Passing the Torch
Dear Families and Friends,

It is with great pleasure that we write to you as we celebrate a transition in leadership at Melmark. For nearly two decades, we have worked together to bring children and adults with intellectual disabilities throughout the country the most excellent services in the field. Through our shared leadership in Berwyn, Pennsylvania and Andover, Massachusetts, both Melmark service divisions have seen tremendous growth, not only in numbers of individuals served, but in the quality of programs as well.

As the torch is passed between us, we look back on the past seventeen years of progress with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Equally, we look forward to our future with hope and determination as we continue to build upon the excellent clinical programming for children and adults provided by Melmark’s highly qualified and credentialed staff.

In this magazine, you will read exciting news about services and events throughout the Melmark community. These stories, as wide-ranging as The Joybells’ Papal Performance on the world’s stage to the Special Olympics Torch Presentation to Melmark athletes to the family picnic in New England, are sure to renew your spirit and bring a smile to your face.

Also in the pages ahead, you will read about progress being made with Promises to Keep... The Campaign for Melmark; you will meet Mary Gene Clavin, a Melmark New England parent and one of our newest board members; you will see how Melmark’s research is improving the quality of services in the ABA field; and you will learn about our consultation services that are changing the lives of hundreds of families throughout the New England region.

While we celebrate this transition, we also promise to each of you that Melmark will always remain The Home that Love Built, providing a warm, nurturing environment and data-driven programs that promote the greatest independence possible for those we serve. Creating opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities is our life’s work, and we look forward to what the future holds for that shared mission.

Thank you for all you do to support the children and adults at Melmark.

Our warmest personal regards,

Joanne Gillis-Donovan, Ph.D. Rita Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA
President and CEO CEO-Elect
Mary Gene Clavin became part of the Melmark New England family more than five years ago when her daughter, Caroline, was enrolled in Melmark’s school and residential program. At that time, Caroline’s specific challenges and need for extensive support began to overwhelm both the local school system and the Clavin family.

Mary Gene, her husband, John and daughters, Abbie and Cassie, had been devoted to participating in Caroline’s daily care, and the void was profound when she left for Melmark. It was an adjustment for everyone involved. Once they saw Caroline interacting with dedicated professionals who understood her complex profile and who were able to teach her, they were overcome with a sense of relief. The progress Caroline has made is remarkable; she has adjusted well to life in her new school and residence. As a result, the Clavin family has been able to move forward.

In 2012, Mary Gene joined the Promises to Keep Capital Campaign Cabinet along with her husband John and has been an active fund-raiser for Melmark New England’s initiatives. Thanks to the generosity of many Clavin family members and friends, the current basement space at MNE will be transformed into the Clavin Center for Professional Development and Family Training; a state of the art auditorium for the purpose of staff trainings, family educational programs, Expert Speaker Series and graduate studies.

Raised North of Boston, Mary Gene received her BA from Boston College and is an avid BC Eagles fan. Her husband John is also a graduate, and daughters, Abbie and Cassie, are students at the university. Mary Gene and her family reside in Newbury, MA. Her career began in executive recruiting, followed by positions in advancement at the Pingree School, Babson College and Emmanuel College. Since 2011, Mary Gene has been a Senior Consultant, Executive Search at Development Guild/DDI of Brookline, MA, a national management consulting firm that partners with leading nonprofits to deliver strategy, talent and philanthropic resources.

Mary Gene was recently invited to join the board of Melmark, Inc., and Melmark New England where she will help guide the organization alongside our new CEO. We are pleased to have someone of her professional experience lend their expertise to Melmark. As a parent as well, Mary Gene’s perspective is invaluable to helping us fulfill our mission to the children and adults we serve, each and every day.
Smart, business-minded and passionate about evidence-based practices in the field of human services - Rita Gardner brings a wealth of knowledge to her new role as CEO-Elect. Most important, Rita holds the heart of Melmark’s mission at the core of her professional standards.

While leading her first group meeting with program directors in Melmark’s Berwyn, Pennsylvania service division, Gardner told staff, “This is my life’s work.” She went on to detail some of the extraordinary accomplishments made by her team at Melmark New England, detailing the similarities between work being done throughout the organization.

