

# CURRENT

**RIALZO GALA**



# Fam Fest

Health, safety and family FUN

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HEALTH **Rx**  
**PHARMACY**  
now serving patients

# Medical

AND DENTAL EXPANSIONS BOOST HEALTH SERVICES



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

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## Dear Friends of Meridian,

It has been another remarkable year at Meridian Health Services. We’ve broadened access to care and served tens of thousands of patients by expanding programming and clinics throughout the state. Throughout our growth, we’ve continued to engage with community stakeholders and state policymakers to promote collaboration and put our patients at the forefront.

**At Meridian we strive to elevate our work, and thereby our mission, in everything we do.** Our network of professionals including extraordinary physicians, behavioral clinicians, nurses and mental health practitioners pushed through the once-in-a-lifetime obstacle of the COVID-19 pandemic. At each turn, our frontline personnel rose to every challenge in 2022.

The centerpieces of our work are our **medical and behavioral healthcare programs.** Our doctors, nurses, therapists, and counselors specializing in primary medical care and behavioral health provide a true medical home, where treatment including medications are coordinated seamlessly.

We expanded our addictions programs, dental programs, and our in-school clinics. We continued giving COVID-19 **vaccinations, boosters and flu shots**, always with the overall health of our community in mind.

**Rialzo**, our premier fundraising event, returned in 2022. After a two-year hiatus, Rialzo returned with a renewed sense of purpose, raising funds for Meridian’s broad spectrum of addiction services.

Meridian offered its annual **Speaker Series**, a free event in locations across the state, focusing on some of the most pressing health issues of our time. Experts spoke to our communities about addiction and suicide prevention. They shared their personal stories about surviving and even thriving. You’ll read about that and so much more in this issue of **CURRENT**.

The **Meridian family serves nearly 40,000 patients** throughout Indiana. We do this by elevating the work, our communities, our expert staff, and our collaborative partnerships. I often say, Meridian cannot be all things to all people. But we can do our part, with you by our side.



**Hank A. Milius**  
PRESIDENT / CEO

*Hank Milius is President and Chief Executive Officer of Meridian Health Services, a statewide, integrated healthcare organization serving more than 40 counties in Indiana.*

**Meridian is ...**



MERIDIAN HEALTH SERVICES | WINTER 2022-23

# CURRENT

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Health screenings.

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**MERIDIAN FAM FEST**

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# CURRENT

WINTER 2022-23

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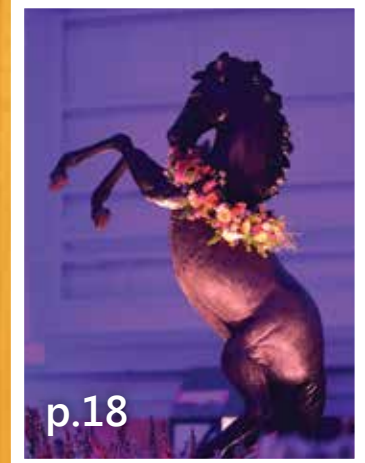
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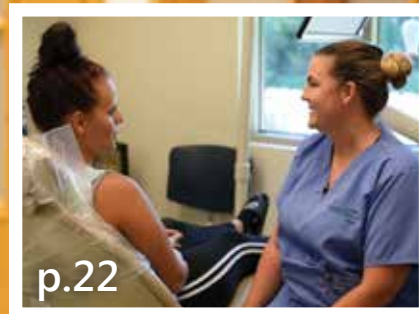
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Powered by American Electric Power Foundation, Safety Town teaches kids how to stay safe.

# Meridian Health Services believes in integrating treatment for the body and mind.

With a holistic approach to wellness, Meridian gives patients the peace and harmony of medical, behavioral and social well-being through “whole-person” health.



## OUR LOCATIONS

- Alexandria
- Anderson
- Bluffton
- Connersville
- Dunkirk
- Elwood
- Fort Wayne
- Indianapolis
- Kokomo
- Lafayette
- Marion
- Michigan City
- Mishawaka
- Muncie
- New Castle
- Portland
- Richmond
- Rushville
- Winchester

## OUR PROGRAMS & SERVICES INCLUDE:

### PHYSICAL

- Primary Medical Care
- Women’s Health
  - OB/GYN
- Pediatric Health/Urgent Care
- Dental Health
  - Family Dentistry
- School Health Clinics
- Internal Medicine

### BEHAVIORAL

- Psychiatry Services
- Therapy & Counseling
- Addiction & Recovery Services
  - Residential Treatment Centers
  - Maternal Treatment Program
  - Women’s Recovery Home
- Children & Family Programs
- Home, Community and School-Based Services
- Skill Building
- Connxxions Program

