

Press Release

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Bellefaire JCB's Technology Entity Acquired

Shaker Heights, OH – 4/09/2021: Building upon the success and experience of its Monarch School, in 2005 Bellefaire JCB (Bellefaire) and its parent, the Wingspan Care Group (Wingspan), launched, as a for profit venture, Monarch Teaching Technologies (MTT) and its premier product, **VizZle**, then a visual learning solution for the education of youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Since then, **VizZle** has developed into a SaaS based, special education software platform for teachers, school administrators, speech-language pathologists and parents. **VizZle**, is an easy-to-use, award-winning software tool for creating interactive, visual learning support for special education and autism instruction. Monarch Teaching Technologies was recently acquired by ReThink Autism, Inc.

*“At the core of the mission of Bellefaire and Wingspan is to use our resources to better serve youth with behavioral health and other special needs, including students with autism spectrum disorder. What we learned through our Monarch School uniquely positioned us to launch **VizZle** as a teaching tool for these students. We are excited to see the company move to the next stage with Rethink, which we are confident will result in more students with special needs benefiting from the **VizZle** product”,* said **Adam G. Jacobs, Ph.D., President of Bellefaire and Wingspan.**

While it may be atypical for a nonprofit to launch a technology start up, the leadership of Bellefaire and Wingspan followed their record of innovation and success. In response to a growing concern of inadequate autism services in northeast Ohio, in 2000 Bellefaire launched the Monarch School, Ohio's first chartered, non-public day school for students with autism. Building upon research that children with autism strongly prefer the permanence of visual stimuli and make significant improvements in language comprehension and communication skills through visual-based learning, the Monarch Model was developed. This dynamic, visual-based, technology-enhanced curriculum maximizes each child's unique capacity to learn and communicate. The Monarch School, using its visual learning model, quickly became a nationally recognized leader in autism treatment and today serves nearly 170 students from across the region and the nation.

While the Monarch Model was a proven teaching methodology for children with autism, early implementation of the method exposed challenges to realize the full potential of visual-based education for children with autism, primarily because of time inefficiencies and the inability to readily duplicate lessons. Further, academic research and Bellefaire's extensive experience, demonstrated that children with autism respond more frequently, appropriately and pleasurably to technological interventions than to many other stimuli. Because students with autism process visuals more easily than auditory stimuli, visually-based interventions allow them to receive information through their strongest processing modality. Furthermore, the use of computers to present visual supports substantially improves students' level of engagement.

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With this knowledge in hand, launching MTT, which created what has become **VizZle**, was a logical next step for Bellefaire and Wingspan.

MTT's CEO, Bob Gephart, commented, *"With over fifteen years of data, we know the impact that our **VizZle** product has had on both the students and educators who we support. We have been gratified by the confidence of both our early and more recent investors, Jumpstart and Jobs Ohio, as well as the vision of Bellefaire and Wingspan in launching MTT. MTT also is grateful to co-founders **Susan Ratner and Dr. Jacobs** who moved this early vision to an enterprise that the staff of MTT has so diligently nurtured and grown."*

MTT and **VizZle** have experienced steady growth since inception, by schools and individual users, growth and engagement that skyrocketed during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this pandemic, the robust nature of MTT's **VizZle** product meant that the transition from classroom to distance learning for **VizZle** users was seamless. Bellefaire JCB and Wingspan Care Group are eager to see the software benefit from the robust marketing and development infrastructure at Rethink.

About Bellefaire JCB

www.bellefairejcb.org

Among the nation's largest, most experienced child service agencies, Bellefaire JCB provides a variety of behavioral health, substance use disorder, educational and prevention services. Bellefaire helps approximately 40,000 children, youth, families and community members each year through its more than 25 programs including outpatient and school-based counseling, prevention and early intervention, pre-school & infant care, homeless & missing youth programs, foster care & adoption, mentoring, residential treatment including crisis stabilization and in-patient psychiatry, plus its' transitional & independent living programs. Comprehensive autism services are provided age three (3) through adulthood.

About Wingspan Care Group

www.wingspancg.org

Wingspan Care Group is a nonprofit administrative and management organization that provides a united, community-based network of services so member agencies can focus on mission-related goals and operate in a more cost-effective and efficient manner. Founded in 2002, Wingspan was formed in response to the growing financial crisis in the health care and social services fields. Wingspan's innovative model is designed to promote sustainability and advancement among its partner agencies by streamlining operations and eliminating redundancies – resulting in improvements to the delivery of direct service operations. With an aggregate size larger than most nonprofit organizations, Wingspan is able to leverage both its size and expertise to positively affect each of its member agencies. The formation of Wingspan Care Group and the subsequent affiliation of its subsidiary agencies is an innovative step in providing solutions to respond to the urgent need to generate more revenue for both nonprofit and for-profit entities. Affiliates include: Applewood Centers, Inc., Bellefaire JCB, Bluestone Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital and Lifeworks.