everything she did. Then we began to pray about opening a school for Melissa and her friends—a home where God’s love could be felt. But how? As we dreamed on, we remembered that God started everything with a family.

We took in three babies with Down syndrome, and began writing appeal letters that shared our vision. Eighteen months later we moved into a 35-room mansion in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. People donated furniture and cribs and even enough money to help with our king-sized mortgage. We plodded on doggedly in spite of setbacks, calling our faith project “Melmark.” “Mel” for Melissa, “mar” for our baby Martha who died in her crib at five months of age, and “K” for Krentel. And God blessed.

The heartache of birthing a baby with a handicap does not vanish as time goes by. The dead-end dreams and chromosomal damage are there to stay. But today Melmark serves 267 clients at our three locations and has a full-time staff to challenge and care for them. An approved private school and residence offering diverse options on 80 beautiful countryside acres, testimony to God’s goodness. And Melissa recently turned thirty-eight. She enjoys a world full of creative programs fitting her capabilities and friends who do not demand more than she can give. She still enjoys playing with her dolls, and I have learned not to substitute age-appropriate toys. I allow her to be herself. Melissa is barely able to write her first name. Her ninety-miles-an-hour speech is difficult to understand and does little to communicate her frustration. When she is unable to tell me something important to her, I hurt all over. I hurt for all the Melissas in the world who have inner thoughts and emotions they cannot share.

Public places are the toughest. People turn to stare, and a shopping spree or dinner can turn into a nightmare. But through it all shines Melissa’s indomitable spirit. She makes us laugh when we’re crying, love when we’re unloving, slow down long enough to see the humor in life. Through her unquestioning eyes, her mercurial forgiveness, her “I love you, too,” I am humbled. Her unswerving loyalty and tearful reaction to discipline bring me up short. Melissa remains outrageously happy and blissfully uninhibited. Her freedom to be herself leaves me cheering on the sidelines, envious.
“Welcome to My New Sister,” reads the banner Edwin recently brought home on a trip to visit Maria, his family’s latest member, born last December. Edwin created the banner largely by himself, said Liz Jurus, his teacher. He chose the wording, matched the letters Liz wrote out, typed it into the computer, and printed it out, all on his own. “He’s taken great pride in being a big brother to Maria,” said Liz.

The maturity Edwin displayed in stepping up to his role as big brother—and as an older classmate to many of his peers—did not always come easy for this handsome 19-year old from the Kensington section of Philadelphia. When Edwin arrived at Melmark on January 15, 1999, he required staff assistance to push his wheelchair, wash, dress, and travel to classes. Underweight and in poor health, he needed help with nearly every aspect of hygiene and battled staff at mealtimes, disregarding lessons on balancing his diet with nutritional foods. Edwin wanted to go home. He took little interest in activities around him.

Today, Edwin cruises across every part of campus, independently pushing himself up and down hills, across lawns, and typically refusing help when it’s offered. He’s a proud young man with a strong identity as a Puerto Rican American. With staff encouragement, he has improved his diet and steadily gained weight. He feeds himself, remains well groomed, and handles many aspects of his personal care. “Edwin has really changed his attitude since coming here,” says Liz. “At first, we put a lot of demands on him, and he didn’t like it. But after a while, he realized it was in his best interest, that people here really care about him.”

Edwin took a large step toward independence last year when he braved a nine-day stay at St. Christopher’s Hospital to undergo a surgical procedure that improved his comfort and quality of life. “I wasn’t scared,” said Edwin. “It was my ninth surgery. I feel much better now.” Now Edwin can sleep through the night without interruption. “He’s more rested and overall feels better about himself,” said Spruce Nurse Sharon Sacks. “His self-care routine has been cut in half, and he’s become more independent.” Sharon takes great pride in Edwin’s accomplishments, her fondness for him evident whenever he’s the
topic of conversation. She encourages him to take an interest in his health and hygiene, eating with him often and keeping an eye on his diet. “I would like to thank Sharon for taking care of me,” Edwin said recently.

In the classroom, Edwin applies himself to academics that can serve functions in his life now and in the future. He's learned to use a calculator, make change, tell time, answer the phone, and read sight words. He also uses a data entry program on the computer, developing skills that might help him hold a job someday. His current pre-vocational assignment has him supplying cups to spring water dispensers throughout the Main House.

