
ECHO

A Chronological History

1968 - 2010

Dedicated to the thousands of clients for whom ECHO has made a difference, and to all our ECHO volunteers and member congregations, organizations, and individuals who made that difference possible,

And

With special acknowledgment to Pastor Duane Carlson of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, who is widely and justifiably credited with being the founding father of ECHO,

And

With thanks to John Gauthier, who compiled this history of ECHO from a daunting stack of annual reports, meeting minutes, newsletters and old, yellowed documents.

1968-1969: A Call to Action

The new community of Springfield, Virginia appeared to be a flourishing, middle-class suburban neighborhood in 1952-1956 when the Crestwood Corporation finished constructing hundreds of homes. Families were eager to move into the quiet neighborhoods to live their "American dream". Springfield had schools, stores and churches, even as it provided easy commuting access to jobs in and around Washington, DC. But despite appearances, there was also growing poverty among some of its residents. Some faced temporary emergency needs that left them unable to meet expenses or provide sufficient food for their families. For the most part, however, these social problems remained hidden and largely unaddressed by local government or the community at-large.

Pastor Duane Carlson of St. Mark's Lutheran Church on Backlick Road soon learned of people in need. In increasing numbers, they came to the church seeking assistance. The requests were simple, usually asking for cash to buy food, clothing or pay a bill. Some needed transportation to medical appointments. As the number of requests increased, Pastor Carlson made responding to the needs of the community a ministry of his congregation. Before long, a committee of the parish had set up a food pantry in the basement of the church. Clothing was made available and distributed. The Church Council authorized a special fund to be used when cash was the wisest way to assist.

After a number of years, the demand for help was more than one parish could manage. It taxed the ability of a single church to supply both volunteers on a daily basis and financial support to meet the requests that came from people in distress. Something new had to be done.



Pastor Duane and Alice Carlson

Early in 1968, Pastor Carlson and his wife, Alice, invited a small group of local clergy to their home for conversation about what might be done to meet the growing challenge of people

in need. Pastor Carlson offered the following guidelines for an ecumenical effort to assist people in our community:

- Every church has people who are interested in helping by offering time and/or financial assistance. When these people are combined into an ecumenical effort, there is the potential for a strong organization to assist people in need in our community.
- Such an organization would be staffed by volunteers. There would be no paid staff. A Board of Directors would be comprised of equal representatives from each community of faith that contributed volunteers and/or financial assistance.
- No one church would be asked to do more than its resources could offer.
- Clergy could not serve in the role of President or Chairman of the organization, but could serve on the Board of Directors.
- No assessments would be made to communities of faith in support of a budget.
- People in need were to be assisted. There was to be no restriction or qualification as to race, color or creed.

The group of clergypersons was in favor of the idea of an ecumenical effort and the guidelines as presented by Pastor Carlson. It was here that a new organization dedicated to serving people with need in our community had its earliest beginning.

Following the meeting at the Carlson home, interest in the idea spread quickly. Members of the Springfield Ministerial Association agreed with the concept and called for immediate action to be taken. On May 22, 1968, representatives of nine Springfield churches met to discuss how social needs could be met on an ecumenical basis. This group was subsequently identified as ECHO. ECHO is an acronym for Ecumenical Community for Helping Others. [*Note: Some years later, the word "for" was dropped from the name.*]

ECHO was eager to get off the ground. Its first newsletter stated that "ECHO has moved beyond the talking and planning stage - ACTION is beginning. The first steps are small, but significant; confidence and experience will help us to expand our involvement. A general meeting was held on February 13, 1969. Enthusiasm and willingness to participate were evident. Feeling a need for a minimum amount of organization, [*three participants*] accepted the responsibility of selecting a nominee for Chairman of ECHO."

In early 1969, ECHO applied to the State of Virginia requesting to be incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization. The Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws were approved by the State of Virginia on April 19, 1969. The initial Board of Directors consisted of nine persons representing nine local churches and Paul Hayes, who was elected the first President. These nine churches are considered to be the founding congregations of ECHO.

