

*Creating jobs and opportunities  
for people with differing  
disabilities so they can have  
a good quality of life.*



*Growing Opportunities*

*FALL/WINTER 2012*

## **Rich History, Bright Future** *Melwood Celebrates 50 Years of Service*

Inspiration, innovation and independence were all keys to Melwood's beginning. The organization started because a group of parents wanted opportunities for their own children who had disabilities. It was this idea of a more independent life for people with disabilities and the inspiration of parents that resulted in the innovative thinking that cultivated the foundation for what is today's Melwood. The idea that people with disabilities could lead valuable, productive lives inclusive in the community challenged conventional thought at the time, but that is exactly the spirit that has made Melwood a pioneer in the history of working toward independence for people with disabilities.

When Melwood began in a small tent in 1963, most people with disabilities had limited access to education and little possibility for employment but Melwood's founders knew that people with disabilities could be taught valuable skills for employment and sought out to do so even before laws in the 1970s expanded opportunities.

The 1971 Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act allowed Melwood to expand into federal government contracts to provide employment for people trained through the organization. Today, 50 years after a few dedicated parents were inspired to create opportunities for their own children, Melwood employees work on federal government contracts around the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area to provide landscaping and custodial services.

Melwood also expanded throughout its history, to provide opportunities and inclusion across all areas of life. A 108-acre farm that Melwood originally purchased to grow plants for its landscaping business is used today to host an inclusive camp called Camp Accomplish and an equestrian therapy program. The organization also began offering travel services for adults with disabilities in the 1970s and today the Access Adventures program still thrives.

The programs at Melwood continue to evolve to be more self-directed and community oriented. Individuals are empowered through services that put them in charge of their own future, providing in-home life skills training, community involvement and job training for competitive employment. In addition, disabled veterans are finding job placement through Melwood's total facilities management contracts.

In 2013, Melwood will celebrate 50 years of service to people with disabilities. The organization persists in pushing the envelope of conventional thought and maintains the inspiration to provide innovation in services that continue to change the lives of people with disabilities in positive, life-changing ways.

*Sarah Hainesworth contributed to this article.*



### **In This Issue:**

- 2 Letter from CEO**
- 3 Employer of the Year**
- 4 Community Connection**
- 5 Volunteerism**
- 6 Access Adventurers**
- 7 Grants**



## A message from the Executive Team Leader

### Melwood

5606 Dower House Road  
Upper Marboro, MD 20772  
(301) 599-8000  
www.melwood.org

### Chairman of the Board of Directors

Andrew V. Colevas  
Principal  
Colevas Group

### Vice Chair

Richard Mahan, CPA  
Principal  
Reznick Group

### Directors

George Watkins, CPA  
Donald A. Donahue, Jr., MBA, Ph.D.  
Christina Eaglin  
Shelly Gardeniers  
Marlon Griffith, Esq.  
Reginald M. Harris  
Mike Keppler, MBA  
Brenda Sheaffer  
Sue A. Greer, Esq.

### Executive Team Leader

Dana B. Stebbins, MSW, Esq.

### Chief Program Officer

Jonathon Rondeau, MA CPRP

### Chief Development Officer

Denise Hyater-Lindenmuth, MA  
CHES

### Chief Contracts Officer

Judith McCowan, CFCM

### Senior Director, Human Resources

Lorenzo Hester, Ph.D.

### Editor

Michelle L. Hankins

### Contributors

Lili Afkhami  
Mike Bellis  
Bekah Carmichael  
Katherine Drayer  
Doria Fleisher  
Sarah Hainesworth  
Denise Hyater-Lindenmuth  
Jonathon Rondeau

In 2013, Melwood commemorates its 50th anniversary. In honor of the strides we have made, we hope that you will join us by embracing the spirit of giving back and by celebrating our history.

During this time of the year, many welcome the spirit of giving back to their community; however, at Melwood, giving back to the community is something we think about all year long.

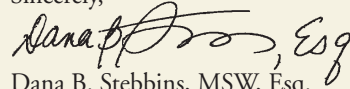
In September and October, Melwood volunteered to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay and helped harvest peppers at a local farm that produces food for impoverished people. Members of Melwood's Community Connections program, which involves individuals daily in the community, volunteered at a local homeless shelter.

