Melmark’s Frontline Heroes and The Significant Impact of COVID-19
Melmark’s Mission

Melmark is a multi-state human service provider with premier private special education schools, professional development, training and research centers. We are committed to enhancing the lives of individuals with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families by providing exceptional evidence-based and applied behavior analytic services to every individual, every day.

About the Cover:

Melmark’s highly skilled staff across divisions in Pennsylvania, New England and the Carolinas have maintained their mission-first focus throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. Every member of Melmark’s team, from direct support professionals and facilities staff to healthcare and senior leadership, have worked tirelessly, since the emergence of COVID-19 in our communities, to keep the children and adults we serve healthy and safe, engaged in skills building, connected to their families, and happy.

This publication highlights just a few of the ways our staff are maintaining focus on Melmark’s core commitments. From living in residential programs during quarantine periods to ensure a continuum of care to learning and executing constantly evolving virus mitigation protocols, Melmark staff are true healthcare heroes.

Melmark is Mission First. Every Individual, Every Day.

Your support, no matter how big or small, makes a significant impact on the lives of the individuals we serve.
As we continue to usher in 2021, we see hope because of our Melmark heroes. In this issue of the Melmark Messenger, you will read about just a few of the mission-first moments we have been so moved to see emerge from our day and residential programs along the East Coast. There are not enough pages to share all of these stories, but we have tried to capture the essence of the incredible work continuing to take place throughout the Melmark community. From the compassionate care of our highly skilled workforce to senior leadership's focus on evidence-based practices and following the science to ensure best outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic and every day, there is integrity in everything we do.

When the COVID-19 pandemic first emerged in the US, we quickly armed ourselves with as much information as possible from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and a number of other national, state and local regulatory agencies. Our teams then utilized that data to inform decisions about everything from daily program operations, visitation restrictions, COVID-19 testing protocols, the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE), facilities redesign, travel guidelines for staff and families, activities of daily living for those we serve, and a hyper-vigilant focus on all aspects of COVID-19 mitigation. It has been an exhausting past year, but our staff have not faltered. I continue to be humbled by their mission-first focus on maintaining the health and safety of the individuals we serve, their families, and one another.

I have also been moved by the generosity displayed by the Melmark community. Words simply cannot express my gratitude for the historic gift made by two individuals who have enjoyed a life well-lived at Melmark. In the pages ahead, you will read more about the $21.5 million endowment gift from the Anne and Brutus Kenan fund to further secure Melmark's mission well into the future. You will also read about how one family's entire neighborhood coordinated a gift drive to place presents under the Christmas tree for the children and adults who live in Melmark residences. Other families had hot meals delivered to our mission-first staff while some supported our sweets for superheroes efforts, sewed masks, sought out PPE, and sent in notes of gratitude. These are rainbows in the storm, and I remain in awe of the sense of community I continue to see, a bond strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are grateful for the support of so many stakeholders, and we celebrate this new year with a renewed sense of mission-first commitment as we look toward a brighter year. As we continue to focus on the hope of 2021, we will follow the science in everything we do, from vaccinations to continued virus mitigation measures. We will continue to work to provide a safe and healthy community and are committed to doing our very best to keep our individuals and employees safe.

Sincerely,

Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA
President and CEO
Since March 2020, Melmark has spent more than a million dollars in unplanned expenditures on COVID-19 testing kits and personal protective equipment (PPE). Ongoing testing and use of PPE ensures optimal virus mitigation within our programs.

In addition to the cost of testing and PPE at divisions in Pennsylvania, New England and the Carolinas, Melmark has spent nearly a million more dollars on retrofitting existing program space, increasing sanitization measures and creating isolation units.

The cost of hero pay, staffing bonuses, extended time off benefits, and short term disability is quickly approaching $1M.
The cost of COVID-19 on Melmark’s programs continues to grow, surpassing $3M in 2020 alone. Your support helps offset these unplanned expenditures. Melmark is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible. To learn more about supporting our work, visit www.melmark.org/donate.

“I am always inspired by the work of Melmark’s mission-first direct support professionals. I am even more so during this public health crisis. Melmark’s staff are superheroes in every sense of the word. They are often the invisible essential workers keeping children and adults healthy, safe and academically engaged. I could not be more proud to be working alongside this ‘League of Heroes’ to promote best outcomes for those we serve.”

-Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA
Melmark President and CEO
March 2020: Preparing and Pivoting

When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Massachusetts, the Melmark team immediately began taking proactive and aggressive steps to ensure virus mitigation within our programs. Securing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as N95 masks, non-porous medical gowns, extra gloves, goggles and face shields proved difficult, causing a creative twist on procurement and hours on hold, tracking orders and shipments over the phone. Some of the most interesting sources of these materials included race car teams, suddenly putting the brakes on their operations due to the pandemic; sneaker companies stepping up to manufacture masks during a global shortage; and family members and staff using their personal time to scour hardware store shelves.

Senior leadership members read countless guidance, studies and articles while tracking real-time data themselves, all to get ahead of the virus. Melmark's mission-first team, under the leadership of Rita M. Gardner, President and CEO, developed internal guidance, revised existing protocols for day and residential programs, and worked around the clock to ensure maximum COVID-19 mitigation within Melmark's programs. Rita's Master's Degree in Public Health proved extremely beneficial, as she led Melmark's highly skilled staff through a first-of-its-kind scenario for the organization.

Within these first days of preparing and pivoting, Melmark New England lost over 60% of its direct care workforce due to a number of factors including dependent care issues resulting from the closing of public schools, other illness, required self-quarantine, and positive COVID-19 tests. Leadership rapidly changed staffing plans, temporarily closed day programs and restricted visitors, all in line with constantly evolving guidance from multiple agencies at the national, regional and local levels.

The health and safety of the children, adults and families Melmark serves, as well as that of Melmark's mission-first staff, continues to be at the forefront of every decision made by senior leadership.

When an MNE residential staff tested positive for COVID-19 in late March, it was quickly determined that sending all 13 exposed staff to their own homes to quarantine would create a significant residential workforce depletion. With eight days remaining since initial contact exposure, eight staff in the home volunteered to quarantine with residents. Staff tracked one another's health, as well as that of the residents, by performing symptom screenings every two hours over the following eight days. Leadership and healthcare staff assisted via video conferencing to limit additional exposure.

Melmark parents made contactless meal deliveries and decorated the front door with messages of thanks. On the final day of quarantine, parents coordinated a socially-distanced thank you parade.
April 2020: Adapting and Appreciating

Melmark Education professionals at all divisions taught classes remotely following Governors’ Orders in MA, PA and NC to close schools in mid-March. By April, staff were equipped with the tools necessary to reach all students who were at their family’s home. Since the onset of remote instruction, Melmark has spent more than $61,000 to support this mode of curriculum delivery.

Students residing in Melmark residences continue to receive programming within their residence during periods of day program closure. This continuum of services is important for all children, especially those who attend Melmark’s specialized special education programs.

Throughout the month of April, Melmark’s COVID-19 Task Force, a group of professionals across divisions, held virtual meetings seven days a week to remain ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic. This team focused on all aspects of virus mitigation and service delivery, including protocols for positive cases, contact tracing, daily symptom screenings, sanitizing measures, remote and in-person service delivery, virtual IEP meetings, telehealth procedures, and communications to all stakeholders, just to name a few. The team coordinated staff and family town hall Zoom sessions, as well as weekly information dissemination measures to ensure a clear line of communication to all families, staff, board members, donors and other stakeholders.

Members of the COVID-19 Task Force worked with their individual departments to ensure all pertinent information shared in these meetings was communicated to every level of the organization. This team’s work ensured efficiency in adapting to all guidance at the national, state and local level and supported best outcomes in regard to COVID-19 mitigation. As Governors’ Orders extended stay-at-home orders through the end of the academic year, Melmark was prepared to meet each individual’s needs regardless of whether they were living in a Melmark residence or at home with their family.

Melmark’s Rehabilitative Services Team coordinated regular outdoor activities to ensure continued skills growth and engagement.

Super Meals and Sweets for Superheroes included donations from local restaurants and bakeries as well as donor-supported deliveries.
May 2020: Advocating and Advancing

Nearly seventy days into the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government had not yet designated a single dollar of emergency relief specifically for Medicaid-funded disability providers. Melmark called on its families, friends and other supporters to advocate for the HEROES Act to become law. This funding was vital, as Melmark and other providers faced a 50% reduction in reimbursement funding for the remainder of fiscal year 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. This unanticipated loss was created when day programs were ordered closed and federal waiver fund matches were not paid.

In addition to advocating for its own mission-first staff, Melmark, under the leadership of President and CEO Rita Gardner, expanded focus to the greater landscape of disability providers. Working with the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools (maaps), a proposal to reopen MA schools safely before fall was created. Still, children’s and adult day programs across Melmark’s service divisions in MA, PA and the Carolinas remained closed while residential programs continued to restrict visitors.