Mr. Robert Fischer	Grace Presbyterian
Col. John Zorack	St. Christopher's Episcopal
Mrs. Audrey Guarino	St. Bernadette's Catholic
Mrs. Jean Howe	Westwood Baptist
Mr. John Kratzke	Prince of Peace Lutheran
Mrs. Donald Weeks	St. John's Methodist
Mrs. Anita Martin	Springfield Methodist
Mrs. Alice Green	St. Mark's Lutheran
Mrs. Joan Fye	Kirkwood Presbyterian

The Articles of Incorporation authorized ECHO to engage in religious and charitable activities, including:

- (1) Aiding families in emergencies;
- (2) Providing family guidance and assistance;
- (3) Supplying transportation to adults and children for needed services;
- (4) Providing adequate shelter for citizens;
- (5) Educating citizens with regard to social, religious and charitable needs;
- (6) Operating a day care center for children; and
- (7) Other such lawful activities.

A modest food "cupboard" was located at St. Mark's Lutheran Church. It was stocked by the individual church representatives bringing food from their respective congregations. As requests for food were received at ECHO, an ECHO volunteer would pick up the food at St. Mark's and deliver it to the family in need. One of the volunteers, who collected food from St. Bernadette's, stored food in the basement of her home and stocked the food locker at St. Mark's from there.

Donated furniture and appliances were also offered to those in need. In practice, this meant that items often needed to be picked up at a donor's home and then delivered to the needy person's home. In the beginning, ECHO had to find a place to store the furniture as well as trucks to deliver it, and was fortunate to receive an offer from Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA) to share their warehouse for the storage of furniture and appliances.

The "Family-to-Family" program was an early concept envisioned to consist of ECHO volunteer families who were assigned to a particular family in need. Home visits would be made in order to provide support where needed. For a volunteer, this meant "giving of yourself in a flexible, creative way, helping a family raise their sights, develop hope and motivation, and cope with everyday problems." It would be their responsibility to stay in contact with the family, see to the family's overall needs, and fill those needs if deemed to be valid and within the capability of ECHO to do so. Needs might include food, clothing, household items, furniture, financial assistance, transportation or one of the many other services provided at various times during ECHO's history. In the case of valid needs beyond the capability of ECHO to meet, the goal was to be able to refer the needy family to another resource for assistance. At an ECHO meeting on March 11, 1969, the "Family-to-Family" and "Emergency Food and Clothing" groups were merged and became the "Family

Emergency" group.¹

From early on, ECHO struggled to attract enough volunteers who were able and willing to "adopt" a family, and no written records have been found documenting that an ECHO family ever visited a needy family or gave the kind of assistance and guidance envisioned by the founders. The problem got increasingly difficult as more and more needy families coming to ECHO for help began to outnumber the available volunteers to assist them in the way ECHO desired. Nevertheless, it remained a vision of the Board of Directors for many years that the provision in the Articles of Incorporation authorizing ECHO to "engage in...providing family guidance and assistance" was intended to be implemented through the deep, continuing family-to-family contact between an ECHO family and a needy family as spelled out in the earliest ECHO written records. [*Note: For a comprehensive description of the concept which ECHO sought in providing emergency assistance to members of the local community in need, see the ECHO paper titled "Information for ECHO Family Emergency Volunteers" dated September 1970, in the Addendum.*] In 1985, ECHO gave up the "one-on-one" attempt to mentor families and adopted the system, more or less as it is today, with family counselors assigned to work a scheduled day to assist the clients who have appointments on that day.

The organization continued to evolve during its first year in operation as more was discovered about what was and was not working. The 1969 Annual Report stated that the ECHO organization consisted of the following committees:

- Family Emergency (included Clothing)
- Transportation
- Food
- Furniture
- Household Furnishings
- Housing
- Publicity

Family Emergency activities included a wide range of services: providing monetary assistance, food, clothing, household goods or transportation to needy families; offering advice or just listening; acting as a liaison between people and agencies; matching resources with needs; finding shelter for families and helping them to move; or buying eyeglasses. This committee was the business end of ECHO. It was the group that had direct contact with the needy, that decided if and how ECHO could help and then took the requisite action to ensure it happened.

Other committees provided the logistical support to ensure ECHO was able to offer such services to its clients. Transportation work consisted of ECHO drivers taking persons to

¹ ECHO 1969 Newsletter No. 1, undated.

medical facilities, legal offices, welfare and public service agencies, and employment agencies. The Food Committee made sure food was available when needed. The Annual Report stated that ECHO gave out a week's supply of groceries in April 1969 to 12 different families, totaling 77 people.