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# Meridian Speaker Series gives voice to addiction pain & recovery



**ABOUT THE MERIDIAN SPEAKER SERIES:** *The Meridian Speaker Series is a community health and awareness program that was developed to bring community leaders, professionals, educators, and the general public together to focus on a health care need in the community. The forum features national, high-profile presenters who speak from the heart and address their personal story around such topics as drug use disorders, addiction/recovery, suicide prevention and mental health illness. Following the speaker presentation, Meridian hosts a panel discussion to help address solutions for the various topics to help create stronger, healthier communities.*

**T** HIS FALL, CELEBRATED BASKETBALL STAR CHRIS HERREN shared his poignant story of addiction and recovery with audiences in Richmond and Lafayette and previously in Muncie. Herren played at Boston College, Fresno State, and in the NBA – including playing on his hometown team, the Boston Celtics – and seven seasons overseas - before losing it all to the disease of addiction.

You could hear a pin drop the afternoon that Chris recounted his own, heartbreaking journey. “We put too much focus on the worst day, and we forget the first day,” Herren said. “I think our children are shown drug addicts and how bad it gets in the end rather than telling them why it’s beginning. That’s been my purpose the last 10 years.”

Herren owns private wellness centers in Massachusetts and

Virginia. He has spoken to two million children in the last 10 years about his personal battle with addiction and recovery.

“Anytime you can talk about recovery, it’s a blessing,” Herren said. “Anytime you can change the face, change the culture, I’m just blessed to be part of this,” he said.

Chris and his recovery journey has been documented in the bestselling memoir, “Basketball Junkie,” and the Emmy-nominated ESPN Films documentary, “Unguarded.” But none compared to listening firsthand to Chris.

“Hopefully, one day, wellness will be a core class in all our school systems,” Herren told the Lafayette gathering. “There are kids suffering. Kids who come to school every day with suicidal ideation, self-harm and they have no safe space to go. I don’t know what Lafayette’s ratios are but most of the time when I present to kids, I’ll walk in to 2,000 kids in an auditorium, and I’ll meet four guidance counselors.

“Throughout their school years starting in kindergarten, our children should learn about emotional health and social wellbeing,” he said.

Meridian is doing its part. Meridian’s addictions services include the Intensive Outpatient Program, Aftercare Addiction Services, Addictions & Recovery Center (ARC), a residential program in Richmond and Lafayette, the Maternal Treatment Programs (MTP) in Muncie, Anderson, Richmond, and Lafayette, and the Women’s Recovery Home in Muncie. In addition, there is Home with Hope, a 25-bed men’s recovery residence, and a 24-bed women’s recovery center for women without children in Lafayette.

All services are designed to help patients learn how to live their lives free from substance use and re-enter their communities by providing an environment conducive to long-term recovery.

The maternal treatment program provides outpatient care to mothers with substance-use disorders and their newborns dependent upon substances. The service is designed for whole-person health through prevention, education, treatment and community support.

“We know the magnitude of this challenge,” said Hank Milius, president and CEO of Meridian Health Services. “And we’re equipped and ready to assist those in need. Our Speakers Series is a tool we use to bring community partners together, in one room, to find ways to work together to improve the health of some of our most vulnerable.”

**MERIDIAN**online  
For Meridian Health Services near you, visit:  
[www.MeridianHS.org/Addiction](http://www.MeridianHS.org/Addiction)



Meridian’s Addictions & Recovery Center (ARC) in Richmond helps patients learn how to live their lives free from substance use.

**‘ Hopefully,  
one day,  
wellness  
will be a  
core class  
in all our  
school  
systems.  
There  
are kids  
suffering.’**

— Chris Herren



**Kevin Hines**, who attempted to take his life by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, was the featured speaker at the Meridian Speaker Series in Muncie on November 16. Hines spoke to a sold-out crowd of 250 attendees to share his personal story of resiliency and survival.

Watch for more about Kevin Hines in a future edition of CURRENT. To learn more about Meridian's Speaker Series and Kevin Hines' story, please visit:

[www.MeridianHS.org/events/speaker-series/](http://www.MeridianHS.org/events/speaker-series/)



## NOTE TO READERS:

*This column, written by Meridian President and CEO Hank Milius, first appeared in June 2022 as an op-ed in local Indiana newspapers.*

# Linking gun violence to mental illness creates false narrative



*Hank Milius is President and Chief Executive Officer of Meridian Health Services.*

**I** picked up my wife Terri, a retired fourth-grade teacher, at the airport the evening of the mass school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. By now, we know the details all too well – 19 children and two teachers were killed by a young man using an assault-style rifle he had legally purchased just a day after his 18th birthday.