“Two of his greatest strengths are his open-mindedness and willingness to try new things, follow new opportunities,” says Liz. Some of those new opportunities at Melmark have led Edwin to explore his creativity. He recently began learning to play piano, and relishes his weekly “private” art lessons. Last May, Edwin’s self-portrait hung in the school hallway for several weeks. The painting astounded everyone, and Edwin took great pride in assuring his audience he’d done the work himself. Art instructor Amy Vogel confirmed his accomplishments and framed the piece so he could use it as a gift for Mother’s Day. His mom hung it on the living room wall.

To explore options after he graduates from school,

workshops once a week. Liz believes the craftwork reinforces his creative potential and self-esteem. Suzanne Muench, Spruce Program Director, also sees significant changes in Edwin’s behavior since he moved to Spruce last March. “He’s taking more responsibility,” says Suzanne. “He’s more dedicated to his self care and really wants to improve his life. He needs to keep working on eating well and brushing his own teeth, but we know he can do it.”

Edwin’s moves and hustle on the basketball court helped him earn Melmark’s Athlete of the Year 2000 award. He also enjoys Teen Club, Club Melmark, and helping care for the animals in the barn. And he especially loves Melmark’s pretty girls.

When Edwin enters a room, those around him smile. “He’s sweet, compassionate, caring of the other kids, and overall very helpful,” says Liz, describing a recent incident when Edwin volunteered to help a classmate by picking up a change of clothes for him from Pines. “He’s stepping up to a new role, trying to help others, look out for them. Not looking for staff attention.”

And as he steadily matures and learns, Edwin will continue to step up to challenges to his independence. “I feel good,” he says. “I am strong.”

To explore options after he graduates from school,

Edwin attends the Meadows woodwork and stenciling workshop once a week.

Edwin’s self-Portrait
We’ll Grow Slowly Together...

by Kate McConnell

When Joy Pott first visited Melmark for a fashion show 27 years ago, she never dreamed the show would lead her to a full-time career at the Meadows, overseeing a staff of nine and 41 Country Garden Guild business partners. But, just as a flowerbed begins with one seedling, what began as an interest in volunteering led to a small shelf of flowers that blossomed into a program.

Twenty-six years ago, Joy, a recreation volunteer, received a call from Paul Krentel, who had determined that Melmark needed a formal program for individuals over 21. He wanted Joy to develop it. The seed was sown. Within a few weeks, ten students joined Joy in a little room attached to the school; some remain with her today. “We weren’t going to play school,” Joy says, revealing the sensitivity to human dignity embodied by all Meadows’ activities to this day. “We were going to do the kinds of things that adults like to do.”

Joy began a program in her classroom drawing from her experience and the pleasure she received from gardening and working with her hands. Constructing a wide shelf in front of a large lonely window, she arranged several clay pots with flowers saved from her garden. They bloomed throughout the winter as she and her faithful assistants tended to them. Joy worked patiently and slowly with students as they learned how to water, snap off dead leaves, love and care for each plant—as they themselves were each being loved and cared for at Melmark. One fall evening she wrote in her journal, “Take your time, my dears, for we have lots of time. It’s the one thing that we have that others do not. We’ll grow slowly together, and there is no need for haste.”

As classroom activities grew to include bread baking and latch hooking, Joy spotted changes in the campus greenhouse/maintenance shop. She heard talk of razing the building and pleaded with Mr. Krentel to renovate the space for a classroom and therapeutic greenhouse. With a $10,000 grant from the Louis N. Cassett Foundation and the addition of a part-time horticulture instructor, the program acquired its own space, and workshop activities began to expand. Joy developed creative arts and vocational activities that included meaningful work to span a lifetime. But something was missing. “Yes, we had flowers,” she remembers. “Yes, we had meaningful work. But we needed our own business.” The Country Garden Guild soon followed.

After careful planning and designing, the professional guild became incorporated, with members gaining the opportunity to work and earn wages based on their yearly accomplishments. Workshop areas emphasize wide-ranging skills while providing opportunities for each person’s varied abilities and preferences. Whether working in the greenhouse, tending flowerbeds and large outdoor gardens, harvesting and gathering flowers, weaving, or stenciling greeting cards, each person’s talents flourish—and the resulting products reflect the spirit of creativity and sense of careful cultivation put into them.

A major grant from The Connelly Foundation led Mr. Krentel to build the Meadows’ current workshops and greenhouse space, a two-story building designed in keeping with some of Joy’s key requirements—namely, a high-peaked roof, cross beams for drying flowers, a quarry tile floor and tearoom.

Today, as Joy takes stock of the past and the future, she realizes that some of our adults are getting a little older and slower. “As we get older we still like and need to do what we did when we were younger, a little less and
There Is No Need For Haste

a little more slowly,” Joy often says. “But as far as Guild members are concerned, their lives are just the same.”

