

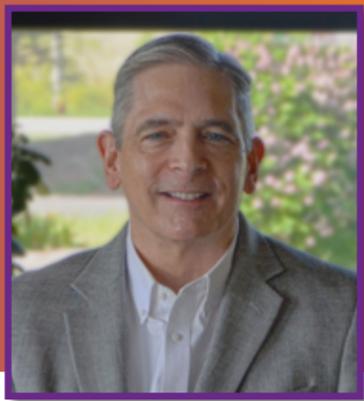


INSIDE

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From the Desk of Gil Fonger

President & CEO



Dear Marklund Family,

For 71 years, Marklund has been a source of strength, hope, and compassionate care—showing up for people when they need us most.

We have a proud legacy that began with two nurses and two organizations. In December 1954, nurse Claire Haverkamp and her husband Stan opened their home and their hearts to Mark William Lund, a baby born with special needs. As their in-home care expanded, the Marklund organization began. In much the same way a few years later, nurse Pat Wasmond and her husband Bob, accepted a child with special healthcare needs into their home, and founded Little Angels Center for Exceptional Care.

The two organizations merged in 2016, with a remarkable history that makes us stronger together.

Today begins a new chapter—one marked by our expanded and renovated Marklund Wasmond Center in Elgin, a \$17.4M two-year project that is allowing us to serve even more children and adults with profound developmental disabilities. This transformation is not simply about a new state-of-the-art facility, the most advanced in the state. It is about creating a space where innovation and compassion meet, one that reflects our proud history and mission, and strengthens us for years to come.

We celebrate this new chapter with immense gratitude—for the legacy that brought us here, for our outstanding staff, the parents who have entrusted us with the care of their loved ones, and our supporters, who have always shown up for us.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for standing with us as we continue to advance our mission and bring our vision to life. The best chapters of our story are still being written!

Gil Fonger, President & CEO

gfonger@marklund.org | 630.593.5476



Presented by:
Fitch Foundation

MARKLUND
APR 26
RUN WALK & ROLL
5K/1 MILE - ELGIN

Inaugural Race
Sunday,
April 26
at 8:30 A.M.

Event Apparel
Finisher Medal
USATF Certified Course
5K Chipped Timing
Food and Beverages
Fundraising Prizes

Marklund Wasmond Center
(formerly Little Angels)
1435 Summit Street
Elgin, IL 60120

Run, Walk or Roll for Marklund!

Be a part of something NEW and FUN! After 13 years of hosting successful 5K/1 Mile events in Geneva and Bloomingdale, Marklund is expanding its fundraising reach to **Elgin** this spring. Runners, walkers, and wheelchair riders are invited to join in the Inaugural Run, Walk & Roll-Elgin 5K and 1-Mile event on Sunday, April 26, starting and finishing at the Marklund Wasmond Center, 1435 Summit St., Elgin.

Register, volunteer and find all details by scanning the QR code or visiting www.marklund.org/5K.



On the cover

Laura and Russ Karlins, pictured with Laura's brother, Scott, a resident of the Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva, are this year's recipients of the 2026 Marklund Friend of the Year Award. See full story on page 7. (Photo by Chris Guillen Photography)