Terri had just returned from a weeklong visit with our grandkids. She greeted me with a kiss and beaming smile. It was apparent she had not yet heard the news. I drove her home without listening to the radio and when we got home made sure we didn't watch TV. I wanted to give her one night of blissful ignorance, enjoying the return home to me and Maggie, her golden doodle. She went to sleep not knowing what had occurred. When she awoke in the morning I said, "I have to tell you something bad." She just burst into tears. I'm sure many of you did the same when you learned of this new reality in our lives.

We have all shared the same horror in the wake of the recent mass shootings across the United States. Mass shootings happen in the United States with depressing regularity – but the past month has been jarring. First, we received news of a shooting at a grocery store, soon after an elementary school, and then a hospital. According to data compiled by the Gun Violence Archive, the United States is on pace to match or surpass its worst year on record for the number of mass shootings with 267 occurring so far in 2022.

This issue is becoming a public health issue. As a healthcare organization we need to address it as such.

**First, let's be clear, this is not a mental health issue. The U.S. does not have a higher prevalence rate than other countries as it relates to mental illness.**

I say this as a gun owner myself: It is a matter of accessibility and abundance of guns.

Indeed, gun violence is a public health issue but linking it to mental health only adds to the stigma of mental illness. We must normalize conversations between doctors and patients about firearm safety the same way we counsel patients on sugar intake or exercise. Certainly, there are cases of gun violence by individuals who have a mental illness. But to suggest there is a cause and effect by inextricably linking the two builds a false narrative. Additionally, it is the aftermath of these mass shootings that contributes to the very real mental health crisis in our country showing up as post-traumatic stress symptoms, depression, not to mention the effect on our children, who no longer feel safe in schools or in crowds.

Major healthcare networks have joined a campaign organized by Northwell Health to recognize gun violence as a public health crisis and identify solutions aimed at reducing the bloodshed. According to findings from Northwell Health's firearm safety campaign, physicians' counseling on gun safety can save lives. Furthermore, patients generally support being asked about firearm access.

Some facts to consider from Mental Health America:

- When ranked with other countries of similar economic growth, the U.S. does not have a significantly higher proportion of people with mental health conditions than other industrialized

countries. But it does have exponentially higher rates of gun ownership and gun violence.

- It is critically important that public officials and policymakers stop responding to gun violence and mass shootings with statements that mental health conditions are the underlying issue. The claim is false and discriminatory. Some facts to consider from Mental Health America:


- When ranked with other countries of similar economic growth, the U.S. does not have a significantly higher proportion of people with mental health conditions than other industrialized countries. But it does have exponentially higher rates of gun ownership and gun violence.

- It is critically important that public officials and policymakers stop responding to gun violence and mass shootings with statements that mental health conditions are the underlying issue. The claim is false and discriminatory.

- Mental illness is not a predictor of violence towards others, but is a predictor of suicide. Firearm deaths associated with mental illness are nearly always suicides. The majority of people with mental illness are not violent. If mental illness were eliminated, gun violence in America would go down by only 4 percent.

- People with mental illness – some living in jails and prisons and others in crisis – absolutely need more services. They require what we all require -employment, educational, social, family, community, and peer support systems. These necessary treatments and supports should be available to those who need them but not because it will reduce violence in the U.S.

Meridian has taken steps to ensure the safety of our staff, patients and communities we serve. We require active shooter training for all employees and since the recent tragic events, have refreshed all employees on our emergency management policies and procedures. These safety procedures and trainings increase staff safety and allow us create a safer space for our patients. Additionally, Meridian provides professional presentations regarding mental health and interventions for law enforcement and emergency services personnel during County Crisis Intervention Team sessions. These sessions are organized by participating organizations such as the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. Topics include recognizing and interacting with those who may be in a crisis and need immediate care. In addition, we offer lay persons such as teachers, coaches, ministers Mental Health First Aid, a training which helps recognize early warning signs of suicide. So far, we have trained 757 individuals throughout the communities we serve.

We and other healthcare organizations can make a difference in our corner of the world by educating our patients on firearm safety and prevention, as well as educating the community regarding mental health awareness. Our top priority at Meridian Health Services is the health and safety of our staff, patients, and community. 



“Whole-Person” **Health** for All Stages of Life.





**OPEN**

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**PHARMACY**

**New Meridian pharmacy  
expands integrated  
healthcare and increases  
convenience for patients.**





# Meridian opens new pharmacy for patients

ON A WARM FALL AFTERNOON, a mother and her child were among the first to use Meridian’s new pharmacy. They had just been seen by their physician at Meridian Health Pediatrics.

“It was so nice to be able to just fill the prescription right here in the same building,” the mother said. “Especially with my child being sick, it was ready to pick up when I was done with our appointment. This made it so convenient not to have to take him to another pharmacy across town and wait in lines.”