The Meadows Program continues to thrive and grow serving the people who live at Melmark and in the surrounding community. The stenciled cards, wreaths, and baskets—and the loyal customers who keep the program going—tell their wonderful story. “There is still no need for haste,” Joy says, “We hurry slowly.”
The air was crisp and cool with an autumn breeze, the sky filled with diamond-like stars and spotlights criss-crossing overhead. Melmark guests buzzed with the excitement of an evening at Ardrossan. Suddenly, all eyes turned to watch two white limousines roll slowly to a stop beneath five-foot high letters spelling HOLLYWOOD. The Joybells had arrived. Car doors opened and into the night emerged Janet, Karen, Meg, Ronnie, Anne, David, Melissa, Mary Ann, Bill, Cindy, Joy and Doug, dressed in tuxedos and evening gowns and beaming with star-like effervescence. Smiling from car to car, they let everyone they met know they were there to enjoy, perform and accept their awards as part of Melmark’s “Night At The Oscars” Gala.

They strolled into Ardrossan on the arms of their escorts, ready for an evening like no other—an evening filled with many firsts, applause, laughter, and memories to last forever.

Guests mingled, enjoying the splendor of the mansion while learning about the magnitude of Melmark’s
mission and ministry. Lou Tilley entertained, Miss Maine sang, and as dinner concluded, guests viewed our video, “I Am A Promise.” If there was a dry eye in the house one would have been hard pressed to find it. And as the “stars” approached center stage to receive their Oscars, the audience became part of the excitement, the energy; they too reveled in each accomplishment, every story of success.

Was it Chris’s determination to walk up on his own, Bianca’s captivating smile, Missy’s mighty grip on her statue, Jeff’s pride, Foxy’s bright energy and smile, or Tony’s self-confidence that captured the hearts of so many? Our stars reached the audience’s hearts and souls, and generosity flowed. Throughout the evening, guests fulfilled wish after wish from the Wish Book. Whether a saddle for Arizona, a tent for the riding ring, funds for scholarships, or upgrades to our children’s and adults’ homes, the overwhelming compassion and spirit of giving electrified the night.

All 451 guests experienced firsthand an environment where determination is encouraged, self-confidence developed, limits challenged, expectations achieved, and lives changed.
“When we first walked into the tent and saw that crowd of enthusiastic people gathered at such an expanse of dazzling tables, our immediate thought was, ‘This is wonderful, so many new people will be introduced to the Melmark story tonight.’ The excitement was evident throughout the entire evening. It was thrilling.”

- Alice and Michael Doyle

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If there was a dry eye in
What we realized that evening was the union of new friends with a mission and vision worthy of their support and praise. The night was Melmark’s— to shine, share our success, and revel in the promise of tomorrow. An opportunity for guests to meet those whose lives have been changed as well as those who work so hard to meet the needs of those we serve.

Now we have begun another stage in our journey. We will continue to do what we do so well; but what has changed are the many new friends who will join us along the way. Individuals who before were not familiar with us today want to be part of our life and support our community. And we expect our stars to continue attracting others with their determination and vigor. The future shines bright.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
• Robert Montgomery Scott for the use of Ardrossan.
• Carey Limousine Service for transporting our “stars” in style.
• Delaware County Symphony for their Chamber Music ensemble.
• The Meadows Country Garden Guild for the beautiful centerpieces.

the house one would have been hard pressed to find it.
Discovering Creative Talents

by Sara Miscannon

I couldn’t have asked for a more challenging and rewarding job than the one of art teacher here at Melmark. Each day brings something unexpected, unique and unusual. With a degree in fine arts and experience teaching children art, I feel nothing quite prepared me for the children I work with at Melmark.

I have watched in awe as Bianca uses a head pointer with a paintbrush attached to create the most beautiful paintings, filled with amazing colors and strokes. When she is painting, a confident young woman emerges. As she works, she tells me stories about her dreams and the heartaches she faces each day. This time allows her to relax, knowing she is accomplishing something that others too find beautiful.

I have seen Edward go from refusing to touch art materials, to scribbling with fervor across the paper with a marker, crayon, or paintbrush. In one classroom I have taught about primary colors. Do you know what the three primary colors are? Go and ask Brian, Edwin, Molly, or any of the students there. I walked in one day and out of the blue heard a voice say to me, "I know about things!" I said, "What things do you know about, Brian?" He replied, "I know about primary colors, and they are..." If you want to know, go and find Brian; he’ll tell you.