In addition to the ACCA warehouse being used as storage for ECHO's furniture and appliances, additional furniture was also stored in the garage of a home located on Franconia Road in Springfield. Household Furnishings was organized in response to many requests from families; items were collected and stored at St. Christopher's as well as in the basement of the home of the committee chairman. The task of picking up and delivering donated items to needy families was shared by ECHO churches on a rotating basis.

There was strong interest in ECHO in regard to the need in Fairfax County for more low and moderate income housing. ECHO was considering the possibility of getting involved.

ECHO was also planning to "develop small-scale training programs to help low-income families learn budgeting, economical purchasing practices, basic home decorating touches, etc. As ACCA and other community service groups have found, a small amount of training can result in a vastly improved home environment and improved family pride."

Start-up plans for a children's day care center were investigated, but a decision was made not to begin such a center at this time due to the effort involved and the "failure to identify an urgent need for such a center in Springfield".

In November, sixty families received Thanksgiving dinner together with a week's supply of food.²

Receipts for the period March 11 to August 31, 1969 were \$2,169.96 and disbursements were \$1,136.61. The Family Emergency Committee spent \$1,068.31, including \$215.18 for food, \$173.72 for utilities, \$606.41 for rent, and \$73.00 for medical needs.

ECHO was granted tax exempt status by the IRS on October 30, 1969.³

² ECHO 1969 Newsletters No. 5, 6 and 8, undated.

³ ECHO 1969-1970 Annual Report for the period September 1, 1969 - August 31, 1970.

1970: "A Small but Vital Force"

The 1969-1970 Annual Report summarized the state of ECHO as follows:

ECHO has grown and evolved into a small but vital force for betterment in our greater Springfield area. We have found responsive people in our churches as well as in the community at large - people with concerns for others - people who are workers, not just talkers. The concerned people in each church are more effectively banded together, are large enough - visible enough - to begin bridging the troubled waters in our community, such as:

- providing 15-20 transportation calls a week for people in need;
- providing Thanksgiving food baskets for 66 families and 33 more on Valentine's Day;
- maintaining a food cupboard year-round;
- providing rent and utility deposits and back rent to assure shelter;
- providing clothing, household goods and furniture to meet essential needs; and
- providing an ECHO volunteer to befriend a family in need and be available to meet emergency needs.

The ECHO President for this year was Robert Fischer. There were ten working committees:

Family Emergency	Household Furnishings
File Box Coordinator	Housing
Transportation	Publicity
Food	Home Repairs
Furniture	Homemaking Skills

There were now eleven member congregations, the original nine plus Messiah United Methodist Church and Springfield Christian Church.

According to the annual report, the Family Emergency Committee "is the main, central thrust of ECHO. Families coming to our attention are usually referred to a Family Emergency volunteer first to determine and hopefully solve the immediate need through provision of food, clothing, rent assistance, or other things. Then through follow up by this committee or one of the others, we attempt to meet other needs."

The job of File Box Coordinator was to maintain a file card on each client. These cards contained records of all available client information.

Home Repairs was a new committee in 1970, formed to meet an urgent need in the community. "In numerous instances, low income families live in houses without adequate sanitary facilities or which need major repairs to bring them up to county health standards. This committee organizes work parties, obtains materials and accomplishes the repairs. The first project was this past summer and produced major improvements including a new roof, new siding, removal of a condemned rear addition, shoring up the foundation and provision of a new privy. The owner assisted with the labor and bought as much of the material as possible."

The Homemaking Skills Committee was another new interest group that formed to meet a perceived need. "The Family Emergency volunteers frequently find families with whom they are working who could benefit from improved homemaking skills - sewing, elements of home decorating, budgeting, cooking, etc. This group will attempt to organize training sessions by either utilizing available instructional resources or by conducting the training themselves."

For the fiscal year 1969-1970, the Family Emergency Committee spent \$4,149.40. Income for the year amounted to \$5,552.56. ECHO finished the year with a checkbook balance of \$1,981.03.⁴

Gaylord Leonard was elected President of ECHO in September of 1970.⁵

⁴ ECHO 1969-1970 Annual Report for the period September 1, 1969 - August 31, 1970.