Meridian’s focus on creating a medical home and establishing a continuum of care for patients in communities across the state is deep and wide. This fall, Meridian Health Rx pharmacy opened its doors as the first step of an extensive remodeling of their Meridian Health Pediatrics office on Tillotson Avenue in Muncie.

The location gives busy parents and caregivers easy access to quick prescription fulfillment, convenience and cost savings.

“This makes it so easy for families,

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## INSIDE MERIDIAN’S NEW MUNCIE PHARMACY



- **LOCATION:** 205 N. Tillotson Ave., Suite A, Muncie IN 47304
- **HOURS:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday
- **PHONE:** 765.215.2029

Meridian Health Rx pharmacy opened its doors this fall in the Meridian Health Pediatrics office in Muncie.

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# MERIDIAN

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# MERIDIAN

HEALTH Rx



Suite A

HOURS: Monday thru Friday, 8am - 5pm



MERIDIAN HEALTH Rx.  
Pharmacist Courtney Snell.





‘I can direct my patients elsewhere in the same building and get them their medications quickly so they can get home and focus on their sick child.’

— Rachel Dudley, Meridian Health Pediatrics Nurse Practitioner

FROM PAGE 11

especially those with small children,” said Pharmacist Courtney Snell. “No one wants to wait in a line to get their medication. They want to get home with their child and start the process of feeling better.”

“Access and giving patients what they need, when they need it drives the reasoning behind the new pharmacy and convenient delivery process,” said Hank Milius, President and CEO, Meridian Health Services.

“At big box stores like Meijer, Walmart or even Kroger, there is a lag in time that keeps the consumer in the store to shop,” Snell said. “Our business is health care so we can focus on those services.”

Meridian Health Pediatrics Nurse Practitioner, Rachel Dudley, says the onsite pharmacy makes it easier for the patient from start to finish.

“The irony of medicine is when you need it most, you’re in no mood to put up with long lines or wait times,” said Dudley. “I love the fact that I can direct my patients elsewhere in the same building and get them their medications quickly so they can get home and focus on their sick child.”

### One-stop shop

The Tillotson Avenue pharmacy uses a “hub-and-spoke” model of operation, which offers remote “mini pharmacies” in some of Meridian’s other primary medical care offices so patients can receive their prescriptions on-site. This is done by having frequent, top selling prescriptions on hand for patients. The “hub and spoke” model is on the rise across the country and abroad. Experts believe they level the playing field between large chains and smaller pharmacies, as they increase efficiencies to free up pharmacists’ time to provide greater face-to-face patient care.

“It modernizes pharmaceutical distribution and gives heightened service to smaller clinics, particularly in rural communities, where access to health care is often needed most,” Milius said.

One benefit to patients by using Meridian Health Rx is that it is a qualified pharmacy through the Federal 340B Drug Pricing Program, which allows qualifying hospitals and clinics to pass discounted medications to low-income and uninsured patients. Some patients may qualify for free medications.

“Our in-house pharmacy is the right fit for our patients and aligns with our integrated healthcare model to increase patient access to care, convenience, cost savings and satisfaction,” said Scott Riggs, Meridian’s Chief Financial Officer.



**MERIDIAN HEALTH Rx.** Meridian’s new pharmacy is located in the Meridian Health Pediatrics office on Tillotson Avenue in Muncie.

### Looking toward the future

Pharmacies like the Tillotson location may be replicated elsewhere in other Meridian offices.


“We want to see how it works and learn from what we do well and what we can improve on,” Riggs said. “We’re always educating our patients, our staff, and our communities about what’s new at Meridian.”

Snell said, “We’re here to service Meridian patients with a one-stop shop for patients who come in for doctor visits and at the same time pick up their prescriptions.”

Some locations across the state may not have a pharmacist on site, but one is always available via telehealth.

“If patients need to speak to a licensed pharmacist where we only have a technician onsite, we will provide the telehealth technology for the patient to remote in and have a direct consultation with our pharmacist,” Riggs said.

Combining services at one location provides integrated, convenient care for patients. This is an example of Meridian’s whole-person health philosophy in action.

“It’s always about expansion and providing a continuum of care in a convenient setting,” Milius added. “The one-stop shop, from a patient satisfaction point of view, is a win-win. We know when patients see one of our physicians and can get prescriptions filled all at the same location, they leave satisfied and reassured about the level of care they’re getting.” 



# Fam Fest Health & Fun Fair provides access to wellness



- ✓ Health screenings.
- ✓ Vision screenings.
- ✓ Flexibility screenings.
- ✓ Mental health screenings.
- ✓ Depression screenings.
- ✓ Immunizations.
- ✓ Safety education.
- ✓ School physicals.
- ✓ Family resources.
- ✓ And loads of fun.