The clouds did part during May, as Melmark saw a flurry of activity surrounding the advancement of the organization. The spring appeal, themed “Planting the Seeds for Tomorrow” was in full swing. Volunteers continued to support staff through any means they could. Some donated money or sewed masks while others created notes of thanks and delivered treats for distribution. Melmark celebrated Nurses’ and Teachers’ Appreciation Week across divisions.

Perhaps the most exciting development of May was when PA Governor Tom Wolf lifted restrictions on the construction sector. This allowed work on the new Melmark School on Melmark’s Berwyn campus resumed. This renewed activity on such a vital project helped maintain focus on the preservation of Melmark’s legacy in being a mission-based provider for every individual, every day.

While some important projects resumed in May, Melmark leadership continued to monitor updates from governors in all three states that are home to Melmark’s service divisions. During this time of monitoring, Melmark teams at every level of the organization were planning for its day programs to resume in a safe a seamless manner.
June 2020: Supporting Superhero Staff

In June, and throughout the pandemic, advocacy efforts more acutely focused on direct support staff at Melmark’s service divisions in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and the Carolinas and beyond. As part of that advocacy, Rita Gardner testified before legislators in a call to action to better support essential frontline workers at Melmark and other human service providers. Many family members joined in advocating for Melmark’s superhero staff, resulting in COVID-19 relief packages for intellectual and disability /autism services. While the relief funds do not cover all of the significant expenses as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they do help offset the financial burden. We continue to need everyone's help in advocating for Melmark's highly skilled staff and mission-first work.

Supporting the Call to Action Against Systemic Racism

In addition to advocating for direct care staff, the summer months also brought about a renewed need for advocacy to ensure racial equity throughout our country. Rita’s advocacy over the past two decades has included extensive writing of policy to ensure equal access to evidence-based services. This work has resulted in a significant shift in the landscape of care, making widespread changes to a system that has not historically offered equal opportunities. Melmark's commitment to demonstrating equity in everything we do continues.

Melmark Carolinas welcomed secondary students back to the classroom in mid-June, with elementary students heading back to in-person school the following week.

Residential visitation restrictions at Melmark Pennsylvania and Melmark New England eased to the yellow phase in June. This meant families could once again see their loved ones in person, although visits were outdoors and physical contact remained restricted.

Universal COVID-19 testing measures began in June. For individuals who live at Melmark, testing was administered by Melmark’s highly skilled healthcare team to ensure comfort and familiarity of staff and to minimize community exposure.

Melmark’s recovery and reopening plan also included reducing program area sizes, reconfiguring physical spaces, and implementing universal protocols across the organization to ensure maximum virus mitigation.
Three months into the pandemic, Melmark’s senior leadership team and highly skilled staff were preparing for program reentry. With protocols for a measured return to in-person services, and with physical program reconfigurations, staff at every level of the organization worked together to ensure a safe reopening of programs in New England, Pennsylvania and the Carolinas.

At Melmark New England, the first cohort of students returned to the school building on July 20. The return of laughter and footsteps echoing through the halls was a welcome sight, and while we could not see one another’s faces, we know there were many smiles under those masks!

Melmark Carolinas students returned to school in groups of two students per classroom to ensure optimal virus mitigation. In Pennsylvania, traditional graduation ceremonies were replaced with graduation parades outside students’ residences.

As visitations restrictions continued to ease, students and adults at all three divisions enjoyed a renewed focus on outdoor visits, both on Melmark’s grounds and in the community. Individuals even participated in the Social Distance Dash, getting together outside in the sunshine to walk in support of Melmark.
By August, students and adults at Melmark Pennsylvania returned to the classroom and day programs in staggered groups, working to ensure those with the greatest need for in-person services returned in the first cohort. This required a great deal of collaboration and coordination between the Melmark team and families, all to ensure ongoing safety for the entire Melmark community.

Also in August, Melmark New England welcomed adults back to in-person services. As more individuals returned to programs at all three of Melmark's service divisions, we began to see light at the end of the long, dark tunnel created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Melmark leadership and staff remained hyper-vigilant in their approach at virus mitigation.

“COVID-19 has not changed Melmark’s mission. It has only changed how we deliver that mission. I am extremely proud of each student and adult who attends programs at Melmark. Their flexibility and resilience, along with the collaboration of their families, have shown us all that overcoming life’s obstacles, even the most unimaginable, is possible. I am humbled by how the entire Melmark has come together during the most challenging time in our history.”

-Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA
Melmark President and CEO
If there was one silver lining to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was our ability to reach the broader Melmark community wherever they were throughout the first six months of this historic event and beyond. Melmark’s Coffee with the CEO series proved to be a successful way for President and CEO, Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA to share live updates in real-time to the organization’s philanthropic partners. With donors positioned all across the country and even internationally, these virtual sessions provided more flexibility for Melmark stakeholders who wanted to learn about how they could support the mission-first work continuing despite the extraordinary landscape created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Family meetings, Individualized Education Program (IEP) sessions, and staff town halls also went virtual, creating a more efficient mode of communication about vital information that was changing at a lightning-fast pace. While dissemination of information was optimized during this time, Melmark’s highly skilled staff also got creative, learning new technology to ensure families did not miss a loved one’s birthday or other special celebration.

On September 29, 2020, Melmark New England students emerged from their classrooms to look up at the skies for a treat! Above the Clouds (ATC) offers ‘Dream Flyovers’ to children facing particularly challenging circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The organization partners with "Local firefighters and police to add a drive-by component to planned flyovers to create what ATC calls, “a full ground-to-air friendship mission.” These missions have benefited more than 200 children across Massachusetts and New Hampshire, including some very excited young audience members from Melmark!

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Thanks to the golfers and donors who helped MNE raise over $130,000 during this event!
The annual fore Melmark New England Golf Tournament also broke new ground, given regulations surrounding social distancing. In addition to the typical in-person play at Andover Country Club, the tournament also offered a virtual element, utilizing the 18birdies app. Golfers from as far away as Ireland were able to participate in this year’s event.

Also new this year was the fore Melmark New England Jeep. Thanks to McGovern Chrysler-Jeep-Dodge-Ram and Wrap Solutions of Woburn, MA for this creative sponsorship.

November 2020: Signature Events with a Twist

Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Classic
Celebrating 15 Years of Benefiting Melmark

A socially distanced 15th Annual Hubert J.P. Schoemaker Classic took place on Monday, October 19, 2020 at Philadelphia Country Club and Gulph Mills Golf Club. Established in memory of Hubert Schoemaker, a pioneer in the life sciences industry, and to honor the organization who served his daughter Maureen for 28 years, the Classic raises critical ongoing mission support dollars for Melmark.

This year’s Classic was more integral than ever, given unplanned expenditures and losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Classic, despite the challenges of 2020, raised over $217,500 in net proceeds. Since its inception, the Classic has raised over $4.5M to support the individuals served at Melmark Pennsylvania.

To sponsor or participation in the 2021 event, email Melmark New England Director of Advancement, Ellen M. Kallman at ekallman@melmarkne.org.

www.melmarkne.org/fore

To sponsor or participation in the 2021 event, email Melmark Pennsylvania Director of Advancement, Ellen Mansfield at ellenmansfield@melmark.org.

www.schoemakerclassic.com
November proved to be an historic month for Melmark with the receipt of a $21.5 million endowment gift from the Anne and Brutus Kenan fund. The generous donation is from two siblings whose lives have been transformed by Melmark's programs and establishes the Anne and Brutus Kenan Fund.

The gift honors the joy Anne and Brutus bring to all they meet and recognizes the compassionate care provided by Melmark's highly skilled workforce. As expressed by Anne and Brutus' family, “it is a circle of deep gratitude for Melmark’s passion and commitment to those they serve” that made this gift possible. “We look forward to the day when major gifts to organizations serving individuals with disabilities are normalized and just as common as major gifts made to other educational institutions.”

This transformational gift will provide the foundation for Melmark’s campaign to increase its endowment, while continuing a deep commitment to honor all individuals with disabilities served at Melmark and beyond.

For the third consecutive year, Melmark New England has been named among the Commonwealth Institute and Boston Globe’s List of Top 100 Women-Led Businesses in Massachusetts. MNE and Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner were ranked among companies from across the Commonwealth during the virtual reveal party, held in November.

The annual rankings honor outstanding women and the businesses they lead. This is a huge honor for Melmark, especially during such a uniquely challenging year. This recognition shines the spotlight on the organization’s commitment to employing a diverse, highly skilled workforce and maintaining an acute focus on the Melmark’s commitment to remain Mission First. Every Individual, Every Day.

Also in November, Melmark hosted Dr. Pat Friman as part of the organization's Expert Speaker Series, which features presentations from leaders in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis during. These educational opportunities focus on a wide range of topics in ABA and are open to staff, families and the public. Events are rotated between service divisions and live-streamed to audiences at each location. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, upcoming speakers will be featured online, in a virtual environment. To view Melmark’s calendar of speakers, visit www.melmark.org.
As we reflect on 2020 and the many challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot help but celebrate the incredible joining together of the entire Melmark community to support the organization’s mission and the essential frontline staff who are truly the superheroes of this pandemic. Below are images showing just a few of the many ways we saw proof behind the hash tag #COVIDCantStopGood in December and throughout the year.

