

# CURRENT

**Gift  
Guide**  
HOW YOUR  
DONATION  
HELPS OTHERS

One Mother's

## TRIUMPH



**SPECIAL REPORT | ADDICTIONS**  
Meridian Programs Save Lives

**EAR INFECTIONS: Tips to avoid & treat**

**Meridian.** Helping make our communities healthier.



# A simple philosophy. A powerful commitment.



SHOWN ABOVE, FROM LEFT:

Wendy Thompson, *Senior Registered Sales Associate* | Evan Griner, *Financial Advisor, AAMS®*  
Charlie Sursa, *Senior Vice President, Investments, CFP®* | Dana Sizemore, *Senior Registered Sales Associate*  
Stan Griner, *Senior Vice President, Investments, IIMC®*

*F*ew things withstand the test of time like a solid relationship. At Raymond James, we take great pride in the fact that the recommendations of our clients are the primary source for new business. It attests to our success in sustaining long-term relationships...ones that not only endure, but also improve with age.

Sursa Griner Wealth Management of Raymond James is proud of its relationship with Meridian Health Services and proud to be a part of the Holidays at Gresham, a tradition that helps strengthen family and community relationships.

Healthy community relationships are what we're all about.

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# DRIVE-THRU LIGHT EXHIBIT



## Holidays at GRESHAM

Four dazzling  
weekends!

December 3 • December 8, 9, 10  
December 15, 16, 17 • December 22, 23

6:00 – 9:00 pm

3620 W. White River Blvd.



Bring your letter for  
Santa's mailbox

Live Nativity  
Scene with Animals  
December 10 & 17



SUZANNE  
GRESHAM  
Center

Division of Meridian Health Services

These nine days of holiday spirit are Meridian's gift  
to the community and will be free of charge to all.

### PARTNERS WITH A PURPOSE

The Ross Family  
University Dermatology  
Muncie Power Products  
Coldwell Banker Lunsford  
NV Design  
Jay Crew  
Pridemark  
Ivy Tech  
Midas  
e-Keeper Systems  
American Pest Professionals  
Wee Wisdom  
City of Muncie

The Suzanne Gresham Center is  
dedicated to improving a child's  
physical, mental and social well-being.

3620 W. White River Blvd.  
[www.meridianhs.org](http://www.meridianhs.org)  
765.288.1928





# Community Outreach

Last year, Meridian provided care to 3,127 individuals who were unable to pay for services

which totaled **\$3.8 MILLION** in charity care.



Outreach into the community includes advocacy, events and educational opportunities.

- **Child Advocacy Center** supports victims of child abuse and has increased the rate of cases accepted for prosecution by 320% since it opened.
- The **“Ducky Derby – Race Against Child Abuse”** river duck race has raised more than \$60,000 for the Child Advocacy Center.
- **Gresham Center’s annual Fam Fest** is a free event for families, offering health screenings, education, resources, entertainment and food.
- **Riley Children’s Foundation, Indiana Department of Health** and BY5 selected Meridian Health Pediatrics as a state **“Early Evaluation Hub,”** where children receive testing for signs of autism.
- **FosterHope** helps children in need of foster care, and provides training, resources and financial support to new foster parents.
- Meridian provided **3,741 Hospital and Community - 24-hour Emergency Service care visits on-site** to people with behavioral health emergencies, which helped reduce Emergency Room admissions.
- **Suicide Prevention Training** is offered to local organizations with the assistance of Meridian professionals.
- Meridian hosts a **statewide conference** for professionals serving individuals with a **dual diagnosis – intellectual and mental health challenges**.
- To help combat the state’s drug problem, Meridian developed a new specialized division, **Addictions & Recovery**, which includes a residential drug **treatment center** and **maternal treatment program**.
- **Project SAFE** is an event created by Meridian to raise awareness on current dangers of **substance abuse** and to educate families on how to address the issue.
- Meridian’s new event, **City Fit**, encourages East Central Indiana residents to strive for whole-person health through a 4K Color Run, free fitness classes and health resources.
- Meridian’s commitment to tobacco cessation was **awarded a grant** from the Indiana Department of Health, making it the lead agency for **Delaware County’s Tobacco Prevention Coalition**.

## Services We Provide

- Primary family medical care
- Pediatric health and urgent care
- Psychiatric medical services
- Women’s health
- Senior health - inpatient and outpatient care
- Counseling and therapy
- Children and family supportive programs
- Child Advocacy Center for children affected by abuse
- Addictions and recovery
- Home, community and school-based services
- Homelessness and independent living support
- HIV care coordination
- Programs for individuals with both intellectual disabilities and mental health challenges
- Care management, skill building and supported employment
- Therapeutic foster care and adoption

**MERIDIAN**  
**HEALTH Services**

Physical. Mental. Social Well-Being.

**866-306-2647**

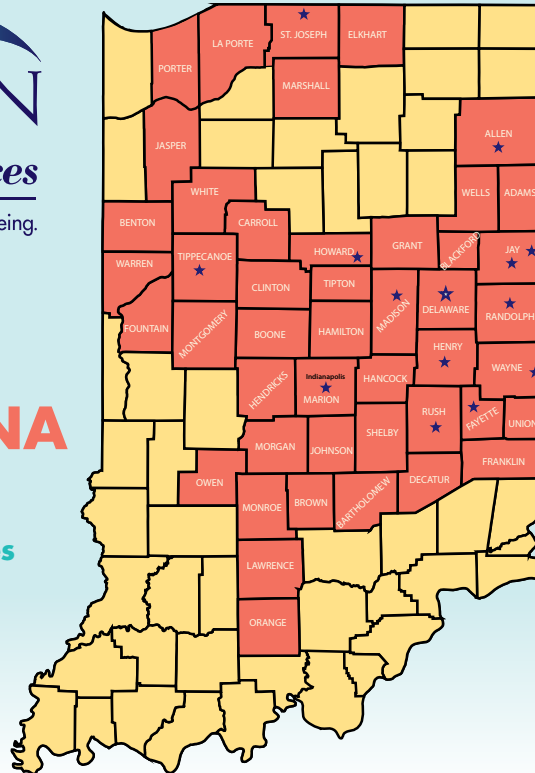
**[www.MeridianHS.org](http://www.MeridianHS.org)**



# Community Report



Residents in  
**46 INDIANA COUNTIES**  
receive health services  
from Meridian.



## 2017 Community Summary

Making a Positive Impact  
on the Communities we  
Serve!

Meridian's span of services  
reaches 46 counties through  
our school and mobile  
community-based programs.  
Meridian has 42 facilities  
including 23 clinics in 13  
counties.

Meridian serves over  
**40,700**  
patients each year.

Meridian has **1,195**  
employees in Indiana. Over 150  
employees are doctors, nurses  
and medical assistants.

Meridian provided  
**601,998**  
outpatient visits  
in the past year.

Revenue generated was  
**\$128.7 MILLION**  
during fiscal year 2016-17.

More than  
**290 SCHOOLS**  
have partnered with Meridian  
to bring services to students.

Over **\$58.6 MILLION**  
is dedicated for our  
employees' salaries and benefits.

Over **17,931** children  
received services from Meridian.

Meridian's community  
investment in 2016-17 totaled  
more than  
**\$52.2 MILLION**



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"I'm truly appreciative for the program and look forward to the classes at Meridian. When I'm done at the end of the day, I have a smile on my face. I'm learning every day."

— Autumn Fairchild, a participant in the Maternal Treatment Program

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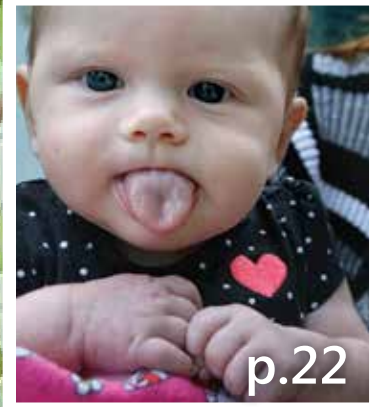
**Behavioral clinician.**

**Life skills teacher.**

**Giver of hope.**

**RAMONA DALE**

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# MERIDIAN

## HEALTH Services

Physical. Mental. Social Well-Being.

Meridian Health Services is a regional, progressive healthcare organization specializing in "whole-person" health integrating physical, mental and social well-being.

### Meridian Health Services

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## CURRENT

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Physician.  
Healthy living advocate.  
Forward thinker.

DR. SCOTT TAYLOR



# caring



# Together we can.

Healthy solutions for “whole-person” health.

Meridian Health Services is dedicated to providing integrated “whole-person” healthcare. This philosophy gives patients the services and care of primary medical care, behavioral health and human services all combined in a holistic approach to treatment.

- › Primary medical care
- › Obstetrics and gynecology
- › Inpatient and outpatient care for senior adults
- › Pediatric medical and behavioral care
- › Counseling and therapy
- › Children and family services
- › Child Advocacy Center for abused children
- › Addictions and recovery
- › School- and community-based services
- › Homelessness and independent living support
- › HIV care coordination
- › Programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental health challenges
- › Care coordination and supported employment
- › Supported residential housing
- › Foster care and adoption

MAIN LOCATION:  
240 N. Tillotson Ave. | Muncie, IN  
765.288.1928  
[www.MeridianHS.org](http://www.MeridianHS.org)

**MERIDIAN**  
**HEALTH Services**  
Physical. Mental. Social Well-Being.





Meridian can only do  
the work we do because  
of friends like you.

## Dear Friends of Meridian,

Opioid addiction is a crisis affecting families and communities across the nation, with Indiana having some of the highest rates of usage. Because of our whole-person health approach, Meridian is in a good position to help answer this need.

We are committed to this cause and have created programs to find solutions to help make our communities healthier.

Meridian established its Addictions and Recovery Center, providing residential detoxification and treatment in a 24-hour, therapeutic environment. We also created our Maternal Treatment Program, dedicated to treating and caring for addicted mothers and their newborn babies. Both programs provide multi-disciplinary approaches for drug and alcohol treatment through "whole-person" health.

In this issue, you'll read about how our Maternal Treatment Program helped a mother through recovery when she was at her lowest point. Thanks to Meridian's newest initiative, that same mother is now able to start a new life and create great memories with her young daughter.

You'll also learn about Project SAFE, an event established in Portland and Hartford City to raise awareness of the dangers of substance abuse and educate families on making healthy choices.

These programs and events are in addition to currently serving more than 8,000 patients in program care through substance abuse experts, therapists, addictions counselors, licensed social workers and behavioral clinicians to help treat patients most effectively.

To keep this success going, we are actively collaborating with many Indiana county community drug task forces, healthcare leaders, law enforcement, business and industry who want to make a difference.

We can only do the work we do because of friends like you. Thank you for the difference you make and for your support of Meridian Health Services.



**Hank A. Milius**  
PRESIDENT / CEO



**Karen Karmolinski**  
CHAIR, DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL





*From Our Family to Yours,  
Happy Holidays!*



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# MERIDIAN

Meridian Health Services is a progressive healthcare organization specializing in “whole-person” health integrating physical, mental and social well-being.