**Meridian.**

MERIDIAN'S 14TH ANNUAL FAM FEST HEALTH AND FUN FAIR, THE AREA'S premiere summer outdoor festival, was held in late July to kick off the back-to-school season promoting health, safety, community resources, and family fun. There were free school and sports physicals, health screenings for all ages, games, live entertainment and free food.

The Meridian School Clinic at Southside Middle School in Muncie provided the venue for the second consecutive year. The clinic's easy access to essential integrated medical and behavioral services to students, their families, as well as teachers and community members, makes it a unique and convenient experience.

More than 1,500 health screenings and school physicals were administered this year and more than 30 community vendors offering family resources, education, and health screenings, including for the first time, Ball State University's Audiology Clinic.



SEE NEXT PAGE





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Meridian opened similar clinics in all Muncie Community Schools in 2022 and more were added in Anderson Community Schools, as well.

“Integrated care is central to Meridian’s focus on whole-person health,” said Lisa Suttle, Regional Vice President of Clinical Services. “As we expand into neighborhood schools, it’s our way of reaching into central touchpoints within the community, creating a heightened access to good health practices at a place where everyone is familiar and feels safe.”

In the Health Hub, Fam Fest fans got free wellness screenings for vision, blood pressure, muscle flexibility, depression and lots more. The Delaware County Sheriff’s Department, Muncie Police Department and Muncie Fire Department were on hand to educate children about what they do as part of Safety Town. Meridian’s focus on prevention was highlighted in Safety Town, a safety course that teaches children rules of the road. It was supported by the event’s presenting sponsor American Electric Power Foundation.

To view more photos, visit [www.famfest.MeridianHS.org](http://www.famfest.MeridianHS.org)

## GREETINGS FROM MERIDIAN



Meridian administered more than 1,500 community health screenings and school physicals this year.

# Meridian's Connxxions program provides coordinated care for the dually diagnosed

DON\* IS A 22-YEAR-OLD MAN DIAGNOSED WITH AN intellectual disability and schizophrenia. Because of his diagnosis, Don has had to endure several unique challenges.

Meridian's Connxxions program is designed for people like Don with a dual diagnosis - both intellectual and developmental delays/disabilities. Through Connxxions, participants gain skills that foster independence and enrich their lives.

Jessica Hamlyn, Director of Connxxions, says three out of four individuals with an intellectual and developmental delay/disability (IDD) concurrently experience a mental health condition. Despite how common a dual diagnosis is, there are few resources for people with this unique combination of issues.

Connxxions was launched in Jay County in 1994. Now, it operates in 30-plus counties across Indiana and serves more than 1,000 clients. In 2015, Connxxions became the first outpatient mental health program to receive the national accreditation with the NADD IDD/MI Dual Diagnosis Accreditation Program, and it still holds the accreditation today.

"It's a lifespan program," said Hamlyn. "We see a variety of people at different ages. The program provides them with individual and family therapy, group activities, personal health skills, case management, psychiatric services, MeridianMD - Family Medical Care, and a 24-hour preventative hotline."

Connxxions focuses on developing an individual's ability to

recognize when health issues are occurring or are about to occur, allowing better understanding of how their health and well-being are connected. Improving communication and learning through experiences are key features of the program, too.

"The program has helped me learn how to reach out for help when needed and helped me with a level system for my thoughts," said Don. "Green thoughts mean I'm happy. Yellow thoughts mean I have something on my mind to talk about. Orange means I need to get some help from someone I trust and know. Red means I need help and need to call 911. My Meridian staff helps me check my thoughts and calm them down when I need to."

Maria\* is a Connxxions patient with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. She knows well the struggles of people with mental health and developmental issues. She also knows the significant impact the program can have through learning new skills and reaching personal goals.

"I have been able to get my job back and I feel good about that," said Maria. "I work on goals and when I meet those goals, I get to do fun things with my provider team. I have a new counselor who is very helpful. She is really interested in how I'm doing, and she has helped me feel better about myself and to see the good parts of my life."

\*Names are pseudonyms to protect patient confidentiality.

## CONNXXIONS

Coordinated Care for the Dually Diagnosed  
**To enroll in the Connxxions Program please call: 866-306-2647.**

**MERIDIAN**online  
 For Meridian Health Services near you, visit:  
[www.MeridianHS.org/mental/connxxions-program/](http://www.MeridianHS.org/mental/connxxions-program/)



**CONNXXIONS TEAM.** From left: Leslie Dailey, Mischa Staton, Jessica Hamlyn, Amy Collins, Jody Mason.



'It's a lifespan program. We see a variety of people at different ages.'