“At Melmark, we are dedicated to each and every child, adult and family served, as well as every member of our professional staff.”

Melmark’s Board of Directors selected Gardner to lead the organization after a national search and interviews with several candidates. The search came after Joanne Gillis-Donovan, Ph.D., announced her retirement after nearly two decades with the organization. “Rita brings a wealth of knowledge to this role,” said Gillis-Donovan. “Her leadership, compassion and focus on fiscal prudence are all qualities that will ensure Melmark’s future in providing life-changing services to children and adults with intellectual disabilities,” Gillis-Donovan added.

In addition to leading Melmark New England to an extraordinary position of national prominence in providing services to people with disabilities, Gardner holds a Masters of Public Health from Boston University. She has dedicated nearly three decades to the field of community-based services for children and adults with the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders, acquired brain injuries, neurological disorders and challenging behaviors and is known throughout the disability community as a tireless advocate for services. Gardner currently serves on Massachusetts Governor Charles Baker’s Special Commission Relative to Autism, an appointment Gardner earned in 2010 from then-Governor Deval Patrick.

Gardner has authored articles for professional journals and made a number of presentations on topics from program expansion, behavior management and transitioning students with brain injury back into the community. She has provided project consultation to nationally-renowned organizations and has been instrumental in the organizational success of Melmark’s programs and services throughout the years. Gardner says she is honored to carry on the torch to ensure the organization’s continued success and growth.

“I am proud to lead a provider that continues to keep its priority on the individuals it serves. Melmark is committed to excellence in its care systems for every individual we serve - every day.”
On Sunday, September 27, The Joybells of Melmark made their debut on the world’s stage, performing during The World Meeting of Families’ celebration along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. The Joybells opened Sunday’s celebrations leading up to the Papal Mass. More than 850,000 people watched from the crowded parkway as The Joybells performed “Holy, Holy, Holy” and “Joyful, Joyful” on the main stage at Eakins Oval. Thousands more saw the performance on social media, shared with people around the world.

This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the musicians, who practiced for months and shared in our entire community’s excitement leading up to the event. Melmark Director of Adult Day Programs, Liza Jones, says she is beyond proud of The Joybells. “They are a true testament to the fact that every single person has a talent to share with the world,” said Jones. “During their performance, The Joybells showed the world that love and opportunity are all anyone needs to make a difference in this world.”
New Partners for Melmark

One of the many benefits of Promises to Keep...The Campaign for Melmark has been the increase in new donors who have joined us in support of this historical initiative.

The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust

This year, a Melmark family recommended the organization be considered for a major grant from The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust. The foundation awarded Melmark $200,000 to support its endowment, one of the goals under the current Campaign. This grant will ensure continued, long-term success for our organization.

Melmark CEO-Elect, Rita Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA, says the Trust’s grant will positively impact many lives. “The William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust will support continued growth and longevity in our wide-ranging, highly-sophisticated clinical programs. These programs increase confidence and build valuable life and work skills,” said Gardner. “With the development of these skills, each individual served at Melmark is allowed the opportunity to live the most independent life possible. They’re able to be active participants in their communities.”

Clay Buchholz Foundation

In a similar scenario, Cabinet Member and Melmark Board Member, Larry Cancro, has been instrumental in building a relationship with the Clay Buchholz Foundation.

Clay Buchholz is a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox and has a relative with autism. His foundation has provided support to Autism Speaks in the past and hosts the Buchholz Bowl each year. This year, the event raised $200,000 of which Clay and his wife Lindsay designated $20,000 for Melmark New England. At the end of August, Lindsay visited Melmark to present the gift, indicating that this is just the beginning of the relationship.

Progress Toward Our Goal

Goal: $20,000,000
Commitments: $11,252,526
Pending Requests: $15,090,000
Donors: 343
Construction Update

The Melmark Community in Berwyn has been alive with the rumble of trucks and the mass movement of earth, as work proceeds on Promises to Keep Phase I projects.