⁵ ECHO 1970 Newsletter No. 17, undated.

1971: A Move to 7309 Old Keene Mill Road

By 1971, ECHO was broadening its reach into the community. Seven new programs were added to complement its already robust operations:

- tutoring elementary school children in two Springfield area schools;
- providing, along with the County, adult education classes to allow people to obtain their high school diploma;
- Mother's Day Out program;
- home repairs;
- Meals-on-Wheels serving shut-ins of the Springfield area;
- in the process of establishing a group home for girls; and
- owning a home to be used as a rental for a needy family.

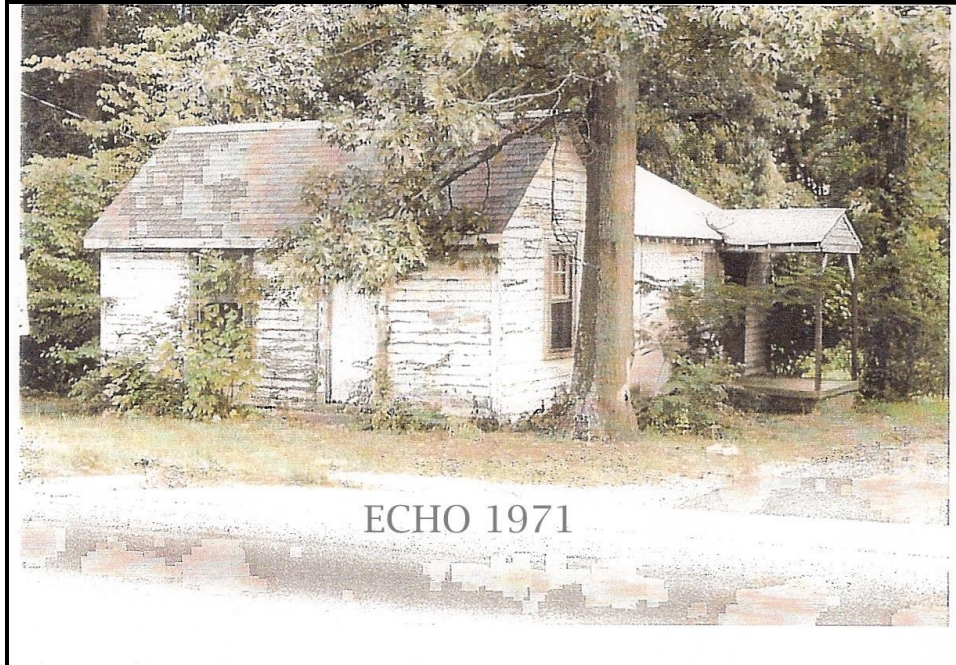
"The key to ECHO continues to be the personal contact between workers (ECHO Family Emergency volunteers) and their families. From these relationships, we are able to serve the families through the different ECHO programs (food, clothing, household furnishings, furniture, transportation, tutoring, adult education, household repairs, Mother's Day Out, and Meals-on-Wheels). ECHO has also helped with rent, rent deposits, utility bills, back taxes, ambulance expenses, medical and dental bills, special shoes, heating fuel, pharmacy prescriptions, car repairs, financial loans, and motel and food bills for individuals stranded in the area."⁶

A mark of ECHO's success thus far came in April of 1971 when the organization was able to rent a small five-room house at 7309 Old Keene Mill Road in Springfield. [*Note: This house was located where the Westhaven town home community now stands.*] Little more than an old wooden shack, the building was intended to be manned by volunteers and used to store food, clothing and household furnishings. The monthly rent was \$50, which also covered property taxes. A telephone and family emergency phone line were planned.

Every inch of space in the building was utilized. Families were brought in to get clothing and household furnishings. Canned food, along with perishables stored in three freezers and one refrigerator, very adequately met emergency food needs. Volunteers worked at the house weekdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., answering the phone and sorting and storing items.⁷

⁶ ECHO Annual Report 1971-1972.

⁷ ECHO Newsletter No. 24, dated April 1971.



The first ECHO building located at 7309 Old Keene Mill Road in Springfield

In addition to the rented house in Springfield, ECHO owned a small home in Alexandria. This house, whose mortgage loan was still being paid off, was donated to ECHO by the Lynch Foundation, with the understanding that it be used to house a client family in need. ECHO accepted the obligation to continue monthly mortgage payments as a condition of the property transfer.⁸

⁸ *Source:* Enclosure to letter from Springfield Methodist Church dated February 20, 1972, and signed by Richard Crom.