— Jessica Hamlyn, Director of Connxxions



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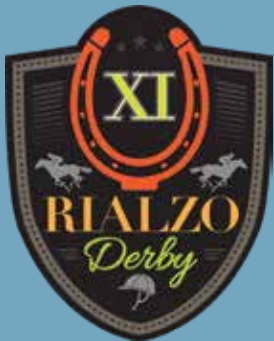


# Rialzo XI

To view more photos from Rialzo XI, visit: [www.rialzo.MeridianHS.org](http://www.rialzo.MeridianHS.org)







Rialzo XI, Meridian's premiere charity gala returned in 2022 with all the glitz and glamour of its first 10 years but in a new venue with renewed commitment to the cause of the hour. The Kentucky Derby themed event, "Go Baby Go," captured Meridian's sense of urgency in supporting its growing addictions and recovery programs throughout the state. The event raised funds for Meridian's full spectrum of addictions and recovery programs including Meridian's Addictions & Recovery Centers (ARC), Maternal Treatment Program (MTP), Women's Recovery Home, Home with Hope, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, Aftercare Addiction Counseling, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), and Teen Substance Use Prevention. Presenting sponsor, Ball State University, hosted Rialzo at its Scheumann Family Practice Facility. A portion of Rialzo proceeds benefits Ball State students working at Meridian through a new Student Training Stipend program, in addition to Meridian's wide-ranging addictions and recovery programs.







Meridian's Rialzo XI post pandemic crowd – 700 friends and supporters – came out for Meridian and its partners, bidding in the charity auction and welcoming back the musical group Party on the Moon. Gov. Eric Holcomb received the Spirit of Meridian Award, a recognition that pays tribute to an individual who demonstrates proactive actions in promoting healthier communities. "Gov. Holcomb got us through the COVID-19 pandemic by being methodical and transparent," said Hank Milius, CEO and President of Meridian Health Services. "And, even as he took office and named the state's first drug czar (an executive director for drug prevention, treatment, and enforcement) it was obvious his administration's priorities aligned with ours at Meridian. We honor that kind of focus on purpose with our Spirit of Meridian Award."







# Rialzo XI

To view more photos from Rialzo XI, visit: [www.rialzo.MeridianHS.org](http://www.rialzo.MeridianHS.org)







Meridian  
**grows**  
**RURAL**  
**HEALTHCARE**  
**access**



# Meridian healthcare expansions boost community services

MERIDIAN'S FOCUS ON WHOLE-PERSON HEALTH offers patients optimal care by integrating healthcare for physical, mental, and social well-being. It is also important to Meridian to be there to help patients receive the care they need wherever, whenever, and however they need it.

Expansion across East Central Indiana has been a high priority for Meridian to help give people in rural communities better access to care, which include recent expansions and added services in Marion, Portland, Richmond, and Bluffton.

"Our overall expansion in primary care and in dental services, in particular, is to reach communities who are underserved," said Jennifer Henderson, Vice President of Primary Care at Meridian. Our overall objective is to keep the continuum of care intact for patients to achieve their best results."

In the future, growth paths may mean an expanded partnership with Lutheran Health Physicians in Fort Wayne and Bluffton. In addition, Meridian is opening new offices on its own offering primary medical care and dental in Grant County and Jay County.

"Meridian's newest primary care clinic will be on Lake Avenue, across from the VA hospital in Fort Wayne. The Fort Wayne expansions are a joint venture and partnership with Lutheran Network," Henderson said. "The new location will include out-patient primary care with family practice physicians and pediatrics, as well as access to Meridian's hallmark behavioral care clinicians. In the future Meridian would like to provide dental and pharmacy services."

Where it makes sense, Meridian brings primary care, dental care, and behavioral health services all under one roof. That attention on the continuum of care is never more evident than when you hear directly from a patient.

For Gregory D. Allen his priority was dental care, but he also was looking for a medical home. He landed at Meridian Dental Family Dentistry at 1547 Ohio Ave. in Anderson.

"They have my gingivitis under control," said Allen. "It's been a very positive experience. I've used their mental health services and I go to a primary doctor there," said Allen. "Since everything was in one place, it made it all very convenient."

Meridian provides dental services at multiple locations, integrating care to help people achieve total body wellness.

Good oral health is key to overall well-being and Meridian experts provide a wide range of services to communities across Central Indiana. Care includes preventative services such as exams, x-rays, sealants, and dental cleanings. Periodontal care, which is the treatment and management of gum disease includes oral surgery and restorative care such as fillings, root canals, and crowns. Prosthetic care such as full and partial dentures is available in-house and same-day emergency care is available for walk-ins.