These are just a few of the opportunities Melwood creates for people with disabilities that also benefit the

community. We encourage everyone to be involved in creating a better community—one that includes everyone.

Will you join us in making the next 50 years successful? Be a part of the Melwood family by contributing to the opportunities Melwood is able to provide for people with disabilities. Donate to Melwood this holiday season online at [www.melwood.org](http://www.melwood.org). If you have a vehicle that no longer serves you or your family, donate to us. We provide free towing and give you the tax credit. When you give to Melwood, you impact the individuals we serve and the entire community.

Sincerely,



Dana B. Stebbins, MSW, Esq.

## Melwood Welcomes SUE GREER TO THE BOARD



Sue A. Greer is the newest member of Melwood's Board of Directors. She is currently a partner at The Greer Law Firm where she specializes in land use; local government; zoning; and business and contract law. Greer's legal career, which began with the Department of Justice Honors Program, spans 20 years. She served as the Deputy County Attorney in the Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, Maryland. She was specially assigned as the General Counsel for the Office of the Sheriff, Charles County, Maryland, the first appointment of its kind in Maryland history.

Greer received her Juris Doctorate from the Notre Dame School of Law and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland. Greer is a member of the Maryland State Bar Association, the Charles County Bar Association as well as the Charles County Chamber of Commerce, where she serves as Chair of the Economic Development Committee.

## CARF Accreditation Highlights Commitment to Quality Services

Melwood has a strong commitment to quality and being a leader in the field of services for people with disabilities. This commitment is evident through Melwood's accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), a process that includes annual quality improvement outcomes and an on-site, multi-day survey every three years.

Since receiving the three-year reaccreditation in 2011, the highest accreditation available, Melwood works to continually advance its services. Melwood's Community Services Division created a performance measurement

program that measures the outcomes of the services it provides and assists with management decisions so it can continue to improve.

"Melwood's goal is to provide person-centered, customer driven services to every individual we serve, regardless of the services they choose. This process takes time and our staff work hard with families to make this transition," says Jonathon Rondeau, Melwood's chief program officer.



# Washington Gas Provides Facelift for Melwood Headquarters

In October, volunteers from Washington Gas gave some of Melwood's buildings a much-needed facelift, painting walls in the Garden Center as well as in the administrative building. Twenty-seven hard-working Washington Gas employees from the company's Springfield, Va., facility provided a day of service to Melwood.

As a thank you, Melwood's volunteer event team helped set up lunch in the newly renovated conservatory, which throughout the summer has been replanted and laid out to welcome more visitors to the space.

*Special thanks to Washington Gas!*



## Melwood NAMED PRINCE GEORGE'S 2012 EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

In celebration of National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month, Melwood was named the 2012 Employer of the Year by the Prince George's County Department of Family Services, Mental Health and Disabilities Division and the Commission for Individuals with Disabilities.

The award was presented at a luncheon on Thursday, Oct. 25 at the LaFontaine Bleau in Lanham, Md., at which attendees celebrated the achievements of individuals with disabilities who reach their goal of employment. As an organization, Melwood helps 1,100 individuals reach this goal each year.

"I am very honored to receive this award on behalf of Melwood and the people we serve," said Dana B. Stebbins, Melwood executive team leader. "Our mission is to create jobs and opportunities for people with differing disabilities so they can have a good quality of life and we work toward our vision of a world where people with disabilities are fully included every day."

## Melwood Receives MARYLAND NON- PROFITS CERTIFICATION

Melwood has earned the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations' Standards for Excellence certification for its commitment to those it serves as well as to its contributors and the public. The certification was developed to advance ethical operations and accountability among the state's nonprofit organizations.

Melwood received the certification at its board meeting in October. "This committee of your peers felt that you meet this standard," said Lorene Lake, executive director of Chrysalis House, Inc., and member of the Maryland Nonprofits standards committee, at a presentation of the certificate. "I think you can take a great deal of pride in the fact that it has been awarded." Lake applauded Melwood for its longstanding positive reputation in the community.