1972: Small Growing Pains

By ECHO's fourth year in operation, 50 client families were assigned to ECHO volunteers working in Family Emergency. Another 15-20 families were being helped on an occasional basis. New Family Emergency volunteers attended orientation sessions prior to their being assigned to a family.

ECHO, in conjunction with Fairfax County, had begun an adult education program in February 1971. Classes were initially held at Springfield United Methodist Church and later moved to St. John's United Methodist Church. Declining enrollment eventually led to the program's discontinuation. A tutoring program was started up at Hunt Valley Elementary School in April 1972. Initially, 12 tutors helped 17 children on an individual basis, meeting with the students once a week for thirty minutes during the school day.

At the end of August and into the first weeks of September, the shelves and racks at the ECHO house were renovated and preparations made to change over to fall and winter clothing inventories. Overages of summer clothing were given to American Rescue Services in Washington as there was not adequate storage space to keep these clothes until the following summer. By this time, ECHO was serving 55 to 60 families in and around the Springfield area with clothing needs. Also, a number of families in the Alexandria area were being given clothing from time to time. The churches in the area normally responded to clothing needs without ECHO having to resort to all-out clothing drives. From time to time there were specific clothing needs which were conveyed through the church representatives; other times, the churches donated money for special needs.

In November 1972, churches, organizations and individuals provided Thanksgiving baskets for 108 families. A community Thanksgiving dinner at the Bethel Community Center in Alexandria was held for 50 people.

A publicity campaign was launched in the local papers to invite the Springfield community to share their Christmas with ECHO families. The response came from civic organizations, churches, businesses, and individual families. Seventy-two ECHO families received gifts, food and holiday trees.

The Mother's Day Out program was aimed at the mothers of families being served. This project involved not only the energies of many of the church groups, but also the assistance from several local businesses who donated materials and products. Fourteen women originally enrolled in the program. The objective was to provide a means of fellowship and interest, and activities initially included grooming hints, sewing classes and crafts. Babysitting services were available during the meetings.

ECHO was also engaged in establishing a group home for girls aged 12 to 16 years. A grant from the Lynch Foundation of Springfield was received to assist in the project. "There is a real need to provide homes for many children who have been estranged from their parents

and who, unless they have a home to live in, may be institutionalized by the authorities. The year 1973 should see this project in full operation.”

Working from their new headquarters on Old Keene Mill Road, ECHO was presented with a fresh set of problems. There was immediate need to establish guidelines and operating procedures for the building’s use by the more than 41 ECHO volunteers now serving the needy community in Springfield.

Family Emergency workers were reminded not to give out the address of the headquarters to people donating items as there was concern that publicizing the location might lead to vandalism. All donations were to be delivered to the churches, sorted, and then brought to headquarters by ECHO volunteers. Workers were also asked not to provide the phone numbers of committee chairmen directly to client families and to keep their family’s information card up to date.

Guidelines were established for those families coming to headquarters to pick out and try on clothing and shoes. Workers were asked to accompany their family to the house and to ensure they took “only their share of what is available – good and not so good.”

Changes in providing emergency assistance were also made. “These changes, which should not hamper our effectiveness, are necessary for many reasons. One time, a person not active in ECHO took a family, not known to us, to the house and supplied them with a large load of food, then went on to charge more food at a local market. Other reasons deal generally with having better control over what families we supply and what we supply to families.” There was also need to remind workers that “the ECHO budget is not unlimited, and we can gain a better dollar value by using our food money for quantities of storable foods and encouraging families to use their funds for fresh foods. [*The Food Chairman*] is preparing a list of foods and substitute foods to help you prepare a healthy diet for families.”

Electric heaters had been installed in the house in place of the oil heater, and volunteers were asked to “be sure electric heaters are unplugged when you leave; except, if you found the heater on in the kitchen, please leave it on.”