Crews are paving roadways, a welcome sight to employees and families who have been dealing with mud, dirt and construction vehicles. While these are sometimes a nuisance, everyone is thrilled to see the project reaching new levels of completion. At this point, roadways and curbing from the Center Circle entrance, along Garden Way and up Lodge Lane to the intersection of Orchard Way are defined with new curbing and are being graded for paving. Also, new road configurations are in place with drop off zones in front of residences.

According to Facilities Director, Jim Calvarese, the plan is to have the roads and the Orchard Parking lot complete before Winter.

“We are thrilled to have 100 new parking spaces in the new lot adjacent to The Melmark School and The Meadows, creating a new parking lot for 137 vehicles. When the work of Phase I is completed, we will have added 176 new spaces throughout the Campus,” said Calvarese.

In addition, work is underway to complete a new water and sewer service system, as well as other underground facilities including conduits for internet connections. Retaining walls behind the Main Building are being constructed to make way for the renewed loop road that provides access for school buses and transport vehicles.

The work of Phase I is scheduled for completion by Fall 2016. Work continues on the following:

- Installation of remaining storm water piping
- Base paving
- New curbing
- New sidewalks

Curbing and newly graded roadway approaching Marcus House

100 new parking spaces to make parking more convenient for staff and families
Melmark New England’s Parent Advisory Council meeting and Family Picnic was a huge success. Beautiful weather provided the perfect backdrop for parents to visit with each other, hear school news, learn about upcoming events and get an update on advocacy issues. Once students were dismissed for the day, they joined their families for some fun in the sun, burgers, hot dogs, games and activities that resulted in smiles all around. We were so glad to have volunteers from the Charles River Laboratories there to support the event.
Building Independence in Daily Living

Opportunities in The Kitchen

Adults at Melmark are getting the opportunity to learn independent meal preparation, all thanks to a local business owner. Chef Art Roman of The Kitchen Workshop in Paoli has generously donated his time, opening his kitchen to the individuals we serve. Each month, Chef Art hosts six adults in his workshop, sharing valuable cooking skills to promote more independent lives. From salads to homemade chili, grilled pizzas and desserts, Chef Art is helping adults with intellectual disabilities whip up hot, delicious meals from scratch. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Chef Art for this incredible opportunity.
Sean was nine years old when he first came to Melmark’s day and residential program for children. Upon admission, Sean displayed significant challenging behaviors including aggression and the inability to cope well with change. He also struggled following direction when going for walks, as he would often try to continue walking away from his staff despite requests to stay with them. Because of his challenging behaviors, restraints were common for Sean.

Melmark’s day and residential staff worked together to develop an individualized plan to ensure Sean’s growth and independence. They began with a de-escalation procedure in which staff helped Sean realize when he needed to take deep breaths and focus. Eventually, he learned these self-management skills. Staff also worked with Sean to become more tolerant to change.

Today, Sean is a 25-year-old, verbal adult who enjoys office support work in Melmark’s vocational program. Sean particularly enjoys shredding, making photocopies and greeting visitors at The Please Touch Museum in Philadelphia. He lives in an apartment in a nearby neighborhood with two roommates and greatly enjoys being part of the community. Sean regularly attends sporting events and goes to the movies. He is known as being flexible, understanding when events are cancelled due to uncontrollable circumstances. Sean has been able to move from requiring any physical protective procedures and has independently regulated his anxiety with self-calming strategies for more than two years.

His future goals in The Christopher Maurer Vocational Program including obtaining a regular, paid job, being able to prepare meals independently and continuing to build social relationships with friends.

Sean is known by Melmark’s day and residential staff, as well as those in the community, as being a genuinely funny young man. He loves all holidays, especially Halloween, when he never misses the chance to don a spectacular costume and celebrate with his friends. Sean’s success at Melmark has been remarkable, thanks to his hard work, as well as that of his staff and family.

“The staff of Melmark are exceptional. We lived our whole lives in NY and had to look at places outside of the state that could meet his needs because others couldn’t. Our family was able to stay a family because of Melmark. Over the past 16 years that Sean has been there he has made strides that he couldn’t have made anywhere else.”