Total Amount Fundraised **\$6,745,581**

497 Leadership Giving Circle Donors
Those who give \$1,000+ in one year.

4,583 Number of Donations

\$556 Average Gift Amount

852 New Donors

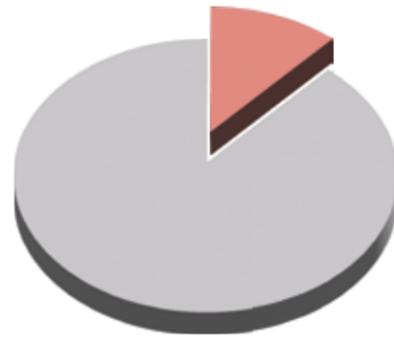
1,432 Total Number of Community Outings

186 Residential Clients Served

99 Marklund Day School Students Served

87¢ of every dollar goes to programs and services

2,760 volunteers provided **12,810** volunteer hours

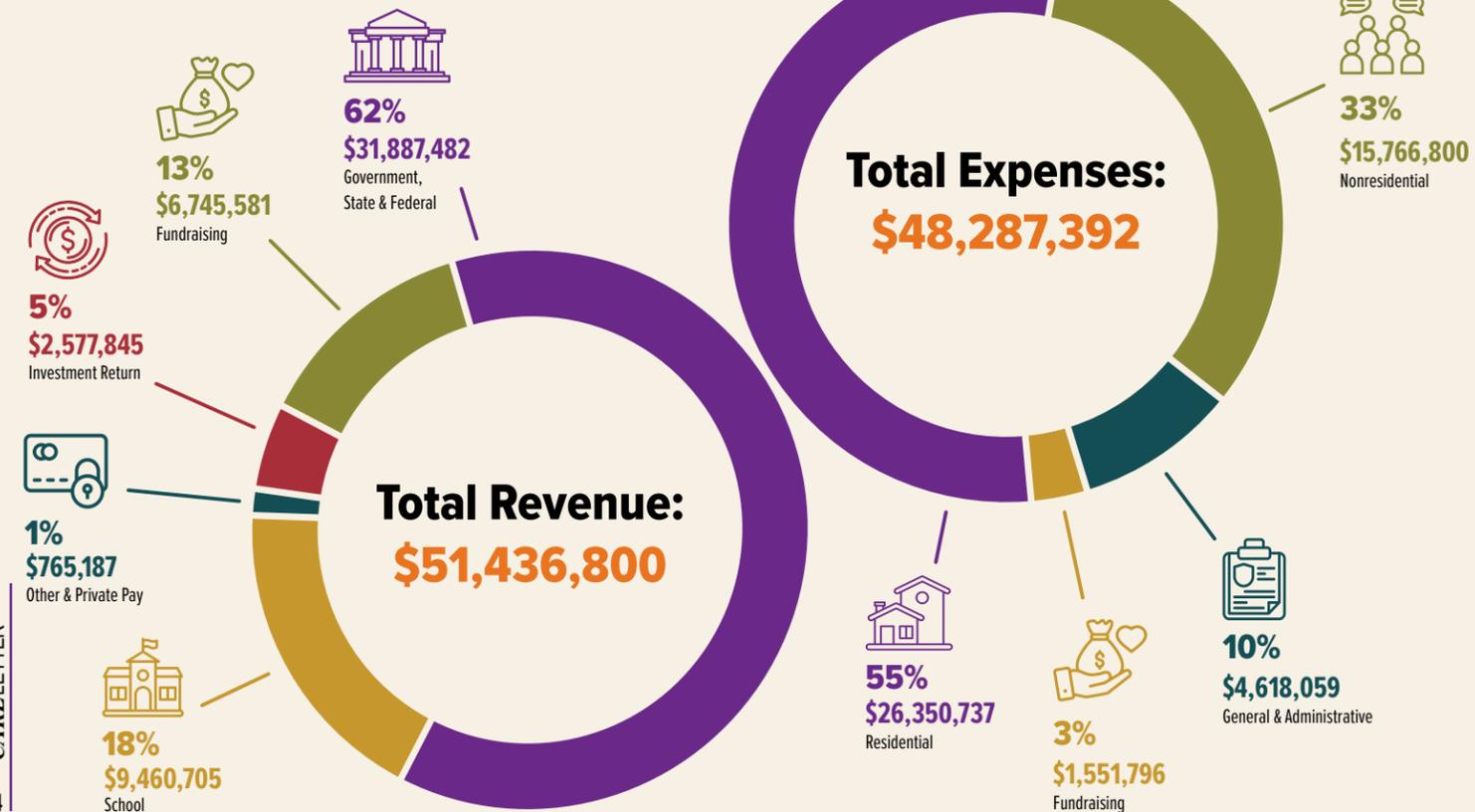


\$19,155

Funding Gap per Resident

The difference between state funding and what it takes to deliver the Marklund standard of care.

Financial Summary



Winter Wonders:

Enjoying connection all season long!

From festive celebrations and visits with the Jolly Old Elf to lively indoor recreation and high-energy/heart-lifting volunteer moments, our residents, community clients and students have been treated to a fun-packed season of celebration and winter cheer!