Volunteers were requested to “please take garbage in the baskets home with you in order to cut down on the garbage collection.” Also, “remember we don’t have water at the house.”⁹

Case histories published in ECHO’s monthly newsletters helped demonstrate the extent of ECHO’s outreach to their neighbors in need. One such story is quoted from the September 1972 newsletter:

⁹ ECHO Newsletters Nos. 31, 32, 33, 34, 36 and 37, dated Jan-Apr, Jul/Aug, Sept 1972.

It became evident that Mr. Anderson (fictitious name) would not be able to support his family of 6 on his salary, which often was not over \$55 a week. ECHO had been providing groceries on a regular basis and helping with utility bills. Mr. Anderson, who is employed as a helper, has no education, cannot read, write his name, or drive a car. Mrs. Anderson, an extremely shy, withdrawn woman, finally accepted the fact that she must go to work. The worker [*ECHO volunteer*] arranged a job interview, put gas in her car, took her into the headquarters and outfitted her in a dress with stockings, matching shoes and a purse. Mrs. Anderson got the job and has been working 2 weeks now. Her 2 pre-school children are in the ACCA day care center, where they are beginning to adjust to being with other people outside the shell of their home. A request was put in a church bulletin for clothing and a check for \$25 was received to help pay for the shoes, uniforms and other clothing that the woman needed. Some uniforms were also donated. It is hoped that with Mrs. Anderson's income, the family will now be able to financially take care of their own needs.¹⁰

Bill Eldridge served as ECHO's President this year. For the calendar year 1972, ECHO recorded \$12,527.13 in income and \$6,669.37 in disbursements by the Family Emergency Committee and total disbursements of \$11,544.68. ECHO had a cash balance at the end of the year of \$2,354.21.¹¹

¹⁰ ECHO Newsletter No. 37, dated September 1972.

¹¹ ECHO Annual Report 1971-1972.

1973: Expanding Programs and Outgrowing Headquarters

Jack Chambliss was elected President of ECHO for 1973-1974. Church membership remained at eleven congregations. In order to meet growing needs, ECHO had formed additional committees, and the organization consisted of the following working groups:

Family Emergency	Publicity
Food	Orientation
Transportation	Adult Education
Furniture	Mother's Day Out
Tutoring	Headquarters
Home Repairs	Group Home
Meals-on-Wheels	Rep to the Citizens Advisory Board
Clothing	

Throughout the year, 63 families were assigned to Family Emergency workers. Of that number, approximately 15 families required only occasional help during the year. ECHO's workers kept families informed of training programs offered by the County Extension Service and helped them to determine if they qualified for food stamps. The Family Emergency Committee was headed up by four coordinators, each of whom supervised the family assistance for clients. Each coordinator was responsible for about 15 families and their ECHO workers.

Demands for food increased in direct proportion to the rate of inflation with an average of 20 food deliveries per month during the year. Food was being delivered to clients' homes by the Family Emergency volunteers.

Furniture, much of it having been completely refurbished, was delivered to 47 ECHO families. When possible, families were requested to pick up their own furniture and, in some cases, they were able to pick up the items directly from the donor. In addition to scheduled runs on Saturday, which used a county truck, many special pick-ups and deliveries were made possible through individuals volunteering their own trucks. ECHO was storing furniture in the garage of one of the volunteers, but traffic in and out of their driveway was making it imperative that ECHO find another location for their warehouse. It was hoped that such storage could be co-located in the headquarters building at 7309 Old Keene Mill Road where food and clothing were stored. The size and structure of this building, however, was already inadequate and it was hoped that ECHO could obtain a larger base for its operations.

Transportation continued to be an important service provided by ECHO. In 1973, all eleven member churches were involved, making trips to Lorton, Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church and Fort Belvoir. Many people were taken to Northern Virginia hospitals and clinics, mental health clinics, employment centers, vocational rehabilitation centers, food stamp locations,

clothing centers and grocery shopping. Trips were also made to George Washington Hospital, Georgetown Hospital and Children's Hospital.

The Mother's Day Out program suffered during the year with the loss of its chairman, but it was hoped that the effort would re-start because it meant so much to the participants.

The Alma Casa group home was officially opened in May 1973. A "wonderful couple" was hired who agreed to be house parents. The objective of Alma Casa was to provide a family-like atmosphere for up to 7 teenage girls aged 12-16. Many organizations, including the Town and Country Junior Women's Club and the Lynch Foundation, made the home a reality.