## MERIDIAN 2016-17 BOARD MEMBERS

Front row, from left: Dr. Chris Bowles, Vicki Tague, Dr. Terry Whitt Bailey, President/CEO Hank Milius

Back row, from left: Chris Fancher, Erica Graham, Mark Hardwick, Steve Smith, Brian Ring (Vice-Chair), Mike Lunsford, Sue Ann Pflum, Julie Newhouse

## MERIDIAN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Karen Karmolinski, Chair	Brent Webster
Vicki Tague	Melissa Daniels
Steve Smith	Wil Davis
Chris Fancher	Dr. David Gobble
Julie Newhouse	Erica Graham
Dr. Terry Whitt Bailey	Dr. George Branam
Wayne Shaffer	Dr. Scott Taylor
Lori Luther	Sue Ann Pflum

## MERIDIAN INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Chris Fancher, Chair	Brian Ring
John Littler	Michael Galliher
Rick Kelly	Steve Smith
Vicki Tague	John Coldren

# Meridian programs go platinum

MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE that two of its programs were named winners of Decision Health's nationally recognized Platinum Awards. MeridianMD, Meridian's primary medical care division, won the “Outstanding Performance in Community Care Settings – Integrated Care Networks” category, while Meridian's School Programs took first in the “Outstanding Achievement in Care Coordination Specialty Programs – Behavioral Health” category.

“We are very proud that these two Meridian programs are earning national attention,” Meridian President and CEO Hank Milius said. “And we accept these awards with gratitude and honor knowing the impact these programs are making in our community.”



Decision Health is a news source for the national healthcare industry that recognizes leaders in the healthcare industry and reaches over 100,000 healthcare professionals, hospitals and specialty physician practices. The Platinum awards recognize organizations that improve healthcare and positively impact the lives of those they serve. Winners are based upon their innovations, leadership, and initiative of finding new and better ways to bring quality healthcare to their patients and populations.

Meridian was nominated among other national and statewide healthcare organizations including Aetna, Kindred Healthcare, Amerigroup, Anthem and IU Health. MeridianMD, with seven locations including those in Muncie, New Castle, Richmond,



**PLATINUM AWARD'S WINNING TEAM:** Front row, from left: Audrey Kirby, Amelia Clark and Beth Clark. Back row, from left: Jennifer Henderson, Dawn Huff, Adrienne Collins and Heidi Monroe.

Rushville and the Jay County area, focuses on total well-being through physical, mental and social health. MeridianMD provides patients multiple benefits including higher quality of outcomes, better access to care, reduction in overlapping medical costs and lower emergency room utilization.

Meridian's School programs partner with more than 290 Indiana schools, helping children and school personnel on a daily basis through on-site services and consistent skill-building programs. By immersing behavioral clinicians into the school team, schools have seen dramatic results including increased attendance, overall behavioral improvement within the student body, fewer suspensions and improved grade point averages.



SUE ANN PFLUM:

# Integrating medical and mental health



MERIDIAN  
BOARD  
MEMBER  
Sue Ann  
Pflum

## As board term ends, Meridian advocate isn't going anywhere

SUE ANN PFLUM KNEW SHE WAS WHERE SHE needed to be. She was working as a nurse in an emergency room in Lebanon, Ind., in the late 1970s when she heard about a new alcohol and drug treatment center opening nearby.

"I thought I would give it a try," she recalled. "From the very first shift I worked, I knew I needed to be in some aspect of mental health. It's where I belonged."

This is why, many years later, she now finds herself on the board of Meridian Health Services, the region's leading healthcare organization that connects behavioral health, primary medical care and human services together for a comprehensive approach to care.

"It's so important to integrate primary care with behavioral health, to treat the whole person," she said. "Historically, we have siloed those services. Mental health was in one silo and medical health was in another. I have always been one to say we need to coordinate the two. And that's exactly what Meridian does."

Meridian does that in Rushville, where Pflum was working in mental health six years ago when she learned about Meridian's efforts.

Pflum, who has led initiatives in Richmond to integrate mental and primary health, was on the board of directors at Rushville Family Health Services when it was acquired by Meridian, she was asked to join the board at Meridian then.

She said she appreciates first-hand the hard work happening in the field of mental health at Meridian.

"It's hard to get people to work in that field," she said. "There is a shortage of healthcare workers, specifically a shortage in mental health. You have to really love the patients."

Meridian, she said, goes beyond those services.

"I am very proud to be a part of Meridian in regard to its community involvement," she said. "When they establish a new location in a community, they get involved. They become a real part of that community."

She also pointed to recent initiatives such as the creation of a treatment program for infants with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) and their mothers who are struggling with drug addiction. "Meridian sees a need and fills it," she said.

A decade ago, Pflum married Steve Walker and moved back to her 160-acre family farm in Connersville. She currently works with Anthem, a health insurance company, and enjoys spending time with their two grandchildren.

Her term on the board will end this year. "But I am moving onto the development committee," she said. "Meridian doesn't let its board members go very far."

She laughed.

"And I wouldn't go very far. Meridian is a great place to be."



# Northfield Park Primary Care Campus

## New Castle



Henry Community Health's new Primary Care Campus at Northfield Park is designed for patient convenience with three physician offices, lab services, Neighborhood Pharmacy and Education Center for health education programs.

### New Castle Family & Internal Medicine

New Castle Family & Internal Medicine's team concept is focused on keeping patients healthy as well as caring for them when they are ill. In addition to physicians and nurse practitioners they have expanded to include other Care Team members.

Counseling services are offered as mental health issues often make it more difficult for patients with chronic problems to take care of themselves. Patients with diabetes have the opportunity to have individual appointments with the diabetes educator at no cost.

Outpatient Care Coordination provides ongoing support and coaching to patients with chronic conditions in addition to providing assistance during periods of transition. They also work with patients who may need extra help on an outpatient basis with managing problems such as COPD, high blood pressure or diabetes.

**7:30 AM-5 PM MONDAY-FRIDAY**

**For an appointment with a provider at the Northfield Park Office - 599.3100**

**For an appointment with a provider at the Forest Ridge Office - 599.3400**

### New Castle Immediate Care & Family Health

**8 AM - 7 PM MONDAY-FRIDAY**  
**8 AM - NOON SATURDAY**

**Appointments can be made by calling 599.2754**  
Patients have the convenience of walk-in care and the ability to call for a same day appointment or to schedule a future appointment. We care for:

- Infants, children, teens and adults
- Acute problems such as the flu or minor illnesses
- Chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure
- Minor injuries
- Sports, school and camp physicals

**Occupational Medicine services available for businesses.**

### New Castle Pediatrics

**8 AM - 7 PM MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY**  
**7 AM - 7 PM WEDNESDAY | 7 AM - 5 PM FRIDAY**

Just as your children grow, over the last few years New Castle Pediatrics has added new physicians and nurse practitioners and we have outgrown our location. Our spacious new office offers larger waiting rooms, additional exam rooms and office space for your Care Team members.

As your partner in your child's healthcare we are here to help keep your child healthy, diagnose and treat your child's illness and provide care for minor injuries. We provide care for our patients from birth through the age of 17.

Our Same Day Appointments and expanded office hours make it even more convenient as together we care for your children.

**Appointments can be made by calling 521.0901**

## Where Is Northfield Park Located?

We're easy to find on the northside of New Castle. Our Primary Care Campus at Northfield Park is located off Indiana 3 at 152 Wittenbraker just west of the Henry County YMCA.

### Hours For Patient Visits

**New Castle Family & Internal Medicine**  
7:30 am - 5 pm Monday-Friday

**Lab Draw Area**  
7 am - 5 pm Monday-Friday

**New Castle Pediatrics**  
8 am - 7 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday  
7 am - 7 pm Wednesday  
7 am - 5 pm Friday

**Neighborhood Pharmacy**  
8 am - 6 pm Monday-Friday

**New Castle Immediate Care & Family Health (formerly New Castle Walk-In Care)**  
8 am - 7 pm Monday-Friday  
8 am - Noon Saturday

## Education Center

### 1st Wednesday | 1:30 pm Better Breathing Support Group

Helps patients diagnosed with COPD and their loved ones, manage health day to day and learn how to have more good days than bad.

Angie | 599.3545 or Ashley | 599.3109

### 2nd Thursday | 1:30 pm Diabetes Support Group

This is an opportunity to share and learn from others who have diabetes. Family members are welcome.

Steve | 521.1544

### 2nd Thursday | 6 pm Breast Cancer Support Group

Cancer is scary and our support group can be of great benefit to help you through this journey.

Tonya | 599.3149

### Healthy Eating Every Day (HEED)

This program is for anyone who wants to make lifestyle changes to their eating habits. The cost is \$30 for the 14-week class.

Joy | 599.3576

### Smoking Cessation Classes

Looking for a way to stop smoking? Our free Smoking Cessation class helps you get started to stopping.

Questions | 521.1176.

### Stress Management Classes

You'll learn and practice relaxation techniques, the importance of proper nutrition, proper rest and having fun along the way. The four sessions are just \$20.

Diane | 599.3719





## Aligning with Meridian's forward-thinking approach

DR. SCOTT TAYLOR BELIEVES IN INNOVATIVE healthcare. As a physical medicine, rehabilitation and pain management physician with Henry Community Health, Dr. Taylor is committed to bringing the latest medical developments to people with chronic pain.

"Many patients I see are at the end of their rope. More often than not, they have been everywhere and have seen a multitude of doctors about their health issues," Dr. Taylor said. "Technology is amazing and with some of the new procedures available, I am able to help many folks get so much better." Taylor finds it rewarding to help patients go from suffering with debilitating pain to regaining normalcy in their lives. "Some people didn't think they could go back to work — or get off narcotics, but in working closely with my patients as a team, we have been able to help make it a reality," he said.

Dr. Taylor focuses on helping people achieve healthy lives, rather than just addressing symptoms. His healthcare philosophy is a natural match with Meridian's commitment to integrated medicine with an emphasis on treating the "whole person." For Dr. Taylor, making Meridian Health Services a charity of choice was an easy decision. "Meridian has a very strong presence in our community," said Dr. Taylor, who recently became a member of the Fund Development Council. "I know the leadership of Meridian is represented by some of the strongest, hard-working people in the community. I'm very proud to be part of the group."

Dr. Taylor, who is certified by both the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the American Board of Pain Medicine, is impressed with the forward-thinking approach Meridian has taken to deal with some of the region's biggest health problems, including addiction. "I have a good friend who is a neonatal nurse at the hospital, and I admire how much energy has been put into addressing neonatal addiction," he said. "Indiana has a dire need for addiction treatment programs."

As America's opioid crisis continues to grow, Meridian's integration of mental health, primary care and specialty services will become a model for national healthcare, according to Dr. Taylor who says: "It's a pivotal time in American healthcare. Something has to change, and I think Meridian is ahead of the curve when it comes to the future of healthcare. Meridian's mission of helping make our communities healthier is evident in their collaborations, like the new Maternal Treatment Program. Meridian took a leadership role rallying local resources, and the Taylors are thrilled to support that kind of leadership."

Healthcare is a family business for Taylor. His wife, Lisa, is a dietitian and teaches nutrition at IVY Tech. Three of his four children have either graduated or are pursuing careers in healthcare fields. Dr. Taylor has been practicing for 24 years and chose physical medicine and rehabilitation after seeing the daily physical challenges of his brother Danny, who has cerebral palsy.

Dr. Taylor keeps up with the rapid advancements in pain management through continuing education, professional meetings/conferences and involvement with medical societies. "I know our orthopedic department is one of the top two in the United States, and the hospital continues to track outcomes and patient satisfaction," he said. Dr. Taylor feels that Meridian is on the same path of quality and excellence. "People around the country are taking note of Meridian's integrated care outcomes, and I'm proud to be a part of telling their story to as many folks as possible. I would highly recommend people to choose Meridian as their charity of choice."

DR. SCOTT TAYLOR:

# Helping people lead healthy lives



DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEMBER  
Dr. Scott Taylor, pictured with his wife, Lisa, and their children have made healthcare a family business.





### \$1,500 GIFT

can buy a **Vivitrol injection** given by Meridian's Women's Health providers and help mothers in our Maternal Treatment Program overcome drug addiction.