-Katie McGuire,
Sean’s Mother
Sam came to Melmark New England in 2008 after attending Andover, MA Public Schools for many years. When Cory Whelan, MNE Clinical Coordinator, met Sam four years ago, he described him as a handsome, energetic young man who loved to play catch. Sam had very limited communication skills and engaged in high rates of self-injury and aggression. He needed frequent physical intervention to keep himself and others safe. Sam spent a good portion of his day wearing a protective helmet to prevent him from causing tissue damage to his head from self-injury. At times, he required three staff to help him transition from one location to another safely. Still, it was impossible not to love working with Sam. His potential to communicate and engage in adaptive behaviors was evident even then, and he hasn't disappointed us.

Now, thanks to intense communication and behavioral programming, Sam uses sign language and modified icons to express his wants and needs. He no longer engages in high rates of self-injury or aggression, and he spends the majority of his time not wearing his helmet. Sam transitions throughout the school building using his gait trainer with only minor assistance from staff. He spends his time learning, working, and socializing. Sam has worked very hard to achieve the success he enjoys today.

When Cory met with Frank Bird and Rita Gardner late last year to discuss why he wanted to return to Melmark in a clinical role, they asked him how he came to that decision. His answer was, “Sam.” Cory participated in, and witnessed first-hand, the power of creative and collaborative clinical programming and how it can change a young man’s life. It inspired him to get back into the field full-time. All of us at MNE consider ourselves very lucky to have clinical and educational staff members like Cory who are so mission driven and dedicated to students like Sam.

Sam will celebrate his 22nd birthday in early 2016. He and his parents, Scott and Catherine, look forward to his transition to MNE’s Adult Day Program. Sam will move into a new adult residence, Hampshire House, which was graciously supported by his father’s employer, Ray Lawton and Lawton Welding. We are grateful to Lawton Welding, along with their vendor and contractor friends who provided in-kind labor and materials to renovate and significantly upgrade this home for five young adults.

“The care of a special needs child is one of the most difficult undertakings imaginable - fraught with literal bumps, bruises, cuts and scrapes, mental and physical exhaustion....day in and day out only to come back again tomorrow and to do it again, relentlessly with dogged determination, never giving up and never giving in...hoping against hope, yet finding tremendous joy in the slightest seed of improvement which ultimately turns into something more than previously imagined. This is sacrifice. Thank you to the entire Melmark staff for showing our son this relentless determination and for never giving up. We are forever grateful.”

-Scott and Catherine Nolin
Sam’s Parents
Consultation Services at Melmark New England provide a variety of outreach resources to communities across Massachusetts. Much of the work done by our consultants is with public school systems and is geared towards improving the education of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Consultants work with public school teachers and administrators to design educational services that meet evidence-based practice standards and include:

- Assisting educators in designing social skills programming
- Leading creation of individual programs for students with ASD
- Training para-professionals in methods of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Providing professional development to school staff
- Conducting program evaluations to determine efficacy of services

Today, job performance standards for positions serving students on the spectrum within the Lawrence School District include best practice credentialing and training. Principals utilize MNE’s available services and technical support as part of an “open architecture” model. District-wide training, workshops and Registered Behavior Technician training has supported the district as it continues to strive to meet the needs of all its students.

It is exciting to be part of the growth for this diverse and dynamic large urban district. With 8% of the district’s 13,900 students diagnosed with ASD and 2,471 serviced through Individualized Education Plans, there is a great need for our expertise and guidance.

**Ethan: A Success Story**

- Began receiving Melmark’s home-based services at age four
- Limited language
- Not toilet-trained
- Aggressive behaviors
- 6-9 hours of direct services and 2 hours of parent training weekly

After only one year of receiving MNE’s services, Ethan uses the toilet and has increased verbal skills. His aggressive behavior has decreased to a point that he now enjoys going into the community with his family. Ethan continues to work on daily living skills to build independence.