Meridian's model of linking dental care with medical care has proven successful. Dental services are offered currently in Anderson, Muncie, Richmond, and Elwood and are going to be

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**EXPANDED ACCESS.** Dental health is an important example of the full continuum of whole-person health services Meridian provides in underserved communities.





‘our overall expansion in primary care and in dental services, in particular, is to reach communities who are underserved.’

— Jennifer Henderson, Vice President of Primary Care at Meridian

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expanded in Portland, Fort Wayne, and Marion in the near future.

In Richmond, it expanded the pediatric urgent care to include all ages because of the growing demand for these services. Now renamed to MeridianMD Convenience Care, which is located at 520 S. Ninth St. provides walk-in primary care medical services, urgent care, as well as urgent dental care.

Recently, Meridian acquired new buildings in Portland and Marion, where it will introduce a model of care that extends its reach even further, offering a centralized pharmacy in addition to the medical, dental and behavioral health services.

“We’ve been remodeling a building that previously was a chiropractic office in Portland,” Henderson said. “We’re adding space for a dental clinic, drop-in space for telehealth services and behavioral health services.”

Sometimes new clinics are a result of existing practices and collaboration.

“My job is to help build community connections,” Henderson said. “To be a liaison for Meridian and that community partner; to provide support to our practices/providers/staff; to make sure the practices are running smoothly and there are no barriers for the providers to treat our patients.”



**EXPANDING SERVICES.** Meridian’s expansions are helping meet a growing demand for services in rural communities.



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# URGENT & GREAT need & impact

## FosterHope supports children awaiting families

**T** IN 2020, MORE THAN 210,000 CHILDREN UNDER 18 ENTERED FOSTER CARE in the United States. On average, children remain in state care for more than a year and a half, and 5 percent of children in foster care have languished there five or more years, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In Indiana, the story is no different. “There is an exorbitant need for foster parents in the state of Indiana,” said Julie Roe, Foster Care Specialist with Meridian’s FosterHope program. “There are about 13,000 children in our state foster care system, many waiting for a home. Yet, there are roughly only 6,200 licensed parents.”



Therapeutic Foster Care

SEE NEXT PAGE



**FOSTERHOPE TEAM.** From left: Julie Roe, Foster Care Specialist; Emily Williamson, Program Manager of Children’s Services; Hope Paul, Behavioral Clinician; Christopher Marker, Adoption Specialist; Mary Grey, Foster Administrative Manager and Rae Benedict, Intern.



‘There are about 13,000 children in our state foster care system, many waiting for a home. Yet, there are roughly only 6,200 licensed parents.’

— Julie Roe, Foster Care Specialist



**FOSTERHOPE TEAM.** From left: Rae Benedict, Intern; Hope Paul, Behavioral Clinician; Emily Williamson, Program Manager of Children's Services; Christopher Marker, Adoption Specialist; Julie Roe, Foster Care Specialist; and Mary Grey, Foster Administrative Manager.



‘There is no such thing as a perfect foster parent. You do not have to be perfect to be a great match for these children.’

— Mary Grey, FosterHope Administrative Manager

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FosterHope is a specialized foster care program for Indiana children in need of emotional, behavioral, or mental health support. It is one of the few foster programs in Indiana that specializes in the needs of children with behavioral issues.

Connecting children with foster parents trained to meet those needs. FosterHope provides hope and support for some of the state’s most vulnerable children. Foster parents share their home and hearts with a child who needs patience, understanding, comfort and love, while also demonstrating good parenting skills for the child’s family.

A chance encounter at work was the catalyst for foster mom Amanda Dirkhising.

“I work at a credit union and one day a customer was telling me about getting licensed through FosterHope,” said Dirkhising. “My husband and I had always been interested in being foster parents, but that was the day we decided to start the journey.”

After completing the licensing process, The Dirkhising were matched with two sisters – a toddler and a pre-teen – who have been with the family for more than a year now. In that time, the family has enjoyed holidays, school activities, and group outings with fellow FosterHope families.

Meridian’s expertise means FosterHope families have the medical and psychological support that goes along with everyday living, as well as care management support that goes well beyond determining placement.

The Dirkhising have access to Meridian Health Services’ child psychiatrists, behavioral clinicians, therapists, and medical physicians. Foster parents in the program also have access to behavioral support, crisis intervention and emergency respite 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

The need for foster parents is urgent, and the impact is great. Mary Grey, FosterHope administrative manager, wants potential parents to remember that perfection isn’t required – or even possible.

“There is no such thing as a perfect foster parent,” said Grey. “You do not have to be perfect to be a great match for these children.”

Dirkhising agrees, and believes the key to foster parenting is having an open heart.