Often I work with the students on an individual basis in my art room. When we work alone, many students respond differently; when away from the distractions of their classrooms, they are able to relax. Bradford, a boy filled with amazing energy, is able to sit quietly, immersed in the beauty of a line he has drawn, the dots made by his marker, or the strokes made with paint. Chelsea smiles with delight as she stretches her arm and with the aid of an adaptive device paints circles. Another student, Louie, expresses emotions through his artwork, drawing things he cannot communicate verbally. Sean already knows how to mix red and blue to get purple and has become obsessed with every color combination possible to man. Though deemed ‘aggressive,’ he demonstrates very different behavior when he is with me. He draws faces that represent various emotions, telling me which one is angry, proud, or scared. As he leaves the room, he says, "Till next week."
There are so many stories, triumphs to share, I could write a book about the ten months I have been here. Such a short time: that is what is so amazing. I love these children, all of them. There is so much for them to accomplish, and I love being here with them to see it. We have an amazing bunch of children here and they deserve all we can do for them.

“The scribblings of any child clearly indicate how thoroughly immersed he is in the sensation of moving his hand and crayon aimlessly over a surface, depositing a line in his path. There must be some quantity of magic in this alone.”

–Edward Hill
Animals impact our lives. They offer unconditional acceptance and affection. They provide opportunities for communication and bonding, whether or not we have the ability to speak. They comfort us when we feel agitated, sad, or uncomfortable. And, for those dependent on others for their daily care, animals provide a unique opportunity to nurture, be responsible for, and take care of another being.

Janet, a high-school student with special needs, knows firsthand the special benefits of working with animals. Last summer, as part of Options, a Delaware County Intermediate Unit (DCIU) outreach program, Janet came to Melmark to help with the weekend care of our horses, other animals, and barn facilities. DCIU provided Janet support through a job developer and job coach who helped her transition to working independently throughout her two weekend day shifts.

Melmark's lead animal instructor Cindy Pascuzzo and her assistant Helene Johnson really appreciate Janet's assistance and dependability. Cindy praises Janet's steady job performance. “She's very focused on her work and notices all the details. She loves the animals. And she’s made good decisions about how to handle them when the weather changes or something unexpected occurs.” As Janet approaches her one-year anniversary at Melmark, we congratulate her on her contributions to one of our most unique and popular programs.

Melmark's array of animals includes two Border Collies, several goats, two guinea pigs, a dwarf pot belly pig, two lop-eared rabbits, a miniature donkey and three full-size horses. They live in a barn with adjoining buildings, and utilize a goat pen, riding ring, and pastures. The menagerie supports three programs central to Melmark's therapeutic and recreational services: animal-assisted activities, Hippotherapy, and sports riding.

Animal-assisted activities range from barn management to bedside “pet visits” for Pines' medically fragile residents; activities are goal-oriented and designed to improve physical and psychosocial functioning. When the weather interferes with class visits to the barn, Cindy brings smaller animals to the classrooms. There, she uses the rabbits, dogs, or guinea pigs to provide opportunities for improvements in health,
independence, and quality of life. The animals—each with its own texture, sound, and personality—provide visual, tactile, and auditory stimulation, while promoting fine and gross motor skills. Along with the Border Collies that go to the classrooms are an assortment of toys, brushes, collars, leashes, treats, and treat containers, all used to facilitate goals specific to each student. The dogs and other animals promote increased interest and motivation within the classroom setting, often resulting in better participation. Among the many benefits of bringing animals to the classroom are teaching students to take turns and helping them practice paying attention. Students with challenging behaviors often become more calm and act more appropriately when they are around animals. When weather permits trips to the barn area, the stable environment becomes the classroom. As students assist with animal care—from feeding and grooming to cleaning and exercise—they learn responsibility and functional skills that apply to their self-care.

During spring, summer, and fall, Melmark’s occupational and physical therapists use our horses in a unique treatment modality. Hippotherapy brings together therapists, horsemanship professionals, and trained volunteers to pursue therapy goals during a highly integrated 30-minute treatment session. During treatment, the dynamic movement of the horse combines with specific riding patterns to facilitate desired postural responses. The horses provide a special activity that appeals to—and is often successful with—clients who dislike or haven’t experienced success with other types of therapy. Melmark’s sports riding program, available to adult residents, provides client-specific instruction in horsemanship skills; while clients ride in the ring or on a trail, they reap physical, psychological, and social benefits. Riding a horse offers students a unique opportunity to improve posture, balance, mobility and functioning, while enhancing self-esteem, confidence and motivation, attention span, and capacity for bonding.