### \$100 GIFT

could provide a child with a **yearly check-up** to Meridian Health Pediatrics.



# Holiday Gift Catalog

## How Your Donation Helps Our Programs

### \$75 GIFT

could purchase a **digital "Health Buddy"** which monitors a patient's heart rate, blood pressure, and blood sugar, alerting us to health issues which reduces emergency room visits.



### \$10 GIFT

may buy a **haircut** for a person headed to a job interview in our Supported Employment program.



### \$5 GIFT

may purchase **towels and washcloths** for a homeless person transitioning to Walnut Commons.



### \$75 GIFT

may buy a week's worth of **groceries** for cooking classes to help us teach clients how to live independently.





### **\$500 GIFT**

could buy a **treadmill** for Meridian's group homes to improve the physical well-being of residents.



### **\$2,500 GIFT**

may purchase a **sensory room** - complete with lights, music, and tactile objects - to help children with ADHD, learning disabilities, and autism, learn to process their surroundings in a stimulating but calm atmosphere.



### **\$50 GIFT**

could purchase a **carbon monoxide detector** to help new foster families become licensed through our Foster Hope program.



### **\$250 GIFT**

could buy **emergency clothes** for children at the Child Advocacy Center that are displaced by abuse.



### **\$1,000 GIFT**

could provide training and support for a **therapy dog** to reduce client stress levels and improve therapeutic results.



### **\$10 GIFT**

may purchase a **weekly bus pass** to help HIV patients get to doctor's appointments.



## **Please Consider a Holiday Donation**

The gifts featured in this gift catalog are examples of how your monetary donation helps Meridian's diverse programs. Scan this QR code with your mobile device or tablet or enter [billpay.meridianhs.org/donate](http://billpay.meridianhs.org/donate) in your browser. You'll zip to our secure website, where you can find more information and donate.





**SCIT TEAM.** Meridian's Specialized Community Intervention Team works together to treat challenging issues. Shown in the back row, from left: Dr. Sarfraz Khan, Daryl Thompson, Amy Clark, Dinah Gibson, Amanda Whitten. Front row, from left: Vikki Heavenridge, Steve Manderbach, Hannah Dennis, Terian Reiley.

# Healthy giving

## Meridian's fund development dollars at work



Despite its 40-year status as a not-for-profit healthcare provider, only in the last five years has Meridian ramped up fund development efforts to enhance its services.

What began as a couple dozen employees participating in payroll deduction for its HIV program has blossomed into a multi-tiered giving infrastructure involving 1,500 donors a year to help make our communities healthier.

Thanks to contributions from our generous partners, donors and employees, Meridian has done everything from building playgrounds to starting entirely new programs to address community health needs.



Meridian's multi-tiered giving infrastructure relies on private donors, businesses and events to help make the community healthier.

Rialzo, Meridian's annual charity gala, is the pinnacle of fundraising efforts and identifies programs in need of additional support each year. Over the years, Rialzo funds have paid for sonogram equipment for Meridian Women's Health, built a \$100,000 playground at the Suzanne Gresham Center, planted three community gardens used in patient treatment, and started a new Maternal Treatment program for addicted mothers and their babies to address the area's opioid addictions crisis.

Another event gaining local popularity, the annual Ducky Derby event which augments the Fam Fest activities, has paid for new, state-of-the-art video equipment allowing victims of childhood sexual abuse to tell their story for recording and potential use in criminal proceedings. Rates of cases accepted for prosecution are up to 80 percent, more than three times the national average, thanks in part to such a video system.

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**BARE NECESSITIES.** The Bare Necessities Pantry in Rushville was started by Amanda Skillman in response to Meridian's Fund Development contest modeled around the television show "Shark Tank." Programs pitched for funding to a panel of internal judges. Amanda's knowledge of her clients and community was the inspiration for the store, which stocks items that fill in the gaps around what food stamps don't provide for needy families.

## Meridian provides millions in charity care across Indiana


Just as Meridian receives donations from volunteers and donors across the community, Meridian works to give back to its community through outreach events, free screenings, health resources and providing services free of charge to people unable to pay for needed care. Last year, Meridian provided nearly \$4 million in charity care. Here are a just a few examples of Meridian's community participation this year:

Meridian participated in over 350 community outreach events helping people in over 40 counties by providing free health screenings, education, resource information, and connecting people to services.

Meridian participated in several community events and task force groups to help fight the area's drug crisis. One example, Meridian was featured with several expert panelists for Ball State University's Facing Addiction project, a forum on education and prevention about drug addiction and recovery as well as included on WIPB's Wellness Matters Addiction shows and included on UnMasked, a TV documentary about addiction.

Meridian partners and supports many great organizations and causes throughout Indiana to help our make our communities thrive and people healthy. One example of this is Meridian's collaboration with many healthcare providers and hospitals such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation and IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital to provide free cervical cancer screenings for Cervical Cancer Awareness Month at Meridian Women's Health. By providing these screenings, Meridian was able to reach women who normally might not have access to healthcare because of insurance, affordability or location barriers.

Meridian also works with hundreds of school systems throughout the state and are dedicated to our youth. In partnership with a local Rotary, Meridian sponsored "Self Reliance" scholarships to local high school seniors who have overcome life obstacles and hardships to be afforded the opportunity to go to college.

Meridian's partnership also with Headstart helped young children at risk get up to date on immunizations and other health screenings. Meridian Health Pediatrics provided free lead screenings and hemoglobin tests also for attendees. We cannot do the work we do without the people who support us and the amazing team at Meridian. We thank you! 

Rialzo, Meridian's annual charity gala, is the pinnacle of fundraising efforts and identifies programs in need.



## EMPLOYEES ARE INVESTED, TOO

Meridian's internal employee giving campaign brought in more than \$44,000 this year, much of it earmarked for favorite programs. This year, the development team has come up with new means of connecting people toward Meridian's cause. For this year's Ducky Derby, the team conducted an internal "Penny War," where the amount of money donated represented points that determined which employees raced in the Ducky Derby. The internal penny war raised more than \$750 for the Child Advocacy Center.

One of the newest – and most fun – ways the fund development team has engaged with its employees is through



**HANK TANK** is named after Meridian President/CEO Hank Milius.

"Hank Tank," named after Meridian President/CEO Hank Milius and framed like ABC's Shark Tank. Just like the ABC show, in which hopeful entrepreneurs present ideas to investors, Hank Tank had six Meridian

programs present three-minute pitches to a panel of judges and a crowd of employees. During these pitches, they explained what they could do with extra funding.

Thanks to having the highest rate of participation in Meridian's annual giving campaign, Meridian's Connxxions division helped pick four judges – employees Aliza McNeill, John Schock, Randy Lykens, and Susy Gard – who sat alongside Hank Milius and asked questions after the presentations.

There were a variety of fund development ideas on the table: emergency meal kits, enhanced treatment, a necessities pantry, children's art programs, foster parent resource packs and bed bug pest control. Hank Tank intended on having only one winner, but the pitches were so well-executed, the development team awarded funding to all programs. Meridian's Specialized Community Intervention Team (SCIT) earned \$20,000 to control its clients' serious bed bug issue, while other teams each earned \$2,500.

"It was incredible to witness these Meridian program leaders take initiative and share what they would do with more funding," Milius said. "It really showed how much our employees care."

## GETTING RID OF BED BUGS

Meridian awarded \$20,000, its largest sum of funding, to tackle a very important issue in treating the community's most challenging clients. Meridian's team of behavioral clinicians had encountered a big obstacle holding up its normal treatment process. Out of 50 clients being treated through Meridian's SCIT program, (Specialized Community Intervention Team) a team-based approach to providing services to people with severe mental illness, clinicians had counted around 15 confirmed cases of bed bugs. Not only do these parasitic insects cause a nuisance by biting clients, but are also easy to spread and transport.

As for getting rid of them, that's not so easy. According to Meridian SCIT team member Terian Reiley, this process is a constant battle. Fully cleaning a client's house takes heat treatments, chemical treatments and regular follow-ups to ensure all have been eliminated. This process is also very costly, normally \$1,000-2,000 per pest control visit.

Because the problem was so serious, Meridian needed to make sure nothing would prevent the SCIT team from treating its clients. A Process Improvement Project (PI Project) was created

to address the best way to utilize the funding. The multi-level solution involves buying suitcase-sized heaters for Meridian facilities all over the state as well as kits for cars and a pool of funds to address larger outbreaks should they occur in an employee's residence. The team wants to be sure it's making the best possible use of the money awarded and help not only the SCIT team, but all of Meridian's employees who encounter bed bugs in the course of their work day.

## MAKING SURE NO ONE GOES HUNGRY

Angie Smith, Meridian Operations Coordinator and team leader of its enhanced support team, knew she had to do something when she noticed some of her team's patients paying regular visits to the emergency room. She found that, often, these visits resulted just from people going hungry.

"Some of our patients are homeless and may not have a place to prepare food; they may not even have dishes," Smith said. "Some couldn't stay awake because they haven't eaten in three days. If they go days without eating, we start to see decline."

It costs about \$5.50 to provide adequate nutrition to one person for one day. So, Smith asked Meridian to help purchase emergency meal kits, a two-day supply of nutrition-rich meals. Each package contains non-perishable food items for a complete, well-balanced diet: raisins, orange juice, granola bars, canned stew, peanuts, pasta and even a pack of silverware.

Meridian answered the call. Because of the Hank Tank funding, Smith was able to purchase 300 meals that she now has ready to provide to people whenever they need. Smith says, "Individuals come to Meridian every day reporting that they're hungry, haven't eaten for days, and/or have no money to buy food for themselves. Regardless of whether they are existing patients or are new to Meridian, anyone in need is provided with enough food for a few simple meals."

Often this is enough to get the individual through until their next check, the next day that a local food pantry is open, or until they can be connected with a case manager who can help them access other community resources.

"It's rewarding to know that we're able to help not just our patients but our community," Smith said. "Nobody should ever go hungry."



**MERIDIAN'S** emergency meal kits.

## ALLOWING CHILDREN TO EXPRESS CREATIVITY

Upon hearing her program had been awarded \$2,500 from Hank Tank, Meridian clinical supervisor Aubrey Driscoll was "elated," knowing this money would provide a creative outlet for children facing hardships.

Right now, Driscoll and her team are in the planning process of creating "Dream Big," a community art event that will allow the Suzanne Gresham Center's patients to express themselves through making artwork. With Hank Tank funding, Meridian will provide a blank canvas, art supplies and a little bit of direction to each child. The rest is up to them. "We strongly believe that this event can empower the children of our community and encourage them to dream big, despite the adversities they may be facing in their everyday lives," Driscoll said.


There are currently 60 pieces of art hanging at the Gresham Center. It is Driscoll's hope that Meridian staff could hang the new art along the walls of the building so "every participant could walk the halls and see his or her creations and dreams come to life."





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LOVE & SMILES. Autumn Fairchild and her daughter, Ellie, and Meridian's Behavioral Clinician, Ramona Dale.



# I just needed a life jacket.'

Meridian's Maternal Treatment Program delivers life skills, hope and a sense of belonging for mothers who struggle with addictions.



A NEW LIFE. Baby Ellie.

Autumn Fairchild was dying. She knew it as her body fell to the bathroom floor in a Muncie restaurant.

"I felt like I was falling into a deep, dark black pit," says the 27-year-old. "I knew I was dying. I was OK with it. I was at peace with it."

It was one of two places Autumn knew her life would take her: prison or death.

And that day almost happened.

The quiet acceptance in Autumn's voice as she tells the story one year later is as chilling as the hard bathroom floor where her body lay – heroin needle in hand – as she was resuscitated from an overdose.