CURTAIN UP, CUE THE LIGHTS!

Celebrating the 30th Annual Top Hat Ball with a record-breaking night benefiting Marklund.

With all the excitement of a theatrical opening night, the curtain rose on “Broadway,” the 30th anniversary Top Hat Ball, an evening that beautifully blended the magic of the stage with the generosity of those who believe deeply in Marklund’s mission. Thanks to the incredible commitment of donors, volunteers, and friends, this year’s celebration set a new fundraising record, with net proceeds surpassing \$1,076,000.

“MARKLUND PROUD comes to mind, as we thank our Top Hat Ball supporters for their significant impact on allowing us to carry out our mission to make everyday life possible for individuals with profound disabilities.”
—Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer

“What a fantastic night celebrating three decades of Top Hat Ball! For 30 years, this event has been Marklund’s largest signature fundraiser, raising more than \$14,000,000 in net proceeds for Marklund programs and services,” said Heather Graves, Chief Development Officer. “We are truly blessed to have such generous donors and volunteers supporting us—whether in the ballroom or from home—and a talented staff and committee that works tirelessly to make this event successful each year.”



Spotlight Shines on Three Decades of Extraordinary Service

As part of this year’s milestone celebration, Marklund proudly honored the many Friend of the Year award winners and past Top Hat Ball event chairs who have made a difference over the past 30 years! “Their faithfulness over time has reshaped the lives of thousands of families who have children with profound disabilities and has compounded into real impact,” said Jeannine Zupo, Signature Events Director. “They are leaders, in ordinary places, telling a story far bigger than themselves, and for that, we let them take center stage again, to receive Marklund’s first Standing Ovation Award.”



MEET THE 2026 FRIENDS OF THE YEAR Laura and Russ Karlins

Congratulations to Laura and Russ Karlins, recipients of the 2026 Friend of the Year award. Since 2018, when Laura’s brother moved into one of Marklund’s homes, the couple has been an essential part of the Marklund cast — volunteering, leading, and showing up to support the mission in extraordinary ways. From serving in numerous committee roles to Laura’s leadership on the Board of Directors, they have made a meaningful, lasting impact.

“I would like to say how truly grateful we are for this honor,” said Laura. “Seeing the love and care that Scott receives every day, reminds us of what a special community Marklund is. Thank you for making Marklund such a beautiful place.”

“We are especially honored to be welcomed into such a remarkable group of supporters and advocates,” Russ added. “Knowing Scott is in his forever home, surrounded by compassion, dignity, and expert care, is a gift beyond measure and our family is truly blessed.”

Presentation of Marklund’s Friend of the Year award dates back to 1979, honoring an individual, couple or group that has demonstrated publicly or privately a heart of gold and willingness to serve Marklund’s residents in ways that will affect their lives significantly, now and in the future.



Enjoy the NEW 2026 Top Hat Ball Video!

View our 2026 mission video which premiered at this year’s Top Hat Ball. Simply scan the QR code with your phone to watch. The video shares the powerful stories of the Van Daff, Estes and Wasmond families as well as special highlights showcasing Marklund’s accomplishments and impact over the past year.



Event Photos to Cherish and Share

Take a peek at all the download-ready photos and curtain-call moments, courtesy of Chris Guillen Photography. Just scan the QR code, and please tag Marklund in your social posts!



Three Years In — and Just Getting Started!

“Our son has always struggled with change, and we were worried that a placement for him may not even be possible. The staff at Bridge Builder listened to our concerns. They see our son. The transition for him and for us has been wonderful. We love that he is happy, safe and continuing to grow new skills that prepare him for his best future.” —Parent of Bridge Builder client



This spring, Marklund’s Bridge Builder CDS day program is celebrating an important milestone: three years of meaningful education, growth and community! What started as an idea to create a therapeutic learning and training program that assists adults with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities has turned into a vibrant place full of energy, connection and plenty of proud moments.

Over the past three years, 18 clients have developed new abilities, built friendships, and grown in confidence. From working on communication, social and daily life skills to enjoying group activities, creative projects, and community outings, every day has brought new opportunities to learn and have fun—at each person’s own pace.