Dana Stebbins, executive team leader for Melwood said, "This reputation was built upon Melwood's dedication to our mission and vision to create a world of opportunities and inclusion for people with disabilities and is achieved each day only by our continued commitment toward this goal."





# Community Connection

## *Results in Employment Opportunity*

Mark Henry began with Melwood's Community Connections program in June. When he first started the program, a job seemed like a distant possibility, but thanks to Melwood's Community Connections program, Mark is thriving.

Shirley Wilson, community connector at Melwood, reached out to people within the community asking if Mark could volunteer at a local Giant Food store. Giant Food Store Manager Sonya Brooks encouraged Mark to apply for a job as a Giant employee. To obtain the job, Mark submitted an application for employment and had a job interview. He was hired the day of his interview.

Mark now works four days a week, restocking the grocery bags at the registers and cleaning the counters each morning. He bags groceries and places the bags in the carts for customers and is also learning how to reshell items.

"I love having Mark here," Brooks says. "It's such a pleasure every time he's in the building. He makes me smile. I wish I had 20 Marks here."

Of his job, Mark says, "I like being capable." He gives his weekly earnings to his mother to put into a bank account, explaining that he is currently saving his money to buy a cell phone, a coffee pot or to go skiing. "The first time he cashed a paycheck, he was beaming," Wilson recalls.

Mark has one day off during the week during which he plans other activities. In just four months in the Community Connections program, Mark visited nearly 50 sites—from museums to mansions to educational sites to sports centers to NASA.

Mark's is succeeding because the program is tailored specifically for him. Having a Melwood advocate working directly with Mark at his job provides the support he needs to be successful at work. Shirley is never far away. She stays on site at Giant and is always there to assist Mark in learning new aspects of his job as his duties expand.

Wilson says she now often sees a smile on Mark's face. When she asks him why he is smiling, he says it is because he is happy. "He's come a long way and I'm proud of him," she says.



*Giant Food Store Manager Sonya Brooks enjoys having Mark Henry as an employee at her store.*

## MELWOOD RECOGNIZES

# Direct Support Professionals

Melwood celebrated National Direct Support Professionals Week in September honoring its 125 direct support professionals who provide long-term service to 700 individuals in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

Two Melwood employees received special recognition in September—Shirley Wilson, community connector, and Herold Proctor, route van driver. Both were commended by community members for the work they do.

Shirley is never far away when Mark Henry needs assistance learning something new in his job at a local Giant—an opportunity that she helped facilitate through the Melwood's Community Connections program. Giant Manager Sonya Brooks says of Shirley's impact on Mark, "He has a job coach that is active. It makes a difference in his life."

Herold enjoys what he does and says, "My favorite thing about working here is that I know I'm doing something for someone else." He recalls a time when someone he was providing transportation for was eating her breakfast and was afraid he would leave her. Harold, who often arrives early, encouraged the person to finish her breakfast and even got out of the van so she would know that he would not leave her.

"It is because of the commitment to service of our direct support professionals like Shirley and Herold that Melwood is able to strive to reach its vision of a world where people with disabilities are fully included," says Chief Program Officer Jonathon Rondeau.

Melwood's turnover rate for direct support professionals is between one and three percent annually. This compares to the average for the state of Maryland which is at 27 percent, according to Maryland's Community Services Reimbursement Rate Commission 2012 Annual Report.



*Community Connector Shirley Wilson received accolades for her work with Mark Henry.*



*Route Van Driver Herold Proctor is known for his stellar customer service.*



# Melwood Volunteers Lend a Hand in the Community

Volunteers from Melwood's Garden Center visited Clagett Farms, a working farm operated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) that grows food for people at all income levels, on October 17 and helped pick small, but fiery habanero peppers from the field. The ten volunteers that visited the farm learned how to determine when the peppers are ripe and also assisted in rearranging potted trees and pulling up the trees that were no longer viable.

Melwood volunteers also assisted the CBF with a project in September to help the CBF in its efforts to restore oysters—vital inhabitants in the Chesapeake Bay.

Six members of Melwood's Crossroads program visited the Oyster Restoration Center in Southern Anne Arundel County, Md. The volunteers shoveled oyster

shells onto wire screens and shook the screens to clean the shells of any debris. As part of the CBF's initiative, these shells with new juvenile oysters are then placed back into the bay in sanctuary reefs where they filter pollutants and improve the bay's water quality.