It was the last time Autumn used heroin, but not drugs.

Autumn, who says she began using drugs when she was 12 years old, participates in Meridian's Addictions and Recovery – Maternal Treatment Program that supports mothers who struggle with addiction during and after pregnancy. It's part of Meridian's emphasis on whole-person health, treating the physical, mental and social well-being of its patients.

Autumn started with pain medications, then marijuana and heroin. She went to a local rehab center for help.

"Not even two or three days out of rehab, I used again," she says. "It went continuously downhill from there. I didn't have a job. I was staying in hotels, friends' houses, abandoned houses. I even stayed in the middle of a cornfield in my tent. At that point, I started using meth," Autumn says and sighs, pausing for a moment as she prepares to share more of her story in hopes others can learn from it.

"My family all walked away from me because they were tired of dealing with the next storm I had created. I was in and out of jail, always hearing my name on the radio scanner. I would stand outside of places



ENCOURAGEMENT. Meridian's Behavioral Clinician, Ramona Dale, hugs Autumn.

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FROM PAGE 23

**MOMENTS OF JOY.** Autumn and her daughter, Ellie.

soliciting. I was in a really bad abusive relationship. I had an unstable life. I was caught stealing from just about every store in Muncie because that's how I fed my habit."

Last November came with a summons to appear in court. She then also decided to take a pregnancy test. "While I was taking the pregnancy test, I was in the bathroom getting high," Autumn says. "I didn't go to court and received a warrant for not showing up." That day, she learned life-changing news.

"I was pregnant," Autumn says. "I considered it to be a sign that this was supposed to be where my life was going to go."

Drug use stopped. Mostly.

"I relapsed twice," Autumn says. "The last time I used, I threw up because I was so guilty and so mad at myself. I got arrested eight months pregnant, and the judge ordered me to do classes instead of sitting in jail and I said, 'Absolutely.'"

Meridian Health Services entered Autumn's life – literally.

"Everybody says, 'What can we do?'" says Ramona Dale, behavioral clinician with Meridian's Maternal Treatment Program at the Suzanne Gresham Center, as she stands in the snug and inviting living room of Autumn's home cradling Autumn's baby, Ellie, born in June. "They let me in their homes, their lives. So many moms don't have anyone. I help them get to the pediatrician's office, court, probation officer, and group meetings. Everybody needs somebody to walk with them. Somebody who cares. And I care."

Ramona leads Autumn in a group session three days a week with other mothers. Both Autumn and Ellie sit through the three-hour classes together. "The program is new, and there's nothing like it nearby," Ramona says. "It's about whole-person health. We talk about what led up to the addiction."

"There is a stigma about drug addiction – that drug addicts are bad and that if you're a drug addict and a mom that makes you extra bad. They are not bad people," Ramona says, resting her head on baby Ellie. "They are not drug addicts. They are people who struggle with addiction."

Ramona says community resources are often closed to people

struggling with addiction because of what they've done in their past. "You find yourself becoming defensive of people," Ramona says, as she looks protectively down at baby Ellie. Her smile is genuine and warm as she asks, "Right?"

Meridian is working to address a complex issue in a way that is producing outcomes. "They are trying to understand why everyone is continuing to use," Autumn says. "They are trying to break the cycle, and I haven't seen that from any other place I have been. I'm truly appreciative for the program and look forward to the classes at Meridian. When I'm done at the end of the day, I have a smile on my face," she says, letting her voice trail off. "I'm learning every day."

Autumn points to herself as an example of the importance of the program. "A year ago, people would've looked at me and thought I didn't have a chance. Now, I'm healthy, happy and have a great baby."

Meridian, she says, is not there to judge.

"They want to better the epidemic," Autumn says. "It's shown me a different way I can live my life. The life skills I'm learning, no one can take away from me."

Autumn is grateful for the impact Meridian is having on her life. She says: "I just needed a life jacket, and I was thrown a rope."

Meridian and its programming have offered Autumn and other mothers a sense of community.

"You are able to communicate and talk to grown-ups who understand you and don't make you feel like you're a disease," Autumn says. "They encourage you to get your life back."

Autumn is now enrolled at Ivy Tech Community College where she is pursuing a degree in human services.

"I feel like the first half of my life has been so bad, I want to be able to help somebody else," Autumn says.

It is clear that Ramona, her Meridian class teacher and clinician, is a role model.

"She's an incredible mom," Ramona says with a bit of pride as she passes baby Ellie to her mom as the two say their farewells in Autumn's living room.

"If you're coming to class tomorrow and need a ride, let me know," Ramona says to Autumn.

The two women exchange hugs.

Autumn calls out through the front door: "Bye, Class Mom."

Thanks to the care, support and treatment from Meridian's Addictions and Recovery – Maternal Treatment Program, Autumn no longer feels like she is falling into a deep, dark black pit. She is uplifted and sees the light in each day. And her daughter has better opportunities ahead. —

**HAPPY BEGINNINGS.** Baby Ellie and her mother, Autumn.





IT'S OFFICIAL. Meridian's ribbon cutting for its new Maternal Treatment Program that supports mothers and babies with addictions.

## Meridian's Maternal Treatment Program special to many

MERIDIAN'S NEWEST PROGRAM, MERIDIAN Addictions and Recovery – Maternal Treatment Program, is part of an ongoing expansion of services addressing addiction in East Central Indiana.

It all started with an idea from Terri Milius, wife of Meridian President/CEO Hank Milius. As a volunteer with IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital's Cuddler program, she was in contact with some of the community's sickest infants, those born into addiction. She went home and asked her husband, "What is Meridian doing to care for these babies?"

Today, her idea has come to fruition. Supported by generous donors, including funds raised at Rialzo VIII, Meridian's annual charity gala, the Maternal Treatment Program offers intensive outpatient group therapy to mothers fighting addiction.

The program provides specialized care and support for drug-addicted mothers and their babies born suffering from withdrawal. Meridian's goal is to reduce substance use among pregnant women and mothers while keeping them close to their babies, as some might be diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS).

A multi-disciplinary team of community leaders, healthcare experts and nonprofit organizations attend the multi-disciplinary meetings to guide policy and best practice. This team includes employees and volunteers from IU Health Ball Memorial, Meridian Health Services, Delaware County Department of Child Services (DCS), Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), the Voss Center for Women, Muncie BY5, the Muncie Police Department, Delaware County Sheriff's Department, Delaware County Prosecutor's Office, Delaware County Magistrate, the Yorktown Police Department, Thrive Alliance, Hope Redemption Center and Huffer Child Care Resource and Referral. The multi-

disciplinary team also exists to help provide the best care and support. The integrated treatment team includes a referral agency, Meridian Health Services staff and other agencies that specifically interact with each mother.


Thanks to collaboration and support from our community partners, this program is able to excel. For example, The Purdue Extension Office provides these patients with nutrition and financial education. Prevent Child Abuse of Delaware County provides resources for topics related to abuse and neglect of children. Huffer Resource and Referral is setting up a group to help women through the parenting process. The babies are also provided with quilts thanks to a generous donation from the Quilter's Guild of Muncie, along with books and parenting materials from BY5 Muncie.

Right now, the new program is treating approximately 20 patients, adding to the more than 8,700 addicted patients Meridian serves annually.

"As we see the community struggling with addiction, we hope this program can serve as a vital resource and help reduce this epidemic," said Hank Milius. "This one is especially dear to my wife and I."

The program and the "baby store" were designed and set up with the help of volunteers Cathy and Halie Hardwick, as an incentive toward recovery. The store uses "baby bucks," which patients earn for each session they attend and redeem for infant care items like bottles, pacifiers, toys, onesies and diapers. The store receives donated clothing, and volunteers Terri Milius and others have also purchased new items to keep it stocked.

The Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce joined Meridian for the Maternal Treatment Program's official ribbon cutting this past summer. Contributors, community leaders, volunteers and local media were invited on a "Trolley Tour" of Meridian's Suzanne Gresham Center, where the Maternal Treatment Program is located.

The program is accepting patients from referral sources in East Central Indiana including court officials, prosecutors, probation officers, the Department of Child Services, Meridian Women's Health and hospitals. The program also accepts non-referred patients. 





**SOLUTIONS.** Jim McClelland, the state's first executive director for drug prevention, treatment and enforcement, hosts a forum on drug abuse.

## Meridian partners to address drug issues

**T**HE PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE PROBLEM IN INDIANA is at epidemic levels. Meridian Health Services has participated in community drug task forces and other community collaborations to address the issue and identify possible action steps.

In June, Jim McClelland, the state's first executive director for drug prevention, treatment and enforcement, was invited by Meridian to host a forum on the topic of drug abuse at Meridian Health Services, which brought in government officials from various cities like Lafayette mayor Tony Roswarski and Richmond mayor Dave Snow. Meridian is also leading efforts in the region by recently opening an Addictions and Recovery Center, a service within its new Addictions and Recovery division providing 24-hour care through residential detoxification and treatment.

Meridian also has developed community partnerships. Meridian partnered with Ball State University's Facing Addiction project and is also a member of the Drug Task Force collaborative, started by the Ball Brothers Foundation's Jud Fisher. "Governor Holcomb is serious about this," McClelland told the task force. "We want to focus efforts on this issue. There are a lot of resources out there to bring the pieces together and leverage."

Meridian's President and CEO Hank Milius is confident that community partnerships within the task force will help this process. "We look forward to teaming up with Mr. McClelland in future projects as we work to tackle this drug problem," Milius said. "There is no doubt that Meridian's collaboration with these hard-working individuals will help us find solutions to local and statewide addiction."

Amelia Clark, Meridian's regional vice president for Delaware and Madison counties, said the value of the taskforce is the community collaboration it creates.

"This is a regional issue and it will take the whole

community - and many outside of the community - to properly address the issue," she said.

Meridian is active on the Community Drug Task Force, along with other health care professionals, representatives from law enforcement, the courts, the clergy, business and industry, manufacturing and the media.

McClelland said his role was to identify where the state could help. "We're looking at everything from opening additional treatment centers to putting peer recovery support specialists in high-risk areas across the state," he said.

McClelland added that his office feels a growing sense of urgency. He said under consideration are:

- Mobile addiction treatment teams
- Education and prevention support, especially for children and youth.
- More support for faith-based groups

"In all of this though we really have to have a strong sense of urgency because so many are dying," he said. "We are committed to reverse trends and start reduction in substance abuse. It's not easy. It's a massive problem." It's a problem proven by statistics. Authorities say 75 percent of those addicted to heroin, started on opioids. Meridian Health Services - bringing its expertise and its voice to the cause - has treated more than 8,700 patients for addictions and have more than 60 people in the MAT program (Medication Assisted Treatment) with Suboxone and Vivitrol, medication that helps patients manage their addiction to ensure more effective recovery.

Through its annual charity gala, Rialzo, Meridian raised \$150,000 for its addictions programs, which include a Maternal Treatment Program for drug-addicted mothers and their babies. In Richmond, Meridian also opened its Addictions and Recovery Center in May, a residential addictions center that is now accepting patients for residential detoxification and rehabilitation. To raise awareness of the dangers of substance abuse and educate families on how to make healthy choices, Meridian also created Project SAFE, a free family event with health screenings and resources.



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## MERIDIAN HEALTH Project SAFE

SUBSTANCE AWARENESS AND FAMILY EDUCATION

MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES TACKLED the difficult subject of substance abuse dangers and how to help children make positive choices during its Project SAFE events in Jay and Blackford counties.

Project SAFE— Substance Awareness and Family Education – brought together more than two dozen vendors, as well as presentations from A Better Life - Brianna's Hope, Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition, Jay County Hospital, Portland Rotary and police departments that provided K9 demonstrations.

