

Below is a sample of a winning nomination for Melissa Market, who won the Pinnacle Award in 2021. *\*This is a sample only and all submissions should be original.*

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Leading by example. That's what Pinnacle nominee and Group Home Coordinator Melissa Market does while managing 3 Group Homes for adults with disabilities. Melissa started her career with Easterseals Rehabilitation Center as a DSP in 1990 and advanced to assistant manager, manager, and coordinator. The depth and breadth of her experience and knowledge can't be matched. "If I don't know something, I call Melissa," said VP Jackie Smith.

Melissa's love for the residents is at the heart of everything she does, which was evident during the pandemic. "I can't even describe the impact she's had during Covid," Jackie said. Melissa translated complex policies into clear direction, trained staff, and ensured the in-depth plans were implemented to keep clients safe. Melissa also "worked miracles" with scheduling during this stressful time of extremely low staffing. Melissa had the opportunity to work from home, but she would not. She told colleagues she couldn't support staff and help them get the job done if she wasn't there. She worked numerous shifts herself, sharing the workload and boosting morale. "She was not only their motivator and cheerleader, but also their co-DSP," explained a Group Home nurse. Melissa even quarantined in one of the homes, working there while remotely managing two other homes. Melissa's calm demeanor, which sometimes disguises her tremendous passion, provided much-needed stability. She set the example for safety protocols, in person and during virtual planning and troubleshooting sessions. "For a year and a half, I didn't see her out of full PPE, even in Zoom meetings," Jackie reported.

Colleagues are inspired by Melissa's dedication. One said "She is down in the trenches, always. She teaches and molds staff to be client centered. I am one of many she has influenced and shown the great responsibilities and joys of the job." She requires staff to follow rules, sets boundaries, and enforces policy with an iron fist for the clients' benefit. Yet she is an outspoken advocate for her team. During Covid, she lobbied for additional compensation for staff before hazard pay was implemented. She played a huge role in updating the managers manual. She constantly suggests, develops, and implements improvements to benefit staff and clients. For nearly 31 years, the residents have inspired Melissa. "Her love for them is unbelievable," Jackie said. "You can see it. Her eyes beam, their eyes beam, there's just a huge connection." Melissa has sat and talked with a client during their final hours, providing the comfort of familiar, loving surroundings - like family. Melissa puts clients first every day, as in this story from a colleague: "She would come into the home like a fun, positive friend spending time with the clients. One time, she came in after a rainstorm. There were puddles everywhere. One by one, she took the clients outside in their wheelchairs, running through puddles and having a great time, while showing us we are here to work for them. She is special." Jackie said, "This job embodies Melissa's personality. It's what she's meant to do."