We feel proud of the enrichment and therapeutic opportunities provided by Melmark’s animal program. The animals that live and visit here make unique contributions to the well being of our children and adults. They also play an integral role in helping our residents—and others like Janet—move toward their individual goals.
MUSIC BRINGS COMFORT and a Tool for Communication

Nurturing an understanding and appreciation of music and its heritage is the hope of many music instructors. As the music teacher at Melmark since May, my position has challenged me in ways I never expected and rewarded me in ways I never thought possible. Before coming to Melmark I worked in a music store, ran my own piano tuning business, and most recently taught music in public schools. Now, daily I learn firsthand how music touches each individual and means so many different things to each of them. This work gives me a kind of love for music that I have never experienced before.

Students receive music instruction in the classroom in either one-on-one or two-on-one sessions. We learn about the instruments of the orchestra, practice keeping a steady beat, and sing songs from around the world and holiday music. Even Dr. Donovan jokes with us about all the drum banging and noise coming from the music classroom as our happy and joyful sounds radiate through the floor and up into her office.

We play Orff instruments to a wide variety of music styles. In the one-on-one sessions, we work on ways that music can immediately help each specific child. Four
students take piano lessons and learn how to read music. One nonverbal student works on singing and matching the pitches I sing to her. Students play instruments using adaptive equipment, and take part in so many other activities, too numerous to mention.

In one weekly session I teach two talented and musically gifted teenage boys who compose their own music each lesson. For two weeks following the tragedy in New York City the boys decided to compose some songs of peace to comfort, as they put it, “The people left in New York, so they would feel better.”

The progress each student makes in very short time periods truly amazes me. I look forward to continued success integrating music into the lives of all the students. Each day brings new energy, spirit, and an opportunity to bring the joy of music into another’s life.

Our happy and joyful sounds radiate through Melmark.
By David Andrulonis

One of the greatest decisions in my life was to take a leave of absence from medical school in order to fully explore my interest in special education. It did not take long for me to realize that teaching special education was the ideal career for me. Medicine had attracted me for several reasons. I enjoyed the scientific and analytical aspects that are applied to individual patients. Working directly with people and having the ability to help others in some way has always been my most important career goal. After spending two years in medical school, including six months of direct patient care in clinical rotations, I obtained a true sense of what being a medical doctor is like. While I was impressed with what doctors are able to do for people, I was extremely disappointed in the amount of time they have to spend with each patient and the limited relationship that is formed.

Since the beginning of high school I have been interested in teaching, and particularly special education. As a high school student I volunteered at a summer program for children with behavioral problems. For two years I participated in a home visit program in which I spent afternoons with Sammy, a high school girl with severe cerebral palsy who communicates by spelling out her thoughts with her eyes, letter by letter. In medical school I spent my summer designing a health class curriculum and teaching children in West Philadelphia. Through these experiences I have seen many similarities between education and medicine. Both have significant scientific and analytical aspects. The potential to help others is immense. However, the difference of greatest importance to me is the amount of time teachers spend working directly with their students.

The work I do daily at Melmark as a teacher quickly confirmed my views on special education and easily convinced me to pursue this as my career. This past year at Melmark has been an exceptional learning experience. The majority of my time is spent in the classroom working with our students. I have also had the opportunity to work with many specialists from diverse fields in order to best accomplish the common goal of improving our students’ quality of life. The most enjoyable time for me is when I am working directly with our students. Observing their progress is my greatest reward.

This fall I began graduate studies in special education instruction. In my career I will strive to earn a reputation as a good teacher who is committed and caring. Through my efforts I hope to positively impact the lives of our students and their families. This will be done by teaching students useful skills, and more importantly, giving them purpose, pride, and self-worth.

From Med School To The Classroom...
We began our love affair with Melmark over five years ago. Our large family had recently moved and our new home sat adjacent to the fenced horse pastures of Melmark. Gazing out from our front porch, we felt blessed in the warmth of this idyllic setting. Little did we realize just how blessed our family would become under the influence of Melmark.

Our initial contact was made shortly after we settled in on Hunt Valley Lane. Soon we began visiting the folks at Pines, taking them to the mall and enjoying a movie. We'd take in a college or pro-basketball game with a couple of fellows from the Gate House. After each contact, we always left with a special feeling that comes when someone genuinely loves you.