While MNE consultation staff have traditionally provided outreach services to public schools throughout Massachusetts, given the passing of ARICA legislation in 2011, outreach has expanded to working directly with children with ASD and their families in home and community settings through insurance-funded services. Expansion of these services is occurring rapidly, and the consultation department is growing to meet the need.
We are grateful for our many corporate and community partners who assist with projects big and small throughout our community. Below is a look at just some of the ways volunteers are making an impact at Melmark.
Melmark Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer Frank L. Bird, M. Ed., BCBA has been named the 2015 recipient of the prestigious Jerry Shook Practitioner Award. The announcement was made at the 2015 Annual Berkshire Association for Behavior Analysis and Therapy (BABAT) Conference.

The Jerry Shook Practitioner Award is given in recognition of the work of a regional practitioner whose achievements have enhanced the value of sound professional credentials in the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to make an exceptional contribution to the field. As founder and first CEO of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), the late Dr. Jerry Shook guided the development of certification programs for practitioners of ABA that meet well-established, rigorous standards for valid credentialing programs.

Frank was recognized with the Jerry Shook Practitioner Award for his many contributions to the field of community-based human services, a field in which he has over 30 years experience. He began his career working one-on-one with some of the most challenging cases in the system before advancing to the position of chief clinical officer for Melmark. Frank’s work has been instrumental to the development of the least restrictive, community-based day, residential, vocational and rehabilitative programs for individuals with autism, intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and other neurological diagnoses. Frank also leads the ABA field through teaching appointments at the graduate level and through mentorship at Melmark’s service divisions in Berwyn, Pennsylvania and Andover, Massachusetts.

One of the many people who nominated Frank for this award said, “I can only strive to be as effective as Frank in the life-changing programming he has developed. Frank has dedicated his life to servicing some of the most challenging students in the country. He is able to fade protective equipment, decrease problem behavior, increase functional skills and ensure the student has the best quality of life.”

The award committee made the following statement:

“Frank emerged as the top nominee because of the breadth of his accomplishments, which include the development of numerous clinical systems, research, staff training and mentorship, among other contributions. His record’s distinguishing feature was the positive impact he has made on a large group of individuals (staff and clients) and the increased access to care resulting from his efforts.”

Frank’s focus on developing systems of care, his research and his dedication to giving back to the field continue to make a global impact on the lives of children and families affected by challenging behaviors.
Melmark New England’s new vocational program, Green Thumbs, is based at Konjoian Greenhouses, a family-owned horticultural business in Andover. This program will offer students and young adults vocational training including propagating plants from seeds and clippings, potting, pruning, creating succulent plant displays, raised bed gardening, packaging for retail merchandising and more.

Dave Konjoian, longtime proprietor, notes, “Having worked in the past with special needs populations through the New England Horticultural Therapy organization, we know the value of this endeavor to help each of Melmark’s students and adult participants reach their fullest potential. To be able to put available greenhouse space to such use allows us to fulfill our purpose to give back to the community. We look forward to a productive and rewarding relationship with Melmark New England for many years to come.”

Melmark is grateful to the Konjoian Family for providing this opportunity to the children and young adults who participate in Melmark New England’s programs. Gaining on-the-job skills will help shape each individual’s future, creating opportunities for possible paid employment in the future.

About the Cover
The PA Special Olympics presented a commemorative torch to Melmark Athletes. The torch was used during the Unified Relay Across America, carrying the Flame of Hope across the U.S. for the Special Olympics World Summer Games.
The Tenth Anniversary fore Melmark New England Golf Tournament was held on Monday, July 27, 2015 at Andover Country Club. Despite some challenges with the weather and the impact on the afternoon and evening programs, the event was a great success once again. We are proud to have celebrated this milestone which was made possible because of the outstanding commitment of the Alex Family, sponsors and donors, Andover Country Club and our amazing MNE families.

As one of the premier golf events in the region, we were pleased to host the Boston Red Sox World Series trophies and have Rene Rancourt, whose rendition of the National Anthem inspired everyone present, join us once again this year. With legendary sportscaster Bob Lobel as Master of Ceremonies, we paid tribute to Jim and Angela Alex for founding the tournament, and we honored Larry Cancro for his decade of unwavering support, advocacy and commitment to Melmark New England.