"Meridian really wanted to address this need by educating families about drug awareness and prevention and what resources are available to help them," said Beth Clark, Meridian's Vice President of Marketing. "We know that collaboration within the community is key in combating the drug epidemic as that helps reach more people and offers a broader span of resources. The staff and community have done a wonderful job in building this event."

Clark said events like Project SAFE help bring together resources and community experts to help people with awareness, detection and prevention. The work falls in line with Meridian's focus on whole-person health, emphasizing physical, social and mental well-being.









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# Wee Wisdom & wide open hearts

There, among the finger-painted masterpieces on a bookshelf at Wee Wisdom Nursery School and Child Care Center, sit several Ducky Derby trophies from the Meridian Health Services' annual Race Against Child Abuse.

"As a partner, Wee Wisdom is dedicated to making annual donations that help in Meridian's many causes," said Wee Wisdom Director Denise Allen. "We also enjoy participating in events that celebrate these causes such as the Ducky Derby and Rialzo."

"Wee Wisdom is excited about the opportunity to give back to our community on a multi-need and multi-generational basis," she added. "We are blessed to be associated with Meridian Health Services." She quickly discovered that Wee Wisdom and Meridian have much in common in that they both understand the importance of "whole-person health."

"Wee Wisdom and Meridian Health share similar missions that continue to grow and change with each new year," she said. "Like Meridian, Wee Wisdom recognizes the importance of helping people in the community. Meridian provides a wide range of whole-person health services, which lead to happier, healthier and more productive lives. Meridian has helped Wee Wisdom and its families learn about ways that we can work together to make a difference in the lives of people in our community."

Wee Wisdom has been making a difference in the lives of children since 1970. That's when Allen's mom, Nadene Phillips, started the childcare center in their home, built by her father, Gerald, almost 70 years ago. It has been there ever since.

After retiring from Wee Wisdom in 1988, her parents offered Allen the opportunity to keep Wee Wisdom going. "So, I left my administrative position with Rise Special Services in Perry Township, purchased Wee Wisdom from my parents, and set out

to maintain and build upon the exemplary reputation that my mother had worked so lovingly to create for the first 18 years."

And build she did. Bedrooms became offices. The family room and living rooms became classrooms. The garage was transformed into a play area and kitchen. Outside there are playgrounds, a Big Wheel track and a pool.

Every square inch is colorful, inviting and, most importantly, feels like home. Because it is. And at the heart of it, Allen said, "is the mission that Wee Wisdom was founded upon, to provide exemplary programs for preschool and school-age children."

She does that with the help of a dedicated staff – many with more than a decade of experience there – Ball State University education students, who complete training there, and, of course, the Wee Wisdom families.

The facility became state licensed in 1988, nationally accredited in 2014 through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and attained the highest level of accomplishment in the state of Indiana by achieving Level 4 through Paths To Quality. Allen, who has a master's degree in special education and is licensed to teach grades K-12, goes through periodic revisions every two to three years and has written each curriculum.

More than 100 preschoolers enroll in Wee Wisdom each year. At the end of each year, they graduate, at a fancy ceremony at Emens Auditorium to move on to the big, wide world of kindergarten.

"We continue to remain involved because we totally believe in Meridian's cause and their unending motivation to help others," Allen said. "They are committed and we are proud to stand beside them as a small part of their corporate partners."



Photo: Amanda Kishel

## THE WEE WISDOM FAMILY

*Pictured from top to bottom and left to right:*

*Betsy and Cole Allen; Nadia and Jason Paul; Nadene Phillips, founder of Wee Wisdom; Etta and Raya Paul and Camille Allen (who all attend Wee Wisdom), and Denise Allen (Owner and Director).*



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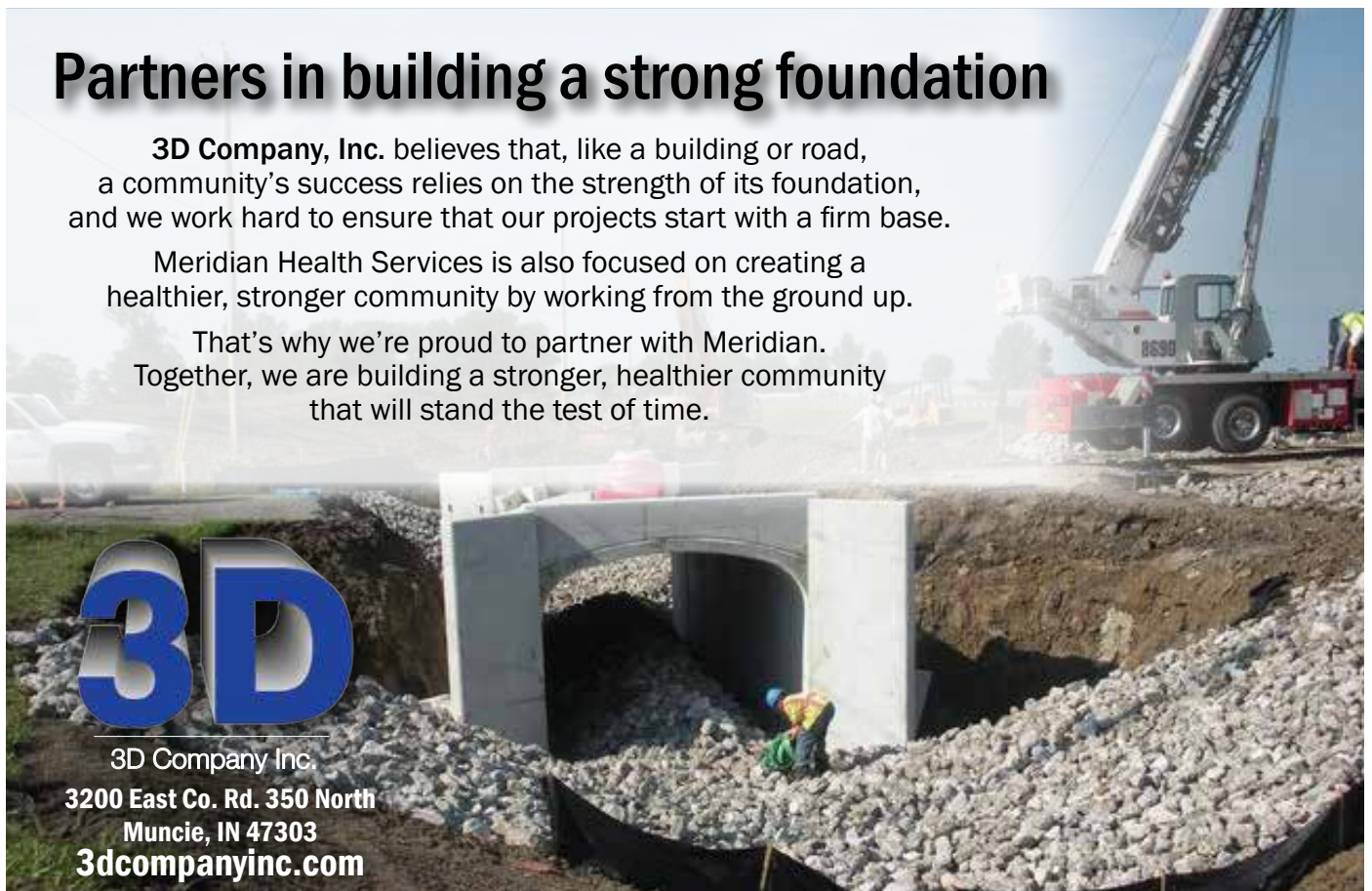
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# Proactive care

## Meridian develops mobile program to assess lead hazards

ELEVATED LEAD LEVELS AMONG CHILDREN IN CERTAIN parts of the community have prompted Meridian Health Services to embark on a proactive program to identify potential hazards and educate parents on how to avoid them.

Meridian identified a need after seeing high rates of contamination in the community and wants to connect with community partners – like churches and preschools – in neighborhoods where the conditions are ripe for lead contamination in children, explained Dr. Robert Byrn, a pediatrician at Meridian Health Pediatrics.

“It’s a progression of an ongoing effort in our medical community to identify children who have lead toxicity,” he said. “We live in a community with a historic industrial base, as well as older housing stock that put our children at risk for lead exposure.”

The mobile program is likely to include screenings in the field and follow-up in the pediatrician’s office. It is well documented that lead exposure can contribute to a lower IQ, and increased rates of ADHD, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

“We know IQ and ADHD rates increase with lead exposure and probably a whole host of emotional and behavioral problems too,” Dr. Byrn said.

Lead-based paint remains a chief way children are exposed to lead. Any home built before 1978 is at risk for having lead-based paint. Children can ingest lead particles either through contaminated soil or dust in the house. The windowsill is the classic place where the lead will degenerate into dust.

Children at an earlier age are at a higher risk. “There’s a lot of hand-to-mouth contact, especially in ages 1 and 2,” Dr. Byrn said. “Because of their developing neurologic system, they’re at increased risk from lead exposure.”

The industrial base also puts local communities at risk, Dr. Byrn said, especially neighborhoods within a 1.5-mile radius of a heavy manufacturer. Lead can be emitted from a factory into the air, then settle into the soil.

“There also can be water contamination,” he said. Older homes may have lead-soldered pipe joints. In extremely old homes, they may actually have lead pipes.

An example of this is the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, which was due to lead contamination in the city’s water supply lines.

“We’ve always screened our 1 and 2 year olds with in-office lead tests and by asking about how old their homes are, do they drink from a well, have they had their well tested,” Dr. Byrn said. “Now, through Meridian, we have an opportunity to try to expand that program beyond the walls of our office and go into neighborhoods that may be more at risk.

Dr. Robert Byrn grew up in Muncie, graduated from Central High School, received his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Wabash College, then attended Indiana University School of Medicine and did his residency work at Riley Children’s Hospital. He returned to Muncie to practice medicine with his father, Dr. James Byrn.

The younger Byrn sees the community-based work as a morale imperative.

“This is my community,” he said. “I married my high school sweetheart; she’s from Muncie, too. I can see my house from my office. I live where I work. I want it to be the best place it can be.”

Dr. Byrn said as a pediatrician, besides treating illness, his job is to prevent illness. “We live in a community with impoverished neighborhoods; poverty exposes children to a host of medical issues.”

Community-based medicine includes the importance of routine child healthcare and how much it helps a physician to know a child’s history when a problem does arise.

“Yesterday, I met with parents who were concerned that their child may have child onset diabetes,” Dr. Byrn said.

“The fact that I had good well-child records in terms of growth charts and developmental parameters helped me determine what to do next for that child. If I haven’t seen a kid for 10 years, and they come in, it’s a lot harder to

decide what work up that child may or may not need.”

Meridian wants to be proactive and help create community outreach that will be focused on lead detection to educate and inform people. Early detection of lead toxicity means a family can address the cause and often mitigate the dangers.

“Through a routine screening,” Dr. Byrn explained, “We found elevated lead levels in a pre-school age child recently. His parents had remodeled their house, and there was low suspicion of lead in the house. We finally had to send the health department out to test the soil and the house. We determined the exposure was actually coming from paint on the front porch. The child spent a lot of time on the front porch and that’s where she was exposed. They made modifications to the home; minimized hand-to-mouth contact during playtime and the child’s lead levels went down to normal range, which has saved this young child from a plethora of potential illnesses.”



**ASSESSING RISKS.** Dr. Robert Byrn examines a patient at Meridian Health Pediatrics. Dr. Byrn has helped Meridian initiate a program to identify areas of increased lead levels in parts of the community.