The tutoring program for elementary school children in grades 1-6 began its second year in October 1973. Nineteen ECHO tutors worked with a total of 26 children at Lorton Elementary and Lynbrook Elementary. The adult education program was dropped by ECHO; however, classes continued in a local church.

Thanksgiving baskets were provided to 60 families. In most cases, these donations by church members included a turkey and a week's supply of food. In December, the Springfield community was again invited to share Christmas with ECHO families. The response from church circles, business offices, the VFW, American Legion, schools, scout troops and individuals was tremendous. Approximately 60 families received wrapped gifts, clothing, toys, Christmas trees and food.

Total receipts for 1973 were \$15,923.37 and disbursements for the year were \$14,934.74, including \$5,080.19 for family emergency assistance. The cash balance on hand at the end of the year was \$3,342.84. ¹²

¹² ECHO 1973 Annual Report.

1974: Keeping Up with Demand

Total congregation membership reached fourteen with the addition of Sydenstricker United Methodist Church, Church of the Nativity and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in 1974. Carl Kohlmeier was elected President.

Expansion needs were met when ECHO was able to rent a second, larger house at 7311 Old Keene Mill Road, located next door to the existing headquarters. Rent for both houses was \$100 per month.



ECHO's second house at 7311 Old Keene Mill Road

Along with the excitement of realizing more space went a great deal of hard work cleaning, painting, repairing and shelf-building in order to get the building into usable condition. The two houses would serve as ECHO's headquarters, storage and distribution center until 1986.

In addition to these two buildings, ECHO also was offered the use of a small house, in fair condition, located at Lyles Road and Old Keene Mill Road. [*Note: This is the house which stood on the current ECHO property until construction began on the current brick building in 1985.*] The house had been offered by the Lynch Foundation in exchange for keeping the grass cut. ECHO used the property for furniture storage.¹³

¹³ ECHO Newsletter No. 59, dated September 1974.



The house which stood on the current ECHO property until construction began on the current brick building in 1985

The Annual Report for 1974 stated that 82 needy families were assisted by about 60 Family Emergency workers that year. Twenty families required only occasional help during the year. ECHO continued a very labor intensive, but well-intentioned policy of assigning one worker to each family. It was intended that the worker maintain periodic contact with the family to ensure they were getting the assistance they needed. This effort included visiting the family at their home, delivering food, taking the family to the headquarters to select clothing and household items, and delivering furniture from the furniture warehouse. It was also the task of the Family Emergency worker to make the family aware of the various programs ECHO offered as well as services available through the county and federal governments.

During 1974, about 20-25 food deliveries were made per month and a concerted effort was made to supply all ECHO's hard-pressed families with food both at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Seventy-five families received a turkey and a week's supply of food at Thanksgiving. Approximately 80 families received gifts, clothing, toys, Christmas trees and food, all coming from the generosity of the Springfield community.

Various newsletters during this period point to the fact that ECHO was struggling to keep up with requests for food assistance. One plea:

HELP! HELP! HELP! Food is going out of the headquarters in an absolutely unprecedented rate. Since it is supposedly an EMERGENCY food supply, this is quite frightening. Family workers, will you please appraise your family's food needs again? If a family needs to rely completely on ECHO for food, there is a deeper cause for concern, and maybe they need some further

professional help with budgeting, acquiring extra income via a job change, etc. At this rate, the ECHO cupboard will be completely bare by early spring, except for the small weekly donations by a member church. It also means that there will be no back-log to rely on during the summer when donations fall to almost zero. Please help your families to stretch the hamburger and chicken with rice and macaroni and to become as self-sufficient as possible so food will be there for the REAL EMERGENCY. Thanks.¹⁴

There was also urgent need expressed for volunteers to help with delivering emergency food to families in need. The job was "so demanding that the only way we can keep it from taking over our family home life is to spread it among many willing workers."¹⁵ This situation continued for the remainder of the year. By November, it was reported that "the Food Emergency Chairman is attempting to help 17 families herself due to a shortage of volunteer Family Emergency workers."¹⁶ Volunteers were asked to alert their churches to the need for additional help.