These experiences became even more pronounced and our link to Melmark grew even stronger as our children began volunteering there. Our daughters Liz and Agnes began pitching in. When college beckoned them to distant places, the next in line, Mary Grace, then took up the tradition. Whether our girls were on the dance floor or poolside as lifeguards, they held, laughed and chattered away with their “Buds” at Melmark. What effect did this volunteer work have on their overall development as Christian women? Before Mary Grace left for college, she told a story:

“I think it is safe to say that most people don’t like Mondays. Usually, Monday means the end of the weekend and the return to school or work. Back to waking up early, rush hour traffic, short lunch breaks, and a load of work at home. I used to feel the same way until, during my sophomore year of high school, Monday became my favorite day of the week. No, I didn’t drop out after freshman year. I still had the same hectic Monday at school, but after school I started volunteering at Melmark.

At around seven o’clock on Monday nights, I would walk over to the gym for the “Club Melmark” dance. Here, we would laugh, jitterbug, and enjoy each other’s company. At one of the dances, I met someone who changed my life forever. Dana is one of the more highly functioning members of the Melmark community. At fifty-six years old, she had the same spunk and energy as a young child and was extremely easy to talk to. (She still is today.) She was always interested in what was going on in my life, and asked me the same questions, week after week, “How is the family doing?” “What tests do you have this week?” “Did you watch ER on Thursday?” and “When are we going to go to the movies again?” She always greeted me with an excited hello, followed by, “Your hair looks different. Did you cut it again?”

Her uninhibited joy in seeing me each week never ceased to brighten up my hectic Monday blues. Her innocent honesty made me laugh, like when she said, “I’m pretty good at tennis. Next time we play, I’ll teach you a few lessons.” Her constant cheerfulness naturally rubbed off on me. Her basic need for me to be involved in her life made me feel

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Swing Into Spring


Let the Dancing Begin...

The Pirates of Melmark

Express Yourself!
With Melmark

Saturday, June 16, 2001 -
Though cloudbursts several times released rain upon residents and visitors attending Melmark's annual Spring Festival, tropical storm Allison failed to dampen the crowd's good time and friendly spirits. Families of residents and staff alike deemed Melmark's 35th Anniversary Celebration and founder Miggy Krentel's 80th Birthday Bash a huge success!

The Melmark Players opened the day with a lively performance of "South Pacific," followed by birthday cake and a slide show tour through time. Outdoors, Pirate Pete's Moon Bounce, a Tropical Island Juice Bar, Trader Jack's Souvenir Shack, Pineapple Plantation Hayrides, craft and game booths, and Captain Cook's Luau Cove spread joy from one end of our 80-acre community to the other.

With props and scenery donated by Ron Flynn and his Do The Right Theme Display Company, and the unique entertainment of the Mandolino Hawaiian Review, co-sponsored by Pilot Air Freight and the Newtown Square Rotary, the day reflected the true spirit of community caring and involvement that has become a hallmark of Melmark special events. And what a fiery event we held! While the three-piece Hawaiian band and five-member dance troupe shared their cultural traditions, Hula dancing, Poi Ball, and the Limbo provided interactive audience participation for those daring enough to take part.

In addition to sponsors mentioned above, we would also like to thank Sam Coco and his friends from the Antique Auto Club of America for their nostalgic car show, and volunteers from the Newtown Square Rotary Club for graciously working our many interactive booths.

There is Nothing Like a Sister.
Bring On The Fun!
The Melmark Players opened the day with a lively performance of South Pacific, followed by birthday cake and a slide show tour through time.

Congratulations Bianca, Melmark's Athlete of the Year 2001

Warm Hearts Shine

Sharing Special Spring Moments

Thanks to Commerce Bank, our 2001/2002 Mission Sponsor
A Tribute to Katie Trainor

By Bob Trainor

Katie’s story is about people performing at their absolute best and at the highest levels of humanity. It is a story of people with a vision and a commitment to make that vision real. People dedicated through hard work and enormous patience to helping those that have difficulty helping themselves; people of generosity and compassion. Virtually all of these people are at Melmark, and the successes and pleasures Katie experienced during her lifetime are directly attributable to them.

I recall, in the early months of her life, how small, frag-ile, and uncomfortable she seemed. Each day was a struggle for her. The medical word on Katie was that she would live two to five years, never walk, never sit up, and never feed herself. There was little to be optimistic about until some dear friends, the Connelly family, introduced us to Melmark.

We visited Melmark and were over-whelmed by how the founders, Paul and Miggy Krentel, had taken an idea and made it real. They had created an environment where people, regardless of their limitations, were given the opportunity to maximize their potential. It was apparent then—as now—that Melmark was an exceptional place, a place like no other.