**For more information on the mobile lead screening program or to schedule a screening, please contact Erin Paul at 765-288-1928.**



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## MERIDIAN HEALTH *Moment*

### Options for avoiding, treating ear infections

**E**AR INFECTIONS ARE COMMON DURING CHILDHOOD, especially during the winter months, according to Dr. Michael Burt of Meridian Health Pediatrics.

Ear infections occur when fluid becomes trapped in the middle ear. Upper-respiratory infections such as colds and flu with nasal congestion cause fluid to become trapped in the middle ear. The fluid build-up can lead to infection.

"Some mild ear infections can be treated without medicine," Dr. Burt says. But often, antibiotics are needed to cure the infection. It's important to have a medical professional examine your child if symptoms occur:

- Earaches: In babies who can't communicate, watch for irritability when lying down or waking at night crying
- Fever
- Restlessness, sleeplessness
- Ear drainage

Dr. Burt points out that children 2 and younger get more ear infections because of the small size and shape of their Eustachian tubes, which connect the middle ear to the upper-respiratory system and can provide a conduit for germs to enter the middle ear.

But there are risks that parents can avoid, Dr. Burt says:

- "Babies who breast feed for 12 months or more have less severe colds and fewer ear infections," Dr. Burt says. "If breastfeeding isn't an option, bottle feed your child in an upright, sitting position. Babies who drink bottles lying down or use a pacifier are more likely to get ear infections."
- Air quality: Cigarette smoke and other types of odors or scents can increase your child's chances of getting an ear infection. "Don't expose your baby to cigarette smoke," Dr. Burt says. "It's best to avoid scented candles, air fresheners or other strong odors."
- Immunizations: "Keep up to date on your child's shots," Dr. Burt says. "Two of the routine immunizations (H Influenza and Pneumococcus) are directed at bacteria which may be involved in ear infections."
- Wash your child's hands and your own often with soap and water. "This can reduce the spread of germs and prevent your child from catching the flu or a cold," Dr. Burt says.



Dr. Michael Burt is a pediatrician  
at Meridian Health Pediatrics  
in Muncie.



**Learn more:**

[www.meridianhs.org/Physical/MeridianHealthPediatrics](http://www.meridianhs.org/Physical/MeridianHealthPediatrics)



nurtur



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## MERIDIAN HEALTH *Moment*

### All ages benefit from proper sleep hygiene

**H**AVING TROUBLE SLEEPING? FEELING GROGGY DURING the day? You might have a sleep disorder like sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome. Dr. Cat Marsteller, medical provider at MeridianMD in Richmond, suggests that you talk to your doctor if you are feeling sleep deprived. Certain tests might be in order to determine the cause.

“The lack of what we call ‘sleep hygiene’ might be the culprit,” Dr. Marsteller says.

“Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices and habits that are necessary to have good nighttime sleep quality and full daytime alertness.”

“Getting healthy sleep is important for both physical and mental health,” Dr. Marsteller says. “It also improves productivity and overall quality of life. Everyone, from young to old, can benefit from practicing good sleep habits.”

Dr. Marsteller offers the following tips for improving sleep hygiene:

- Limit daytime naps to 30 minutes. Napping does not make up for inadequate nighttime sleep, but a short nap can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine close to bedtime. And when it comes to alcohol, moderation is key. Alcohol will help you fall asleep faster, but too much close to bedtime can disrupt sleep in the second half of the night as the body begins to process the alcohol.
- Exercise to promote good quality sleep. As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, during the day can drastically improve nighttime sleep quality.
- Steer clear of certain foods just before sleep. Heavy or rich foods, fatty or fried meals, spicy dishes, citrus fruits, and carbonated drinks can trigger indigestion.
- Ensure adequate exposure to natural light. This is particularly important for individuals who may not venture outside frequently. Exposure to sunlight during the day, as well as darkness at night, helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.



MERIDIAN **MD**

*Cat Marsteller, MD, is board-certified in Internal Medicine at MeridianMD in Richmond.*



**Learn more:**

[www.meridianhs.org/Physical/MeridianMD](http://www.meridianhs.org/Physical/MeridianMD)





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# Spirit OF Meridian

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extra mile

2017 SPIRIT OF MERIDIAN Employee Award Winner Melissa Parsons.

## 2017 CATEGORY WINNERS



### Administrative Services Staff:

Left to right: Maurice Conley,  
Melissa Parsons (winner), and Jacob Clark.



### Behavioral Clinicians / Technicians:

Left to right: Julie Stingley,  
Dexter Wade (winner), and Ramona Dale.



### Medical staff:

Winner: Dr. Scott  
Marsteller.



MELISSA PARSONS IS THE KIND OF EMPLOYEE at Meridian Health Services who goes the extra mile for her colleagues and her company. She has a servant's heart for the work that Meridian does, and her boss would like to clone her.

"I'd like to have 10 of her," said Tammy Hargrave, Melissa's supervisor.

Parsons received the 2017 Spirit of Meridian Employee Award, which recognizes someone who has contributed significantly to Meridian's success in making our communities happier and healthier, and who goes above and beyond the call of duty in doing so.

Recently promoted to recruiting specialist, Parsons has worked for Meridian since 2014 in the Human Resources Department.

"Melissa interacts with all staff extremely well," wrote Hargrave of Parsons' nomination. "She demonstrates a real team approach. She has developed strong relationships with Meridian employees and executives. They trust her judgment."

Parsons said she believes in "whole-person health," Meridian's focus on physical, mental and social well-being.

"I interview so many different people from so many different backgrounds for positions like medical assistants and behavioral health clinicians," Parsons said. "It's not hard to convince people that

this is a good place to work. I believe in what we do and feel like I'm part of a bigger effort."


Described by her colleagues as a "team player," Parsons is outgoing and dedicated to doing her job well. "She never meets a stranger," Hargrave said. "She's totally devoted to her position and the company."

Meridian employs more than 1,000 people serving 46 counties in Indiana. It's Parsons' job to keep up with the ongoing staff recruitment and hiring. Across the company, Meridian hires about 30 positions a month, and there's an orientation session every two weeks.

The Delaware County native holds a bachelor's degree from Ball State University. In her current role, she attends job fairs, recruits new prospects, and conducts interviews. She's continually reaching out to the community in search of the best people she can find to serve Meridian Health Services.

What made her an easy selection for the annual employee award was "her outstanding work ethic," Hargrave said.

"It was her desire to make sure we're successful, especially in hiring the right individuals and her passion to do a great job. It sets her apart."

Parsons and her husband, Mike, have two grown children; Justin is a recent Ball State graduate and Jenna, currently attends Ball State. 

## 2017 CATEGORY WINNERS



**Managers/Supervisors/Team Leaders:**

Left to right: Patrick Ripberger, Tammy Dodson (winner), and Amy Shemoel.



**Clinical Support Staff:**

At left: Rebecca Thompson (winner) and Vikki Heavenridge.



**Therapists:**

Left to right: Julie Dugan, Kelle Zeabart (winner), and Robert Vanderwal.





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## MERIDIAN HEALTH *Moment*

### Gluten intolerance has wide-ranging effects

**C**ELIAC DISEASE IS A SERIOUS AUTOIMMUNE DISORDER where the ingestion of gluten leads to damage in the small intestine, according to Dr. Murat Gonulalan, an internal medicine physician at MeridianMD in Muncie. “Studies estimate that 1 in 100 people are affected worldwide,” Dr. Gonulalan says. It is also estimated that 2.5 million Americans are undiagnosed. They are at risk for long-term health complications.

“Celiac disease is different than a food allergy, so the symptoms will differ,” Dr. Gonulalan says. “For example, eating something you are allergic to might cause itchy, watery eyes and difficulty breathing. With gluten intolerance, the symptoms can range from intestinal problems to bone or joint pain.”

Specifically, symptoms might include abdominal pain, nausea, anemia, itchy blistering rash, loss of bone density, headaches or general fatigue, bone or joint pain, mouth ulcers, weight loss and heartburn.

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye, and other grains.

“When someone with celiac disease eats something with gluten, their body overreacts to the protein and damages the wall of the small intestine,” Dr. Gonulalan says. The small intestine can't properly absorb nutrients from food. Eventually, this can lead to malnourishment and serious health issues.

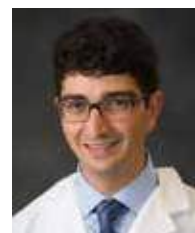
“Many people are genetically pre-disposed to celiac disease,” Dr. Gonulalan says. Many people with celiac disease never know they have it. The damage to the intestine is very slow, and the symptoms are so varied, that it can be years before someone gets a diagnosis.

To diagnose celiac disease, blood is tested for certain antibodies, and genetic testing is conducted. If blood tests show the possibility of celiac disease, more testing will be required.

There are no drugs that treat celiac disease. Those affected must go on a strict gluten-free diet. In addition to staying away from bread, cake and other baked goods, they also need to avoid beer, pasta, cereals and even some toothpastes, medications, and other products that contain gluten.



*Murat Gonulalan, MD, is board-certified in Internal Medicine at MeridianMD in Muncie.*



**Learn more:**

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**New patients welcome!**



## Dr. Bedford stresses value of preventative care

### **Q. How often should people schedule a doctor's appointment?**

A. Check-ups are important. Healthy people should have an exam once a year. The appointment should include a physical exam and blood work. People with chronic medical problems require more frequent visits. Even young people need an annual physical. A lot of diseases are hereditary, and the western diet is horrible. We are seeing patients with diseases like diabetes earlier. We want to get people on a healthy track early in life before they develop a chronic condition.

### **Q. How is Meridian helping people gain access to healthcare?**

A. I've seen a big change in the last decade, and more people have access to doctors now. Healthcare and primary care have gone in the right direction since the Affordable Care Act. More people have received care without the worry of high medical bills, and many people are receiving preventative screenings for free. The expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act now gives people access to important health services. Before, physicians often had to beg for grant money just so they could get lower-income people basic screenings, like colonoscopies and mammograms. And for those struggling to figure out how to receive their best care, Meridian has insurance navigators who teach people how to meet their needs through the best services possible and help connect them to those resources.

### **Q. Is mental health care improving in America?**

A. Depression is really common, and we hear more about bipolar disorders and PTSD. Years ago, mental health issues had a stigma, and people didn't want to talk about it or admit there was a problem. People were embarrassed to discuss issues with their doctors. I'd like to see more medical students go into psychiatry, because there are not enough psychiatrists in this country. Even primary care physicians need more training in mental health. That's what is so great about Meridian. Here, our primary care physicians have internal connections to behavioral health services because of our whole-person health approach.

### **Q. How is Indiana addressing opioid addiction?**

A. I'm definitely seeing improvements in the region. I think a lot of the physicians are getting more educated about the dangers of prescribing certain drugs, and laws have been put in place to protect physicians so they feel like they can say no and cut people off. Also, irresponsible physicians are facing serious consequences. New laws in Indiana have cracked down on unscrupulous providers, and they are going to jail. The demographics of drug addiction are across the board. It doesn't matter how much money you have or where you live or your race. It crosses all socioeconomic boundaries. I think the biggest problem is there are few places left to get help. Meridian recently introduced a residential addiction center, where people can detox without feeling alone and have the support of multiple wrap-around services. Overall, Meridian Addictions and Recovery has served more than 8,700 patients.

DR. ADRIENNE BEDFORD:

# 'Check-ups are important'

Dr. Adrienne Bedford is a family medicine physician at MeridianMD in New Castle and the Medical Director of the Family Medicine Department at Meridian Health Services. She has been a practicing physician for more than a decade.







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**CHILD ADVOCATE.** Frankie is a courthouse facility service dog who spends her day in court helping comfort children as they testify.

