

# Know Me

NAME **Melissa**

PASSION **Auto  
Racing**

## My Story

Meet 44 year-old Melissa Meister.

Melissa is fun, easy going, and likes to stay busy! She's from Westerville, which is near Columbus, and keeps in touch with her friends from back home. She likes to work out at Planet Fitness, go for walks at the park, walk around North Canton, or get together with friends or family. She loves sports and learning new things. She works a full time job so she fits all of her fun stuff in on the evenings and on her days off.

### Job story:

Melissa first started learning about work when she was at Westerville High School. In high school, she had a job busing tables at Pizza Hut. Then, through Career exploration in high school, she worked at Riverside Hospital in dietary and in housekeeping. Once she graduated she was able to get her first job at Edgewood Manor, where she had a mentor who took her under their wing. Not too long after that she got a job at Manor Care in Westerville where she received the support of a job coach; she worked there 17 years before moving to North Canton! Fun fact- Melissa and her mom were coworkers at Manor Care for over a decade!

In 2018, Melissa made a big move from Westerville Ohio to North Canton so that

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she could be closer to family. With preparing for her move, Melissa had to transfer her waiver services, connect with [Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities](#) (OOD), and transfer with Manor Care to the Belden Village location. After working for Manor Care for 18 years, Melissa decided it was time for a change. Melissa used Job Development through OOD to help find her job at [St. Luke Lutheran Community](#) in North Canton, where she initially started in housekeeping. Melissa worked in housekeeping until the pandemic started and a job in laundry opened up. Her job coach helped her to write a letter of interest and transfer into a new role in laundry, where Melissa still works. She loves her job in laundry because she's a morning person and the hours allow her to lead an active lifestyle after work!

#### **Melissa's passion:**

Auto Racing (she says she watches Open Wheel Auto Racing and likes to go to the Mid-Ohio Sports Course in Mansfield, Ohio with her family!)

#### **Strengths and talents:**

Melissa says, "Cooking, I love to cook!" Her mom Janis said, "She is a strong, independent person." In one of her Stark DD discovery tools, it said: "Melissa is great at being positive, even when things aren't going quite how she pictured. Her ability to maintain such a busy schedule is something to be admired. Most of all, Melissa is reliable; she is someone you can count on."

#### **Triumphs/What she's overcome:**

Melissa said, "Moving from Westerville to come to Stark County was hard until I made new friends." Her mom talked about how Melissa moves forward no matter how people treat her. No matter what happens, Melissa is always able to overcome.

#### **How has Stark DD helped or been a resource:**

Both Melissa and her mom said that having her waiver is why she is able to live on her own and be independent. Melissa loves having Homemaker Personal Care (HPC) services, especially for making friends, going to the gym, going to community events, and trips down to Westerville to see her old friends. She uses Non-Medical Transportation (NMT) and could not be happier with how reliable and flexible Jeff Bair (independent provider) has been. Jeff has even stepped up and provided extra transportation during the pandemic (Melissa needed to go get tested for COVID twice per week as a healthcare worker).

She also receives job coaching through Goodwill (job coach is Stacie Ady) where they have had to use some creative planning to keep up with this during the pandemic. Stacie does her job coaching via phone right now. She calls to touch base with Melissa to see how things are going. She encourages Melissa to advocate for herself and they talk through work changes. When needed, Stacie will call and talk with the supervisor as well.

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*Melissa and her mom*



*Melissa and her dad*



*Melissa and her family*



Melissa said, "Stacie is wonderful. She listens and gives helpful tips!"

Stark DD was also very helpful with the transition from Franklin County to Stark County. Melissa's mom had said they were considering Stark or Summit because they all (mom, dad, and Melissa) were moving up here to be closer to her sister who lives in Green. Janis said after talking to both counties she knew she wanted Melissa to be in Stark County because we were more than willing to work with her ahead of time to set up services so that everything would start immediately upon her arrival (NMT was the biggest one).

Melissa came to the Street Fair with her sister and found HPC providers she wanted to interview with. Through the Stark DD Provider Portal, we were able to find the NMT provider, Jeff Bair, and he was able to start right when she needed him.

Melissa's mom, Janis, talked about all of the connections they found through the SSA such as festivals, community activities, cooking classes, and Special Olympics. Since COVID, Melissa has been connected with a variety of online groups and virtual events so she could stay involved. Now things are opening up more Melissa has attended an adaptive fitness class and the Café Disco dance at First Christian. Her SSA emails any and all community events and activities to Melissa's parents to help Melissa find new things to do.

Melissa's favorite thing about Stark DD is Special Olympics! She says, "Special Olympics has been great!" She is involved with Softball, Bocce, Bowling, and Swimming. Melissa loves to stay busy and likes to exercise. She is social and likes to be around people whenever she can!



*Melissa and her Stark DD  
Service and Support Administrator, Courtney Downey*



*Melissa and Jeff Bair, Independent Provider*



# *Know* Stark DD



**Stark County Board of  
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