“To me, a good foster parent is someone who goes into it being accepting, patient and loving. Someone who is trying to make a difference in the child’s life that comes into their home, no matter how long they are actually there.”

**To learn more about FosterHope, or submit an application, call 866-306-2647.**





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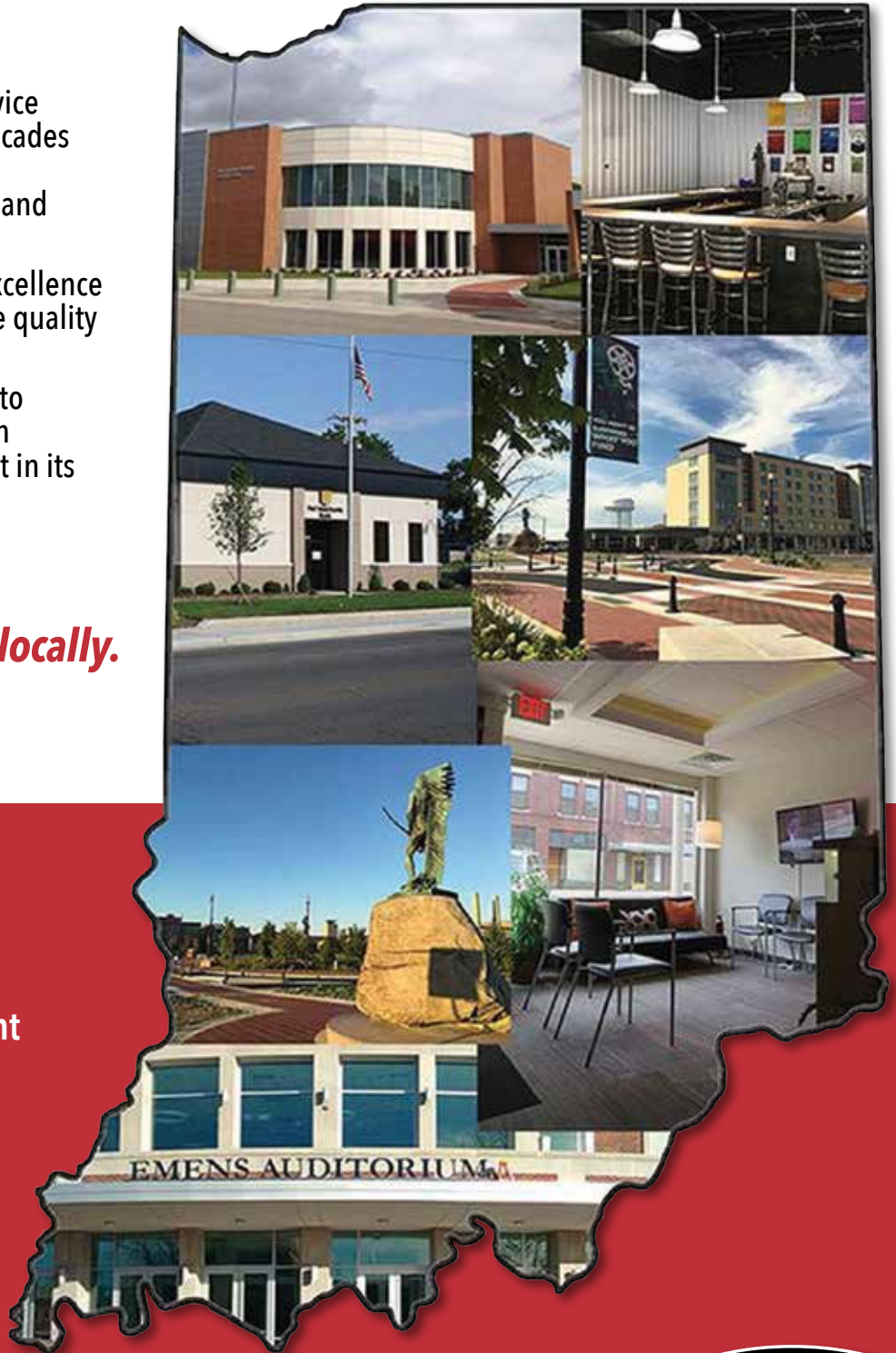
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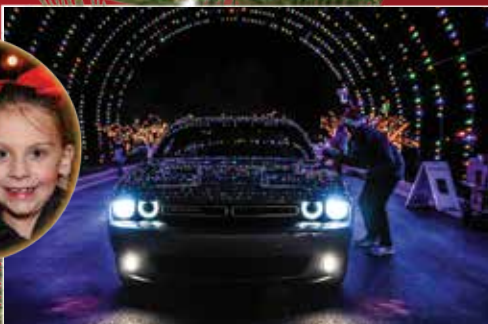
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