We certainly knew we had found the right place, but we first had to fight that tortuous battle within ourselves: to give up the day-to-day care of Katie to Melmark. It was not an easy fight. We knew, in our hearts, it was best for Katie, but we weren’t so sure about ourselves.

Ultimately, we made the choice: Katie was going to Melmark.

There have been very few days in my life where I have been overwhelmed with sadness, but one of them was the day Kathy and I delivered Katie to Melmark. We handed Katie to Paul and Miggy Krentel in Paul’s office. On that day, we entrusted Katie to Melmark, and Melmark has never—not once—let us down or betrayed that trust. We are eternally grateful. As painful as it was at that time, I came to know we had made the right decision for Katie and for us.

Early on at Melmark, Katie lived in an area known as Sunshine. During those years, Katie’s life metaphorically moved from darkness to sunshine. The clouds parted and the rays of light touched Katie and our entire family. In fact, Katie thrived at Melmark. Despite the nay-saying experts of yesteryear, Katie learned to sit up, to walk, to feed herself and to other-wise thrive, all of which were originally said not to be possible. I truly marveled at the progress she made and the care she was being given.

Katie’s teachers—and there have been several over the years—have been patient, caring and dedicated, and have worked endless hours to maximize Katie’s skills. They have done what others said was not possible. I have long said that Katie was one of the few people I know who was actually living up to her potential.
This was not an accident; it’s a tribute to the exceptional people here who worked so tirelessly with Katie. Katie specifically, and Melmark in general, have been a “reality check” for my wife, our daughters and me over many years. When the rest of the world seemed out of control, or there was anger or negative feelings in my heart, or problems seemed to be mounting up, spending time with Katie always gave me a better perspective on things. I would leave Melmark with a better sense of what was important and what was not, of what was worth worrying about and what was not, and above all else, the importance of treating all people with respect. This, at its core, is what Melmark is about. You can’t be here for any length of time and not be inspired or moved by Melmark. It’s a very special place.

It is only fitting that Katie died at Melmark. This was Katie’s home; this is where she thrived, and this is where the people are who allowed her—and in fact required her—to be all she could be.

Melmark is filled with “givers,” people who are dedicated to teaching and providing comfort to those who can’t always fend for themselves. You can’t work at Melmark for any length of time just because it is “a job.” It is too tough, too demanding to be just a job. Melmark is filled with selfless people doing the work of God, whomever their God may be. You can only be here if you are a giver, someone whose mind and heart allows you—no, requires you—to give more than you receive.

May God bless Katie Trainor, Melmark, and all of those current and former Melmark givers for making Melmark the “Home That Love Built.”

special. Just by being herself, Dana made me a better person. She awakened in me the realization that each person in this world has a gift to share.

When peers become fad oriented and culture conscious, Dana’s unique personhood, complete with her own set of values, reminds me to remain constant and focused on why I am here. Unknowingly, she made me thankful for unearned gifts bestowed on me. Today, thinking of her reminds me to use them wisely. Most of all, Dana has given me the little moments of happiness, laughter, and joy that are the treasures of life and make it worthwhile. Who knew that Mondays could be so great?

To have our children so touched by the Melmark life is a priceless gift of almost untold joy for us as parents. So… thanks, Melmark, for affording our family the experience of our “love affair” with all of you!
Today, 35 years after Paul and Miggy Krentel first opened their hearts to people with developmental disabilities, you may wonder why Melmark remains dependent on the generosity of others. While we do receive revenue from Federal, State, and local agencies, it is philanthropy that allows us to maintain and continually improve our clinical and staff-training and development programs, as well as our campus and community homes. Without the support of so many generous and loyal donors, we could not offer the level of quality in staff, programs, and services that has become the standard at Melmark.

Melmark’s philanthropic legacy has been rich, beginning with Miggy and Paul Krentel’s deep and abiding faith that people would step forward and help. Step forward they did, in numbers and levels of generosity that the Krentels could never have imagined would come their way. Those who lacked the time, talents, or treasure to contribute sent along a most important gift: their prayers for the success of the ministry.

Today, each philanthropic gesture remains essential. We’re deeply grateful for your ongoing support for special events, calls for volunteers, campaigns for capital improvements; and especially for the individuals, foundations, and corporations who support our Annual Appeal. Each request fulfills a discrete need.

The Annual Appeal, the cornerstone of our advancement efforts, provides the resources we depend upon to meet our increasing needs, fulfill our ministry, and provide the levels of service and care that are our benchmark. Special events like our recent Gala provide an opportunity for showcasing our successes and the individual wishes that clients and staff hold dear. Finally, special appeals are what they seem—requests for special
needs above and beyond our day-to-day functioning. These distinctions, though sometimes subtle, remain real.