Citizen Bank (location?) donated gifts for the holidays to Melmark PA.

Weinrichs Bakery provided delicious treats for Melmark New England.

Piero and Anastasia Brown working on a technology device

The Aierllo family organized a food donation for the residents homes and staff of Melmark PA.

Lintons and MOD Pizza donated treats and pizza to Melmark residential homes.

Salvatore’s food donation to Melmark New England staff and residents.

Brad Stevenson, Ph.D., BCBA, Director of Program Administration and Clinical Services of Melmark Carolinas teaching a class

Mackenzie and Tyrell Brandon doing a stamp project at Melmark Carolinas

blankets that we are sending home to some New England day students, courtesy of Susan Posterro and her np-Binkeez for Comfort. A grant from the Dunkin’ Joy in Childhood Foundation supports her work and this donation.
Melmark welcomed 2021 with renewed hope, as an evidence-based COVID-19 vaccine was distributed. Again, just as they had done throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Melmark’s leadership team worked around the clock to secure doses of the vaccine for the individuals served at its service divisions in New England, Pennsylvania and the Carolinas.

As vaccines were rolled out, individuals meeting the age criteria to receive the Moderna and Pfizer doses were vaccinated during clinics and in the residential setting in New England and Pennsylvania. In the Carolinas, senior leadership advocated to have Melmark’s staff and families moved up on North Carolina’s vaccination distribution plan, as the medically fragile individuals we serve are at highest risk for significant illness and death if infected with COVID-19.

Dani Block, M.H.A., B.S.N., RN, Senior Director of Health Care and Heather Hirst, PT, DPT Senior Director of Rehabilitative Services at Melmark Pennsylvania procured early Moderna vaccine doses for Melmark staff, adult clients, family members and the community.

Nurses don personal protective equipment.

Melmark New England students ages 18 and older were among the first recipients of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Brad Stevenson, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Melmark Carolinas Director of Program Administration and Clinical Services and Keri Bethune, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Director of Educational Services at Melmark Carolinas shares why they got vaccinated.
Mission-First Moments

Jasmin with her teacher Stephanie Fells working the lunch ticket station at Melmark Pennsylvania.

Sean with ?? have a moving on ceremony at Melmark New England.

Railyn having summer fun with Lindsey Feeley, M.S. Ed, Assistant Director of ICF Residential Services at Melmark Pennsylvania.

Tyrell Brandson giving Simeon a back ride at Melmark Carolinas.
Ways to Give

Your Support Makes a Difference

There are a number of convenient ways for you to support Melmark's mission. Gifts received may be unrestricted or designated for restricted purposes. Donations can be made securely online through Melmark's website, by check, cash or stock. For more details about all the ways you can give, visit www.melmark.org.

- **Annual Giving**
- **Gifts of Stock**
- **Matching Gifts**
- **Tributes and Memorial Gifts**
- **Planned Giving / Krentel Legacy Society**
- **In-Kind Gifts**

**Greater Philadelphia and Southeastern New Jersey:**
- PA Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC)
- Corporate, Foundation and Organization Giving
- New England Legacy Brick Walkway
- Special Events

To make a secure donation:

- **Melmark New England**
  - www.melmarkne.org
  - ekallman@melmarkne.org
  - 978-654-4371

- **Melmark Carolinas**
  - www.melmarkcarolinas.org
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  - 978-654-4371

- **Melmark Pennsylvania**
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Bill Ahearn, M.B.A., CPA
Vice President of Business Operations and Finance Director, Melmark New England

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Executive Director, Melmark New England

Shawn P. Quigley, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Executive Director, Melmark Pennsylvania

Brad Stevenson, Ph.D., BCBA-D
Director of Program Administration and Clinical Services, Melmark Carolinas

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Senior Director of Human Resources, Melmark Pennsylvania

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Director of Advancement, Melmark New England

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Peter Troy, M.B.A.
Retired VP of Business Operations, Melmark
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## Dates to Remember:

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<th>Melmark New England</th>
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<th>Melmark Pennsylvania</th>
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<td><strong>16th Annual</strong> Melmark New England Golf Tournament</td>
<td><strong>Melmark Carolinas’s First Golf Outing</strong></td>
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<td>September 25, 2021</td>
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<td><strong>Mission Possible</strong> Planting the seeds for tomorrow</td>
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<td><strong>Dream, Maker’s Ball</strong> Planting the seeds for tomorrow</td>
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