“What really makes Bridge Builder special is the people—the clients and the staff. Our clients come in trusting us to understand and support them. Our staff show up every day with patience, kindness, and a genuine commitment to supporting each individual,” said Kate Thommes, QIDP, Bridge Builder program manager. “They celebrate the big wins and the small ones, too. We are also incredibly thankful for the families and caregivers who work alongside us—it truly takes a team.”

While specific programming tactics have evolved over the past years, the overarching goal of the Bridge Builder program is to provide a meaningful day for the clients, focusing on life skills and those necessary to pursue employment opportunities, if desired. Curriculum is designed to foster independence, social development, vocational exploration, and creative expression—always guided by respect, patience, and person-centered planning.

Looking ahead, the team is excited to keep growing and improving, having a goal of serving up to 30 clients by Summer of 2028. “We’re always finding new ways to expand our activities, strengthen skills, and support the pre-vocational and vocational goals and interests of the clients,” Thommes said. “Most of all, we’re committed to creating a space where everyone feels safe, valued and encouraged to be themselves.”

Bridge Builder CDS is located within Marklund’s Nathan Education Center in Elgin.



March Appeal

“It’s truly the families that we shape the most, helping make everyday life possible.”
— Jessica Redmond, Instructional Coach

From the moment she arrived, Jessica Redmond knew this wasn’t a typical school, and that’s exactly why she stayed. Jessica joined Marklund in 2016 as a Special Education teacher, just after the Ann Haskins Center at Marklund Day School in Bloomingdale opened. “I didn’t want a traditional school,” she says. “It was important to me to work with a population that is not the norm.”

Nine years later, that purpose remains. Now an Instructional Coach, Jessica steps in wherever she’s needed. “If there’s a vacancy, I’m there,” she says. What made the work personal wasn’t the classroom, it was the families. “Our mission is to make everyday life possible,” she explains, “and we can help families do that.”

She remembers when one child used their communication device independently at the dinner table for the first time. “It almost didn’t matter what they said,” she recalls. “What mattered was that they used it, on their own, at home, because of what they learned here.” Progress doesn’t just happen in classrooms, and Jessica knows her work shapes families’ daily lives.

Over the years, she has seen how rare places like Marklund are. That reality and her passion is why she has stayed. “Who is going to take care of these kids?” she asks. **Feeling called to carry that responsibility, Jessica says, “I need to do it.”**

As an Instructional Coach, much of Jessica’s impact happens behind the scenes, supporting teachers so they can better support students.

The biggest celebrations come when the team sees a change in the students’ everyday life: calmer, more communicative, and open to learning. Jessica says, “we’re not just looking at numbers, but at kids we know and care about.” Supporting our staff means supporting every individual they serve.

From sensory tools and adaptive curriculum to durable materials and even a bus that allows students to learn in the community, donor-supported resources shape daily life at Marklund. “Without donor support,” Jessica explains, “we wouldn’t be able to keep pushing forward.” Families choose Marklund because they see what’s possible, and that possibility exists because of **YOU**.

“Marklund is a landing place for individuals who don’t have anywhere else to go,” Jessica says. **Your gift today helps families find hope again;** it gives children and adults with profound disabilities opportunities that make *everyday life* possible. **Thank you for being part of the Marklund community.**

Thanks to a generous donation by the Berzanskis family, your donation will be matched up to \$15,000.

To give online or make changes to your information, please scan the QR code or visit <https://www.marklund.org/give>



Contributions to Marklund are tax-deductible as permitted by law.



“The staff at Bridge Builder have been so patient in helping my daughter transition to the program. They greet her with smiles every day and are always happy to celebrate her successes, no matter how small. We are lucky to have found such a caring place for her to spend her days!”
—Parent of Bridge Builder client

Nurse case manager honored as employee of the year

Shannon Gardner, a nurse case manager at the Marklund Hyde Center in Geneva, received the 2025 Claire Haverkamp Commemorative Award, a special 'employee-of-the-year' honor named for Marklund's founder.

Shannon's journey with Marklund began in 2006 and has included a wide range of roles within direct care, to administrative services, and back to direct care.

