

## **Melmark's Dream Maker's Ball Raised \$1.2 Million to Support Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

*Honorees included Humanitarian Award recipient Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, Good Neighbor Award Recipient Accenture and Brad Michel, and Leadership Impact Award Recipient Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner*

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*Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner with Board Chair Dr. Maureen McMahon*

**(Berwyn, PA May 21, 2026)** – Melmark, a nationally-recognized non-profit human services provider, recently held its biennial fundraising gala, The Dream Maker's Ball, on April 18<sup>th</sup> at The Bellevue Hotel in downtown Philadelphia. The event raised \$1.2 million in support of Melmark's mission to enhance the lives of individuals with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The evening was emceed by longtime Melmark supporter and Emmy Award-nominated journalist and former CBS Philadelphia reporter and anchor Trang Do and included a celebration of Melmark's 60<sup>th</sup>

anniversary along with silent and live auctions, and live entertainment from The Melmark Players, a theater group from Melmark's Meadows Adult Day Program. The highlight of the evening's program was the awards ceremony which honored recipients for their commitment to Melmark's mission and vision.

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro was honored with the Humanitarian Award which spotlights individuals who, through their selfless acts of compassion, understanding, and public service, share Melmark's mission and commitment to improve the lives of all individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. While Governor Shapiro was unable to attend, he sent along written greetings, stating, "Over the past 60 years, Melmark has demonstrated the true Pennsylvania spirit by enhancing the lives of those they serve and consistently striving to raise the bar with their services and I am grateful for the tremendous impact this organization has had on our communities in the Commonwealth and beyond."



*Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner with Accenture Senior Managing Director, Life Sciences Brad Michel*

The Good Neighbor Award was presented to Brad Michel, Senior Managing Director, Life Sciences, in recognition of his leadership and the enduring partnership of Accenture, a global business management consulting firm, with an office located in Philadelphia. Melmark’s partnership with Brad Michel and Accenture exemplify how leadership in the life sciences industry can advance both discovery and humanity.

In its inaugural presentation, Melmark was proud to present the Leadership Impact Award to Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA, CDE® in recognition of her extraordinary leadership and enduring impact over the past

decade in her role as President and CEO. Under Rita’s direction, Melmark has become a national model for excellence in evidence-based education, applied behavior analysis, and lifelong services for individuals with autism, intellectual, and developmental disabilities. Her vision has expanded Melmark’s reach across multiple states, strengthened its financial sustainability for generations to come, and deepened its commitment to workforce development, family partnerships, and research.

In her remarks, Melmark President and CEO Rita M. Gardner, stated that, “For 60 years, families, educators, clinicians, and supporters have helped build an organization grounded in a simple but powerful belief - every individual deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and live a meaningful life.” She further elaborated, “What we see every day is that when individuals receive the right support, everything changes—not only for them, but for their families and the communities around them. At Melmark, we call that ‘making more possible’.”

### **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).*