We are excited to announce that fore Melmark New England has raised more than $2M which has enabled us to increase the quality and breadth of the programs and services we provide to hundreds of children, adolescents and adults. We thank each parent, family and staff who made donations, came to the event or volunteered. Save the date for next year’s tournament, July 25, 2016.
On October 5, the Greater Philadelphia life sciences and business communities gathered for the Tenth Annual Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Classic to benefit Melmark. Once again, the tournament’s Title Sponsor was Accenture. We were also pleased to have other major sponsor support, including SAP, which served as Co-Presenting Sponsor. The Classic, founded in memory of the late Hubert J.P. Schoemaker, a leader and advocate in the region’s life sciences community, has raised more than $3.5 million for children and adults with intellectual disabilities at Melmark since its inception in 2006.

This year’s event included 264 golfers who played on three premier golf courses: Waynesborough Country Club, St. Davids Golf Club and Gulph Mills Golf Club. Golf was followed by a cocktail reception, silent and live auctions, and dinner at Waynesborough. We would like to personally thank all of our sponsors, as well as each member of the Schoemaker Classic Advisory Board for their tireless work to make this event a success.
Sharing Research

Conferences and Presentations

Melmark’s senior staff contribute to the global research field by conducting training sessions in Applied Behavior Analysis and special education for local and national professionals; presenting research posters, papers, and symposia at regional and national conferences; and publishing research studies in peer-reviewed research journals. Below is a look at some of our recent presentations.

ABA International, May 2015: Members of Melmark’s Clinical Team who presented on topics ranging from identifying symptoms of bipolar disorder in children with ASD to unique approaches to treating pica

Expert Speaker Series:
Thomas Zane, Ph.D., BCBA-D, presenting “An Ethical Obligation to be Empirical: Our Philosophy of Life, Perspective on Treatment and the Driving Force Behind Our Work”

Melmark New England Poster Day: Clinician, Michael Nazzaro, sharing his research and findings with a fellow staff to expand opportunities in the classroom and in residences

Autism New Jersey, October 2015: Samantha Smith and Jen Croner, M.S.Ed., BCBA, from Melmark’s Professional Development Department, presenting on differential responding of students in individual versus group instruction

Dr. William H. Ahearn to present at MNE Expert Speaker Series event in 2016

Melmark Poster Day: Will Green and Danielle Marshall presenting their research and findings

Expert Speaker Series Events

Jan. 14, 2016 - New England
Response Blocking for Stereotypy
William H. Ahearn, Ph.D., BCBA-D

February 4, 2016 - Pennsylvania
Organizational Behavior Management
Don Hantula, Ph.D.

February 11, 2016 - New England
Brain Injury, Behavioral Neurology and Behavior Analysis
Harvey E. Jacobs, Ph.D., CLCP

Melmark offers continuing education programs for parents, staff and professionals in the communities we serve. These include:

- Expert speaker series in Applied Behavior Analysis
- Annual Conference
- Trainings and workshops
From a generous gift made by the wife of Boston Red Sox pitcher, Clay Buchholz, to The Joybells’ appearance on The World Meeting of Families stage during Pope Francis’s visit, Melmark continues to be the focus of many positive media reports. This coverage, featured on television, radio, print and online, highlights the abilities of the children and adults we serve and raises awareness of Melmark’s mission to millions of new audience members, not only in our communities, but around the world.

This page includes a snapshot of just some of the coverage leveraged this past quarter, including donated billboard space for the Tenth Annual Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Classic for Melmark.
Save the Date!

The Melmark Family Christmas Party
Sunday, December 13
1:30 p.m. / Berwyn, PA
The Melmark Players

Melmark New England Holiday Show
Friday, December 11
10:30 a.m. / Andover, MA

Dream Maker’s Ball 2016
Saturday, April 16
7:00 p.m.
The Hyatt at The Bellevue, Philadelphia

Celebrating Melmark’s 50th Anniversary!