# FRANKIE

A partner as irresistible as the children she serves

Children with difficult stories to tell now have an advocate trained to make the sharing easier.  
Her name is Frankie.  
She weighs in at 68 pounds.



**TEAMWORK.** Ashley Soldaat, Director of CASA programming in Delaware County, pauses in front of Meridian's Listening Tree at the Child Advocacy Center with service dog Frankie.

She enters the workforce every day with four paws, two soft ears for listening and one big heart for loving.

A courthouse facility service dog, Frankie is a 2-year-old English Black Labrador Retriever and a rookie. She joined the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) team – whose volunteers serve as “the voice” of abused and neglected children in court proceedings – full-time in April.

While new to her job, she has already become a fixture in Delaware County's juvenile court and Meridian's Child Advocacy Center, where she spends hours most days supporting children who have been sexually or physically abused and helps them give their testimonies.

Frankie is an example of Meridian Health Services' strong and growing community partnerships. Meridian's Child Advocacy Center works alongside CASA to provide a safe and healing environment for children who have experienced abuse. The Child Advocacy Center is where a multi-disciplinary team that includes law enforcement, Department of Child Services, CASA, Victim Advocates, Prosecutor's office, healthcare and mental health representatives come together to interview children and investigate abuse cases. And now Frankie is added to this team.



“When she’s not there, people notice,” says Jennifer Lombard, practice manager at Meridian Health Services’ Suzanne Gresham Center. “It’s a community effort between all of the organizations.”

Ashley Soldaat, Director of CASA programming in Delaware County, is Frankie’s primary handler. Frankie lives with Soldaat and comes to work with her each day. Soldaat said that the law allows children to bring a comfort object with them to the stand in the courtroom. Dogs – Frankie, in particular – are allowed.

“Frankie is brought into the courtroom before the jury and lays quietly at the feet of the child she is there to support,” Soldaat says.

Discipline is a big part of Frankie’s life. She sits next to Soldaat awaiting commands, wearing her official blue vest that carries Frankie’s official business cards and badge.

“She’s only allowed to use the restroom on command,” Soldaat says. “The child comes first. While on the stand, children can take their shoes off and feel her with their feet. They hold her leash as empowerment.”

Frankie is Muncie CASA’s first service dog, a growing trend across the country. Her presence is bringing new awareness to the program. “People hear children’s sad stories, but it can be hard to personalize,” Soldaat says. “Frankie is symbolic of hope.”

Frankie accompanies children into the interview room at Meridian’s Child Advocacy Center and sometimes in the testimony room across the hall. The goal is for children to be interviewed only one time, so their stories are recorded for the multi-disciplinary team to observe in a nearby room.

“Once a child is in need of services, Meridian becomes involved,” says Lombard as she explains the important partnership between Meridian and CASA. “CASA can come and

observe interactions, and we work together to gain information.”

Frankie is a fixture on the blue couch in the interview room.

Soldaat recalls a deeply sad day when Frankie leaped up on the couch next to a girl moments before she was delivered news that would change her whole life.

“We had to tell the girl that her mom died due to an overdose on heroin,” Soldaat says as she sits in a Child Advocacy Center meeting room with Frankie’s head in her lap. “The girl buried her head in Frankie’s fur and cried and cried.”

Frankie’s job did not end that day.

“Frankie went to the funeral,” Soldaat says.

Frankie took it hard.

“They say emotions go down that leash,” she says. “Cases do affect her.”

When an 11-year-old opened up about taking her own life, Frankie was there. “The second the girl started talking about her suicide attempts, Frankie lifted her head, looked at her face and laid her head down in the girls’ lap. The girl didn’t stop talking and petting Frankie during the entire interview. We thought she was going to rub a hole through Frankie’s ear.”

So far, Frankie has assisted children ages 2-14.

Lombard said there is often a secondary trauma that occurs with the telling of each story and that is with the service providers who are there to help. Frankie brings comfort to the forensic interviewers, too.

“It’s not easy to see the things we see,” Soldaat says. Case managers, the judge, and others in the court setting are benefitting from the soothing presence of Frankie. “She offers normalcy – something to make you smile,” says Soldaat as she describes the connection that the adults serving children feel with Frankie. “She’s in this with us.”

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MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES' SECOND CITY FIT started with more than 500 runners and walkers participating in a Color Run on Richmond's bucolic Glen Miller golf course.

The Color Run challenge, a one-mile run/walk, combined education about healthy choices with the fun of fitness. Sponsors and vendors set up tents and booths promoting healthy living.

Partners in City Fit included Reid Health, Richmond Family YMCA, Richmond Parks and Recreation, the Boys & Girls Club of Wayne County, Family Fitness Works and Heartfulness Meditation, First Bank of Richmond, HCA Holland Colours, Eye Center of Richmond, Earlham College, Runnels Chiropractic and Centerstone of Indiana. City Fit aligns with Meridian's focus on whole-person health, emphasizing physical, mental and social health.

Richmond Mayor Dave Snow said he was appreciative of Meridian leading this event. He said Meridian has helped improve the community's perception of health and fitness by hosting City Fit, adding that Wayne County was one of the unhealthiest counties in America, and a lot of that had to do with the community's perceived health barriers.

Organizers said this year's City Fit had a record attendance.

"It's amazing to see our event come to fruition, especially when there is such a great turnout of people with a desire to become healthier and learn about Meridian's whole-person health services," said Patrick Ripberger, Operations Coordinator, Meridian Health Services Children's Services. "It really shows just how much of a difference Meridian is making in the community."

Meridian's laser focus on whole-person health, fitness for body, mind and spirit, is what brought together families to this free event but it also promoted fun and entertainment, healthy resources and screenings to help people on their journey to better health.











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# Meridian launches Pediatric Rehab Summer Camp

SUMMER CAMP BUILDS BOTH CHARACTER AND friendships. The experience of spending time away from school in the great outdoors has inspired generations of young people.

But for kids with special needs, summer camp often can be inaccessible, just another missed experience that separates them from other children. Holly Zent, a pediatric therapist with Meridian Pediatric Rehab, wanted to give the children she works with the opportunity to enjoy the perks of spending summer with friends. “We realized a typical child during the summer is going to summer camp of some sort, but our kids have limited opportunities during the summer. We wanted our kids to be able to go to summer camp as well,” Zent said.

Meridian launched its first Pediatric Rehab Summer Camp in June at Muncie’s Suzanne Gresham Center, a facility that assists children with emotional, physical or psychological needs and helps with foster care placement, addiction issues and other behavioral health needs. Campers attended two days a week throughout the month of June.

For Travis and Stephanie Lennon, the camp seemed like a good opportunity for their son, Noah.

“Signing up your special needs child for any camp is normally out of the question, but this camp allowed us to have a comfort zone that our son was in good hands,” said Travis.

Zent and her camp coworkers mirrored typical summer camp activities but adapted them to fit their campers’ specific challenges, and the group had access to an adaptive playground at the center. “We had gym time where we offered different fun activities, like parachuting, kickball and soccer. But we adapted everything to their needs,” Zent said.

The program ran in two sessions. Seven campers participated in the program for 7- to 11-year-olds. The camp also served 10 children ages 3-6. Some of the campers had cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome and rare genetic disorders. Five to six staff members worked directly with the children at all times.

Staffing included an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a volunteer from Ball State University and a rotation of therapists who helped during down time from their daily schedule at the center. “The kids loved seeing the staff around. They see us every week in the clinic, but they got to see us in a different manner. They began to look at us as friends. It built a special relationship,” Zent said.

The staff kept campers active to keep them engaged. Activities included music, story time, dancing, crafts and interactive stories with puzzles. Although the camp offered many opportunities for fun, the activities were designed to encourage learning and skill development. For example, speech therapists worked with campers through stories and music to help strengthen communication skills.

“We had a snack time, and the kids would prepare their own snacks. They were taught manners with snacks, and they had to wait for everybody before they could eat,” Zent said.

Camp activities were developed around a theme, which included concepts like colors, shapes, bugs, under the sea, plants, space and tie-dye. One of the most rewarding aspects for Zent was watching the kids enjoy themselves.

“Knowing the excitement the kids had just to come to camp every day was so special. They got to play and make new friends. It’s great to help these kids overcome the challenges they face and the obstacles in life,” she said.

The camp also provided an opportunity for parents to meet and network. “A lot of the

parents would sit in the waiting room, and they started talking and communicating. Some of them became friends and even carpooled,” Zent said.

Travis and Stephanie were hopeful that the camp would expand their son’s opportunities. “We thought that the program would be a great fit for our child because it would give him a sense of independence, knowing the therapists would provide a safe and active environment. We knew the camp would allow our son to socialize with his therapy friends outside of the weekly therapy environment,” Travis said.

Zent is hopeful the camp will return next summer.

“We’ve had a lot of parents ask about it. We did a survey at the end of camp, and all the comments were positive. The only negative was that the kids thought camp was not long enough,” she said as she smiled. Travis and Stephanie already plan to have Noah attend next year.

“Not only did Noah enjoy the experience, but we as parents loved hearing Noah use his words to communicate to us about the reading circle, art projects and games from that day of camp,” Travis said.



**SUMMER CAMP.** Meridian launched its first Pediatric Rehab Summer Camp in June.



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# Meridian, Reid Health combine efforts

## Focus is area opioid abuse

INDIANA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION'S HARMONY MAGAZINE featured Meridian Health Services and its collaboration with Richmond-based Reid Health. The two health organizations are working together to fight opioid abuse in east central Indiana, which has been hit especially hard by addiction and substance abuse.

"We often refer patients that come through Reid to Meridian for outpatient behavioral services and residential detox treatment. Sharing and referring patients allows us to best treat the person along a full continuum of care, not just one piece of the puzzle," said Reid Health President/CEO Craig Kinyon.



IHA Harmony Magazine, Summer 2017

"No one entity can do all things for all people," said Hank Milius, president/CEO of Meridian Health Services. "Only by bringing great people and ideas together can great change happen."

According to Kinyon, a holistic approach was needed after Wayne County saw a 92 percent increase in 911 calls reporting an overdose compared to just one year before. And in 2016, the overdose reversal drug Narcan (naloxone) was administered every three days on average in Reid's emergency department.

Kinyon made it the hospital's mission to further develop services to address prevention, education and treatment options for patients suffering from substance use disorder.



**WORKING TOGETHER.** Hank Milius, president/CEO of Meridian Health Services, (left) with Craig Kinyon, president/CEO of Reid Health.

"It's time to move away from the stigma of mental health and addiction, and come together to talk about what we can do differently," said Kinyon. "We have several tools to address this problem together."

"Patients walk into the ER, and they just need services," said Milius. "Our partnership allows us to combine resources to better serve these patients and provide follow-up care after they're released."

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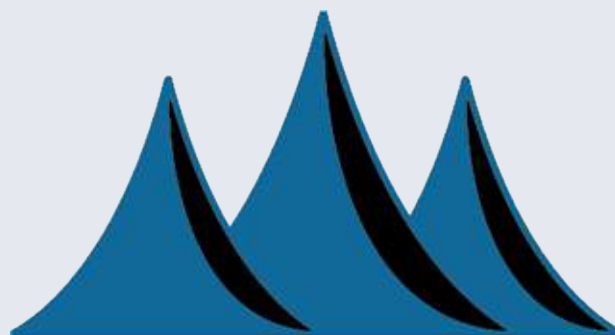
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A silhouette of a pregnant woman stands in profile, facing right, against a vibrant sunset sky. She is holding her belly. The background shows a calm body of water and distant hills under a sky with orange, yellow, and blue hues. The text "Thank you..." is written in a large, white, cursive font in the upper right quadrant.