Through volunteer efforts like these with the CBF, Melwood volunteers are assisting both people and the environment and are learning more about their community in the process.



*Daniel Kohout shows the habanero pepper he has picked as fellow volunteers continue the harvest in the background.*



*Jean Lee shovels oyster shells for cleaning during a volunteer project to revitalize the natural inhabitants of the Chesapeake Bay.*



*Quamar Williams jokes about eating a habanero pepper he picked at Clagett Farms during a volunteer project in October.*

## Lowe's of Glen Burnie Helps Build a Better Melwood

Several Lowe's Heroes added a little super power to Melwood on July 19th in a project that helped beautify several areas around Melwood's Upper Marlboro campus.

The all-volunteer Lowe's Heroes team built 10 raised garden boxes to place around the Dower House Road facility, working with Melwood individuals to assemble the boxes. After building them, the Heroes helped stain the boxes to prepare them for planting. The Lowe's team donated all the supplies to build the garden boxes at an estimated value of \$900.

The Lowe's Heroes volunteers then went to work in Melwood's conservatory taking out the old pond and building a new one.

In total, nine Lowe's employees contributed close to 60 hours on site to help benefit Melwood. "We had a great time," says Tom Hren, Lowe's department manager of lumber and building materials.

Special thanks to the Lowe's Heroes of Glen Burnie, Maryland!

## Melwood Employee NAMED USNA HONORARY GRADUATE



*Photo by Jim Klima*

A huge Washington Redskins fan, Melwood custodian Greg Klima is now sporting a new football jersey—one he received in May when he was named an honorary member of the U.S. Naval Academy's class of 2012.

To recognize Greg's hard work at the Naval Academy as well as his dedication to Navy sports events, Greg was given a Navy football jersey on graduation day in May that was signed by each Navy sports captain. During the event at the Navy-Marine Corps stadium in Annapolis, Md., Greg received a standing ovation from the crowd of 25,000.



*Three Lowe's Heroes volunteers rebuild the pond in Melwood's conservatory to provide moisture to plants in the building.*



*Ashley Price stains a garden box that the Lowe's Heroes helped build.*



*Nine Lowe's Heroes volunteered at Melwood in July helping to construct raised garden boxes and rebuild the pond in the conservatory.*



# Travelers Visit Mickey, Myrtle and Manhattan

Melwood's Access Adventures travelers have visited eight states since June. Recent trips included visits to Atlantic City, Virginia Beach, Williamsburg and Hershey Park among others. Take a look at where else Access Adventures landed these lucky travelers:

**[A]** Taylor McLeran and Jonathon Windsor view a shark at Ripley's Aquarium in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, during an Access Adventures trip in September.

**[B]** Access Adventures brings greetings from the heart of Manhattan.

**[C]** Access Adventures travelers pause for a photo outside Disney's Hollywood Studios in Orlando, Florida, in October.

**[D]** During a trip in October, Terry Redmond enjoys the New York City skyline.

**[E]** From left to right, Samie Griffs, Gloria Downs and Karah Weiser aboard the SkyWheel in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.



## PRIZING WINNING Personal Enrichment

Kathy Stephens only started sewing a year and a half ago, so when she went to the Charles County Fair this summer and saw two prize ribbons on items she created, she was thrilled.

Kathy is part of the Super Sewers group, which grew out of a project in Melwood's Personal Enrichment Program. She is among four others on Melwood's Super Sewer team who also received awards for their work at the fair. The team does both hand and machine sewing and learned through lessons every other week.



With their prize-winning quilts are (front row, l-r) Kathy Stephens, Carolyn Lange and (back row, l-r) Marie Lucas, Linda Perdue and Cathy Smith.



# Grants Enable Melwood to Expand Services, Enhance Facility

Melwood has been awarded nearly \$200,000 in grants since June to help expand its services and improve facilities for those with disabilities.

Melwood received a \$59,400 grant from the State of Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. The grant funds will be used to purchase 27 new computers and three projectors for Melwood's job training and day support programs at both the Upper Marlboro and Waldorf campuses.