"It is such an honor to be chosen," she said. "Over the past 19 years at Marklund, I have had the opportunity to serve in many roles and take on a variety of responsibilities. No matter the title, my mindset stayed the same: someone was depending on me to do my job with accuracy, care and integrity. That is a responsibility that I've never taken lightly.

Other finalists for this year's award were Kayla Clifton of Shabbona and Jessica Redmond of Bloomingdale.

The award process included two rounds of voting by staff members followed by the final selection being made by a committee of members from Marklund's board of directors. Board member Frank Murnane Jr. presented the award at the annual Employee Appreciation event.

A Special Evening! Shown from left are Frank Murnane Jr. of the Marklund Board of Directors, Jessica Redmond, Shannon Gardner, Kayla Clifton, and Gil Fonger, Marklund President & CEO.



Sites & Services



Marklund Hyde Center

1S450 Wyatt Drive, Geneva, IL 60134; 630.593.5500

25-acre campus includes:

- Marklund Hyde Center building houses Community Day Services (CDS) classrooms, onsite aquatic therapy pool and spa, administrative and therapy offices, dental office and salon
- Six 16-bed homes are licensed as Intermediate Care Facilities (ICFs) that provide 24-hour care to support the medical, social, emotional and physical needs of 96 adult residents
- The Foglia Education Center at Marklund Day School-Geneva serves students ages 3-21 with multiple disabilities, including those on the Autism Spectrum, within both the Multi-Needs and Life Skills programs
- Our Marklund ball field, newly resurfaced with specialized materials suitable for wheelchair accessibility



Marklund Wasmond Center & School

1435 Summit Street, Elgin, IL 60120; 224.523.7530

- Five-acre campus includes a newly-renovated MC/DD residential facility for 85 children and adults with medically complex developmental disabilities. Facility offers new, state-of-the-art skilled nursing and intermediate care services, comprehensive respiratory services, onsite aquatic therapy pool, dental office, and therapeutic social, recreational and community activities
- CDS classrooms also located adjacent to main building
- Marklund Day School-Elgin operates Multi-Needs classrooms onsite



Marklund Day School

Four locations in Bloomingdale, Elgin and Geneva;

Phone: 630.307.1882

Therapeutic Day School serves students ages 3-21 with multiple disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum, within both Multi-Needs and Life Skills programs. Education services are supported by nursing and therapy teams.

- **Ann Haskins Center, 164 S. Prairie Avenue, Bloomingdale, IL 60108:**
 - Multi-Needs and Life Skills programs
- **Marklund Wasmond Center, 1435 Summit Street, Elgin, IL 60120:**
 - Multi-Needs classrooms
- **Foglia Education Center, 1S376 Wyatt Drive, Geneva, IL 60134:**
 - Multi-Needs and Life Skills program
- **Nathan Education Center, 1210 Hunter Drive, Elgin, IL 60120:**
 - Life Skills classrooms for students on the autism spectrum
 - Bridge Builder CDS program for adults on the spectrum who have aged out of traditional school programs

CARELETTER

The Marklund CareLetter is a quarterly newsletter created and distributed by Marklund, a nonprofit organization that provides residential, educational and day services programs for children and adults with severe and profound developmental disabilities.

To receive extra copies, email Dawn Lassiter-Brueske, Chief Communications Officer, at dlassiter@marklund.org.

For digital copies, visit www.marklund.org/newsletters.

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Call 630.593.5500

Volunteer with Marklund this spring!

Scan the QR codes to explore upcoming opportunities for individuals, families and groups at both the Hyde Center in Geneva and the Wasmond Center in Elgin. We can't wait to see you!



Opportunities in Geneva



Opportunities in Elgin



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@MarklundCharity on Instagram



@Marklund on LinkedIn

Follow Marklund on Socials



1S450 Wyatt Drive, Geneva, IL 60134

NON-PROFIT
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US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #126
ELGIN, IL



**Scan here to learn more
and get involved!**



CARELETTER A newsletter for those who care about **Marklund**.



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BURSTING
with **fun opportunities...**

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- Paid Time Off (PTO)
- Tuition Reimbursement
- Extended Sick Bank
- 7 Paid Holidays per Year
- and **SO MUCH MORE!**



Scan the QR code or visit
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to apply today!