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# Don't let healthcare become a travel disaster!

MY HUSBAND AND I HAD TRAVELED TO CANCUN SEVEN times. We loved the beautiful scenery, friendly people, and delicious cuisine. On one vacation, my husband dislocated his shoulder while playing beach volleyball, so we got to experience a Mexican hospital. We were satisfied with the care he received, and although we had to pay out of pocket (American health insurance is not accepted internationally), we figured it could have been much worse. We learned to purchase travel insurance.

Our son, Mason, was almost a year old, and we were excited to take him to Cancun and start a lifetime of family vacations in beautiful destinations, fostering a love of travel. As a new mother and nurse practitioner, I packed everything I thought we could possibly need. We laughed, and begrudgingly paid the fees, as we were overweight on all three suitcases when we checked in for our flight.

A few hours after check-in to our resort, I noticed Mason seemed short of breath. I lifted his shirt and saw some mild retractions. I gave him a nebulizer breathing treatment. I had packed his nebulizer, just in case, that he used a few months prior when he had RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus), never thinking he would need it. His breathing seemed to improve, but a couple hours later, he needed one again. Then just an hour later needing another, then it was not helping at all. I turned on a steamy shower, and took him in there, with no improvement. He was severely short of breath. His skin was mottled from lack of oxygen supply. I took him to the resort physician. She did not know what was wrong, only stating, "Respiratory frequency," through an interpreter. The physician called an ambulance.

It seemed like an eternity until the ambulance arrived and took us to the hospital. We were in the Emergency Department for hours with our son struggling to breathe. I begged for the doctor and nurses to help us. He was finally taken to the "shock room," given medications, and improved slightly. He was admitted upstairs, and he continued to have severe difficulty with breathing. All we could do was pray to God continuously. The tests and treatments were not like that of the United States. At several points in his hospital stay, I begged the nurses to give him a breathing treatment or call the doctor. We did not have access to the internet, and we talked in what little Spanish we knew.

After three days, my husband and I determined we needed to get him back to the United States, or he may not survive. We called our family physician, and he directed us how to obtain a medical flight. After we had already previously paid our hospital



Deborah Shelley

bill that was mandatory so we could check out, we were detained for several more hours until we paid more money. We had difficulty getting our credit cards to work, as they had started to decline due to large amounts of international payments.

When we arrived back in the United States, the medical flight crew took us to Peyton Manning Children's Hospital. My son received excellent care. It was determined that he had pneumonia and asthma. I am so happy and blessed to say Mason is alive and very healthy today.

This was quite a traumatic experience to recover from. We remained quiet, wanting to put that chapter of our lives behind us. However, we saw on TV a story about a woman from Kokomo in Cancun that suffered a heart attack. I reached out to her niece via facebook, to see if our experience could help them. The woman had already paid \$50,000, but still needed more procedures for her heart. They did not have the money to pay, but couldn't afford to pay for the flight to leave, either. At one point there were police at her hospital bedside threatening to arrest the woman's husband if she did not pay.

More recently, there was a 28 week pregnant woman from south of Indianapolis, that went into premature labor and delivered her baby in Cancun. The family was understandably wanting to get them home to the United States but was having trouble like the rest of us being detained and having to pay exorbitant amounts of money before leaving.

These two recent cases in the news have compelled me to come forward about our own experience and educate others how they can be prepared when traveling abroad.

**1. Purchase travel insurance that includes medical and evacuation coverage.** We had purchased travel insurance for our trip with Mason, but unfortunately it was only a trip interruption policy. Therefore, we only received a modest stipend for not completing our vacation. It did not cover his medical or evacuation bills. Be aware that your health insurance is not accepted outside of the United States. Be aware you may have to pay for services prior to leaving.

**2. Research your destination country on [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).** There is country-specific information describing safety and security, laws and customs, healthcare, and embassy contact information if needed. We could have called the embassy for help, but did not know considering our distress. I recommend to print this information out to carry with you.

**3. Consider obtaining a temporary international plan for your cell phone.** We did not have access to the internet or any of our apps. We couldn't "google" what to do or use our translator app. We even had difficulty calling and texting.

**4. Be polite and respectful to everyone.**

Traveling internationally can be an unforgettable, wonderful experience. Taking these steps can help assure that your memories are positive.

*Deborah Shelley FNP-BC is a family nurse practitioner at Meridian Health Services in Rushville.*

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**MORE THAN A PLAY.** Local teens were part of a powerful play presented at the Muncie Civic Theatre over the summer.  
PHOTOS: Courtesy Muncie Civic Theatre.

# ‘Last One, Most Likely’

Meridian has starring role in Muncie Civic Theatre production

A dozen Delaware County teens gathered in the Suzanne Gresham Center gym this summer to talk about some tough subjects. The struggle to fit in. The feeling of isolation. Anxiety. Depression. Drugs and alcohol.





**REAL LIFE ROLES.** Teens open up about the 'messiest parts of life.'

The result was “Last One, Most Likely,” a powerful play presented at the center in July. The teens were part of a summer playwriting workshop at Muncie Civic Theatre. Led by director Katie Morario, the teens met for two weeks to put their feelings about what Morario called “the messiest parts of life” on the page, and eventually on the stage.

Muncie Civic was looking for a location for its summer playwriting workshop for teens after much-needed renovations began inside its historic building on Main Street. What they found at Gresham was so much more than a space, according to Civic’s Executive Director Laura Williamson.

“The kids were able to see what an important role Meridian plays in our community,” she said. “They could see that this was a safe place for children and families dealing with these issues. They knew this was more than a play. It was real life.”

Jennifer Lombard, practice manager at Gresham, said having the camp there was “a perfect fit.” Both Meridian and Civic, she said, “want to break down the stigma behind these issues and make it educational.” To say Lombard was impressed with the results would be an understatement. “They were able to address different issues through the different characters,” she said. “You could tell they really did their research. They really understood each disorder and did a great job of displaying it.”

Lombard knew being at Gresham was having an impact on the teens. “Students were coming up to me, saying ‘It’s really important what you guys are doing here,’” she recalled.

Williamson said the teens chose the theme and developed the play (which told the story of a teen writing group), with “their own voices, their own jokes, their own music, and their own experiences.” This was the second year for the teen summer program at Civic. “And it’s the finest acting that I have seen this group of actors do,” Williamson said. “The play itself is about feeling so disconnected. But through this experience, I saw them develop a true feeling of family and connectedness.”

Meridian and Muncie Civic have been connected as community partners for years. Both have worked closely to pull off the performances during Rialzo each year. “We are very grateful for our relationship with Meridian,” Williamson said. “The Gresham Center could not have been more welcoming.”

The response to the play was overwhelming. Opening night, they had to bring in extra chairs, Lombard recalled. More than 300 people in all saw the production over its two-day run.

“It was very emotional,” she admitted. Williamson agreed. “There was not a dry eye in the room both nights.”

Lombard added, “It’s hard to sit there and imagine your kids dealing with these issues, feeling trapped, feeling isolated.”

This is why she had a table packed with information and resources available at Meridian for parents and kids. They were available at each show. Would they do this again? “Absolutely,” Lombard said. “We already told them to come back anytime.”



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# Fam Fest!

Family. Fitness. Fun.

FAM FEST, MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES' ANNUAL family festival, in 2017 celebrated its 10th year of raising community awareness and essential funding for Meridian's Child Advocacy Center.

More than 3,000 guests enjoyed games, sports clinics and health education during Fam Fest's Health and Fun Fair. Meridian and other community healthcare vendors provided free health screenings in the Health Hub including blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI testing, spinal screenings, germ transmission and muscle stretching. The Health Hub included the Education Stage, where Meridian physicians and health experts shared valuable health information.

Families also enjoyed a BMX stunt-bicycle demonstration, as well as appearances by Charlie Cardinal, the Berenstein Bears and other mascots.

In total, the event brought together more than 40 community vendors and 200 volunteers who helped make it possible.

New this year in the Ducky Derby, a race against child abuse, were ducks piloted by some of Meridian's biggest supporters.

Winners were University Dermatology, then Cardinal Greenway and Midas. First place for the best decorated duck went to PrimeTrust, Meridian's lead sponsor of FamFest, with a Hippy-themed duck; second place went to Midas with its NASCAR-themed duck, and third place to Coldwell Banker Lunsford with its Wonder Woman-themed duck.

Also new this year was the Cowan High School Marching Band, who helped get things underway on the banks of the White River with their rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Jack Surface, owner of Midas Muffler in Muncie and Anderson, was a sponsor for the first time this year.

"I love it – Meridian is such a big part of this community," he said. "When you have a big event like this, it helps: The more money we raise, the bigger difference we can make. And when you can bring the kids and family out – that's what it's all about."



## Health & Fun Fair

at the Suzanne Gresham Center







**Fam & Fest!**  
Family. Fitness. Fun.  
**August 26, 2017**



# Fam Fest's most dedicated volunteers

AMONG THE LARGE CROWD AT MERIDIAN'S 10th annual Fam Fest, a line of smiling kids stretches across the halls of the Suzanne Gresham Center. They're eagerly waiting to visit a duo they look forward to seeing every year, Buttons and Waddles.

When it comes to volunteering at Fam Fest, this duo doesn't miss it. For years, Ed and EllaMay Whitten have dressed up as clowns and tied balloon animals because, as EllaMay puts it, it's an honor to make children smile and help Meridian's cause.

Unfortunately, this year, on the event's 10th anniversary, a health scare almost prevented them from attending an event they enjoy so much.

One year ago, in July, EllaMay suffered a seizure. This led to a diagnosis of expressive aphasia, characterized by partial loss of speech ability. After a CT scan, blood work and several tests, doctors determined she had a large tumor on the right side of her brain. An operation posed risk of permanent damage to the right side of her body.

Thankfully, EllaMay's surgery went on and was successful. Doctors were able to remove 95 percent of the tumor; however, a year's worth of chemotherapy, doctor's visits and effects from the surgery made it questionable if she would have enough stamina to volunteer at Fam Fest's 2017 Homecoming celebration.

Amanda Whitten, clinical supervisor with Meridian's Adult and Addiction Services and daughter-in-law of Ed and EllaMay, said she was a little nervous to ask her in-laws to volunteer this year because "I knew they love this event, and it would be difficult for them to

have to 'sit out.'" But Ed and EllaMay couldn't stay away from an opportunity to make people smile and give back to Meridian. The duo agreed to volunteer, adding that they wanted to share joy with as many children as they possibly could. With Andy (her son), Amanda and God by her side, EllaMay asked herself, "How could I lose?"

"The deepest excitement was not simply to continue what has become a tradition, but because clowning at Fam Fest is such a significant 'mile marker' in this journey – their first public performance since my mother-in-law had surgery to remove the brain tumor," Amanda said.

As it turns out, tying balloons also serves as great therapy for EllaMay. The hand movements help rebuild her strength, cognition and her fine motor skills. During her time in the hospital, EllaMay even tied balloon animals for children on the pediatric ward of the rehabilitation section.

Through it all, EllaMay said she was "purposefully choosing to be joyful." This year's Fam Fest attendees are thankful for the joy that Buttons and Waddles bring. Meridian is also thankful for their amazing dedication to its mission of making communities healthier – and so much happier.

"For the adults who are suffering with addictions and need help, the children who are in need of foster care, for people in need

of necessary medical care, for those in an abusive environment and the many other needs, I consider it a privilege and an honor to help raise money for Meridian and many more of its worthy causes," EllaMay said.



**DEDICATION.** EllaMay and Ed Whitten, shown as clowns Buttons and Waddles, are committed Fam Fest volunteers, despite EllaMay's recent health scare.













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


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