"With this grant, over 250 people with disabilities will have access to state-of-the-art equipment and technology," said Jonathon Rondeau, chief program officer, Melwood. "This grant will enhance our training programs and provide people with disabilities access to technology to be able to participate in their communities."

The grant was awarded as part of the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission and Development Disabilities Administration Infrastructure Grant Program.

Melwood also received an \$88,000 Prince George's County Community Development Block Grant to renovate the bathrooms in the Copus Training Center (CTC) to increase accessibility and meet the needs of the changing population in Melwood's Crossroads program, which impacts 177 people daily. Completion of the project is slated for spring of 2013.



*A grant provided 27 computers for Melwood's day services programs at two campuses.*

The Charles County Board of Commissioners granted \$50,000 to provide transportation to people with disabilities employed within Charles County. The grant was received with the goal of alleviating transportation as a barrier for individuals getting to and from work in the Southern Maryland County. By providing transportation in an area where public transportation is not readily available, Melwood will assist 20 people in achieving their goal of employment.

## FAMILIES ENJOY Fall Fest at Recreation Center

Face painting, pony rides, the games—all a part of Melwood annual Fall Fest held on Saturday, Oct. 13 greeting nearly 500 visitors at Melwood's Recreation Center in Nanjemoy, Md.

Families enjoyed hay rides around the recreation center culminating in a trip to the pumpkin patch where children choose a pumpkin to carve or decorate. Volunteers and staff helped children on the recreation center's horses and ponies for a ride around the equestrian center.

At the Garden Center table, participants could make their own lavender sachets. Volunteer Theresa Smith hand-crafted hundreds of beautiful fabric sachets and volunteer, Mimi Colevas, donated lavender from her own garden that was dried and prepared for the sachets.

Local sponsors and volunteers donated sweets for a musical-chairs-style cake walk in which participants vied for the grand prize of each walk – to pick their own cake, pie or cookies.

Fall Fest 2012 was a great event for families and friends of Melwood! A special thank you to the Fall Fest sponsors: Arrow American Pest and Termite Control, FatCat Studios, Kevin's Wholesale, Manpower of Waldorf, Sign-a-Rama of Baltimore, Wildes-Spirit Design & Printing.

*Photos by: Erika Hagen*



## Melwood Celebrates Employee Service

### 20+ years

Wanda Brooks Williams

### 10+ years

Anthony Newman  
Denise Young

### 5+ years

Kevin Brown  
Jacqueline Cockerhan  
Maurice McKoy

### Richard Patopie

Cyril Phillips  
Joan Pinkney  
Karmal Wright



5606 Dower House Road  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772  
(301) 599-8000  
[www.melwood.org](http://www.melwood.org)

Contributions to Melwood help individuals with disabilities to earn their way. Each year, Melwood provides employment, support services and recreation for more than 2,400 people with disabilities. To find out how you can help, call (301) 599-8000 or visit [www.melwood.org](http://www.melwood.org).

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
WALDORF, MD  
PERMIT NO. 42



## Donate Your Vehicle!

*Tax deduction • Free towing*

1-877-MELWOOD  
(1-877-635-9663)



*Donate online at [www.melwood.org](http://www.melwood.org)*

Give people with disabilities just the lift they need!

*Join Us On:*



Facebook, Twitter and YouTube at MelwoodNews.

Get the inside perspective on our blog at  
[www.melwood.org/blog](http://www.melwood.org/blog)



**SAVE THE PLANET**

If you prefer an electronic instead of printed newsletter, please email us at [aroundmelwood@melwood.org](mailto:aroundmelwood@melwood.org).



**Workplace Giving Campaigns** support worthy programs at Melwood. Ask your employer for the **United Way** or **Combined Federal Campaign** form so you can join Melwood's family of supporters. Please help create jobs and opportunities for people with disabilities all year long by pledging to Melwood now on your workplace giving form. Our designation numbers are listed below.

*United Way of the National Capital Area*  
**8148**

*United Way of Charles County*  
*Write in "Melwood"*

*Combined Federal Campaign*  
**21166**

*Maryland Combined Charities*  
**3460**

*Combined Virginia Campaign*  
**3127**

Call your UW/CFC coordinator to request Melwood at your workplace giving fair!