Just during the past year, contributions enabled us to completely refurbish our Pines building from rooftop to foundation, including seven new, state-of-the-art bathrooms and the kitchen; purchase an additional horse for our Hippotherapy program; build a new walkway between the residences and the main house, enhancing the safety of all who traverse the campus; and install new campus-wide outdoor lighting fixtures.

We purchased a new community home; converted The Lodge into a “bed & breakfast” for use by our parents during their visits; began work on a new playground area; and were able to keep up with the ever-increasing program needs for new materials, equipment, and technology.

All of this is response to change, an ever-present challenge to our mission. The speed and effectiveness of our response, however, is determined by the amount of resources available to meet the challenge.

It is you who empower us to change the lives of those we serve, and for your continuing generosity, we are truly grateful.

*Arizona—our newest horse to Hippotherapy*

*The before and after at Pines*

*The beautiful renovations to The Lodge, a home away from home for our families.*
By Kate McConnell

“There is a balance and harmony in life. Feeling good is wonderful, but seeing that what you do can make a difference is the true reward.”

–H. Robert Marcus, Chairman, Melmark Board of Directors

Over the years, we have shared stories about Melmark—its vision, ministry, mission—stories about those we serve, their families, our staff, volunteers, and other supporters. We give readers a glimpse into so many lives, share our hopes and dreams, and thank all those who give of themselves so unselfishly.

Melmark’s Board of Directors, many of whom have given years of service, include several “behind the scenes” members whose collective talents, expertise and commitment impact our community far beyond the individual contributions of any one person. In turn, like so many others, Board Members’ lives change through their association with Melmark.

When Melissa Marcus was 13 years old, Bob Marcus and Audrey Flack began to look for a place where Melissa could spend her teen and adult years. They wanted a place where Melissa would live a healthy and happy life; a good and nurturing home. “We found that and much more at Melmark. We found a wonderful, secure, and safe environment for Melissa, not too far from our home in New York,” Bob recalls. The Marcus family felt confident that Melmark was a community with a family-like atmosphere that encouraged each person to be self-assured, independent, and resourceful.

Nine years ago, Bob Marcus’s interest and involvement in Melmark took on new meaning when he was asked to serve on the Board of Directors. He possessed a personal interest, that of a parent. He also knew his business background would provide the organization with valuable knowledge and expertise.

Bob saw the need to have parents and guardians more involved. He wanted to see to what extent residents’ lives could be enhanced.

Much of what he hoped when he joined the board is being realized today. In the years that followed, Bob, leading the board, worked very supportively with Dr. Donovan to expand Melmark’s programs and services. He believes Melmark is a community where people develop to their fullest potential and experience unparalleled opportunities for creative living. As programs continually evolve and grow, residents and staff alike share in the experience, reveling in their accomplishments and looking forward to an exciting and fulfilling tomorrow.

Bob and his wife Audrey have been generous Melmark benefactors. Their continuous support speaks to their dedication and devotion to their daughter and her home.

When asked about his involvement—the time he gives, the expertise he lends in his oversight of the Melmark Endowment and Charitable Trust, his financial generosity—Bob credits his upbringing and childhood. “As a young child, I was taught the importance of giving back. I learned to be thankful for what I had and the gifts life had given me. When I unexpectedly reached a point in my life where I had an ability to give, I realized that giving to help others just made sense.”

Bob continues to serve as Chairman of the Board.
He looks forward to Melmark’s future. Over the years, Melmark has demonstrated expertise in what we do. Today we possess a clear vision of our future. And Bob hopes we will soon attract many more people to join us on our journey. “It is important that Melmark continue to work with our neighbors, increasing their awareness of our mission and eliciting their support. Our neighbors’ lives will be enriched if they truly understand and know what we are all about.”

Melmark is fortunate to have the support, guidance, and friendship of Bob Marcus.
In the wake of the tragic events of September 11th, staff and students of Melmark united to create a beautiful tribute to our country. Teacher’s Aide Lisa Iannece, joined by her students, Measha and Jamie, literally took a hands-on approach in the design of their flag. In a time of such sadness, these students put their energy into a project that not only represented their creative abilities but also became a salute to their country and their freedom. Their patriotic design has been transformed into t-shirts with the slogan “Freedom Unites Us.” During the fall the t-shirts were sold to staff. Melmark will donate 50% of the sale price to non-profit programs in New York City.