

## Boston Fleet Champions Inclusion with Melmark New England visit during Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Awareness Month

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Photo caption: Boston Fleet Player Shay Maloney working with Yash on a craft.

(Andover, MA April 9, 2026) – Members of the Boston Fleet, an original six team in the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), recently visited Melmark New England. The timing of the visit coincided with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness of the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential.

This collaboration highlights the alignment of Melmark's mission with the Boston Fleet's commitment to support the I/DD community as the professional athletes engaged directly with program

participants, fostering mutual understanding, inclusion, and respect.

During their visit, players and staff members toured The Cancro Center for Adult Services (located at 280 Merrimack Street, Lawrence, MA 01843), Melmark's community-based adult day program which provides essential supports for individuals with autism, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

The Fleet engaged in crafts and activities with participants from the adult day program, fostering a sense of community and inclusion.

“The Boston Fleet's visit to Melmark New England's adult day program reflects the team's commitment to making a meaningful impact beyond the game,” stated Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner. “We're thankful to the Fleet for a community partnership which gives the individuals we serve opportunities to practice their daily living skills and have fun in the community where they live and learn.”



Boston Fleet players Haley Winn, Shay Maloney, and Rylind MacKinnon with Brendan and Mark, participants in Melmark's adult day program.

Melmark's adult day program is designed to promote well-being, personal independence, and community integration through innovative, evidence-based vocational, social, and recreational services.

"It was an incredible experience spending time at Melmark and connecting with such inspiring individuals," stated Boston Fleet player Shay Maloney. "Their energy and joy is so powerful and it was an honor to share the day with them! Moments like these remind me how important it is to give back and build meaningful connections beyond the game."

As a national leader in the human services field, Melmark is in the process of developing an innovative new adult services model. The adult planned community pilot project will be located on a three-acre site in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. With an expected cost of over \$16 million, construction is slated for completion later this spring. To learn more about the Adult Planned Community at Melmark New England, Tewksbury, visit <https://www.melmark.org/planned-tewksbury-adult-community/>

#### About Melmark

Celebrating its 60th anniversary throughout 2026, Melmark is a multi-state non-profit human service organization providing clinically sophisticated evidence-based special education, residential, vocational and therapeutic services for children and adults with autism spectrum disorders, developmental and intellectual disabilities, acquired brain injuries and other neurological and genetic disorders. All specialized special education services are based on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) and are designed based on each student's individual needs.

Recognized as one of the leading providers in the country, Melmark has a combined staff of over 1,500 at its service divisions in Pennsylvania, New England, and the Carolinas and serves over 700 individuals from across the country. [www.melmark.org](http://www.melmark.org).

#### About Boston Fleet

[Boston Fleet](#) is one of eight teams in the newly launched Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL), which was founded in 2023. The PWHL began its inaugural season in January 2024 and features the best women's hockey players in the world. The PWHL has broken multiple attendance records and holds the worldwide record for a women's hockey game. For the latest news and information on Boston Fleet, visit [boston.thepwhl.com](http://boston.thepwhl.com) or follow the team on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#). Follow the PWHL on all social media platforms @thepwhlofficial.