Furniture continued to be a big project for ECHO, and a lot of trouble. By 1974, there were furniture warehouses at four different locations. Getting drivers and trucks and scheduling pick-ups and deliveries were a constant problem. However, the results seemed to have been worth the effort for the hard-pressed volunteers. During the year, 163 pick-ups and 90 deliveries were made, in addition to the many families served when they furnished their own transportation.

The Mother's Day Out program continued. A variety of useful and decorative crafts were made, a film and information program on breast cancer was presented by two registered nurses, and a Christmas luncheon was held.

Transportation for those in need of rides was being provided by 11 churches. Approximately 13,000 miles and many hours had been logged to this service. Two of the needs met included a man taken to and from the Social Center (a mental health program) three days each week and a physically-handicapped boy taken to and from the Child Development Center in Falls Church on a weekly basis. Many people were being driven to Northern Virginia hospitals and clinics, employment centers, vocational rehabilitation centers, food stamp locations, clothing centers and grocery stores.

Approximately 60 volunteers gave their time each month to Meals-on-Wheels and delivered a hot lunch and cold dinner to shut-ins in the Springfield area.

A car was donated to ECHO and passed along to a client family.¹⁷

¹⁴ ECHO Newsletter No. 52, dated December 1973.

¹⁵ ECHO Newsletter No. 54, dated February 1974.

¹⁶ ECHO Newsletter No. 60, dated November 1974.

¹⁷ ECHO Newsletter No. 55, dated April 1974.

Responding to a request from ECHO, Prince of Peace Lutheran and Messiah United Methodist Vacation Bible Schools collected school supplies in August of 1974. Also, Sydenstricker United Methodist Vacation Bible School donated their entire monetary collection of \$45.72 to purchase school pencils, paper, crayons, etc.¹⁸

More than 20 girls were now residing in Alma Casa, the group home for teenage girls. All the girls were either in school and/or working. Some had been at the home for many months; others for just a few. The house had been completely furnished with donated furniture. A "very fine" young couple was currently serving as house parents.

Total receipts for 1974 were \$15,089.02. Total disbursements were \$14,067.67, of which \$9,443.47 was for family assistance.¹⁹

¹⁸ ECHO Newsletter No. 58, dated August 1974.

¹⁹ ECHO 1974 Annual Report.

1975: Helping One Family at a Time

ECHO was growing and, with the addition of Burke Community Church, was representing and was supported by fifteen area churches. Ed Jones was elected President. A Headquarters Coordinator, Housewares Coordinator and Secretary for Thank-You Notes were added to ECHO's organization.

"Family Emergency continues to be the very heart of our work of service in ECHO, enabling us to work with those families we serve in a personal one-to-one relationship, so that we may extend and share the concern of our fifteen churches. This Christian witness is what makes us unique from other so-called service groups and helps us combine personal concern with positive Christian action. Although we have certain guidelines in working with requests for aid, each family is helped on an individual basis, being evaluated as much as possible on the basis of need."

A broadening recession in the early months of 1975 and the arrival of a number of families from Vietnam who were in need of help were factors leading to increased activity by ECHO. Throughout the year, ECHO helped families – primarily those with low incomes – in emergency situations, providing bread and food deliveries, clothing, furniture, housewares, transportation, minor home repairs, employment, housing, and budget and meal planning. Financial assistance included help with rent payments, medical and dental bills, utility and fuel costs, auto repairs, prescriptions, shoe coupons and, in one case each, sewing lessons and driving lessons. Vietnamese refugees settling in the Springfield area were helped primarily with clothing and furniture assistance.

The spiraling rate of inflation, coupled with poor education; temporary, seasonal unemployment; and low-paying jobs, contributed to an increase in the number of families helped at this time. In the first eight months of this fiscal year, forty families were helped on an on-going basis, twenty-eight on an occasional basis and forty on a one-time-only emergency basis. Approximately fifteen were referred to other community groups working in surrounding areas. One such group, the new Lorton Community Information Center, would be the first in line of referrals for families living in Lorton, with ECHO sharing aid in this area going forward.

By 1975, the ECHO headquarters was being used as a facility for storage as well as a point of distribution for donated items. An open house was held three times a year for ECHO families, usually in the spring, fall and early December, to enable families to make a seasonal changeover of clothing. Of the three buildings now in use, one – the original house – was being used solely for clothing storage, one for housewares and food, and the other for furniture. Because of limited space, only off-season clothing in excellent condition was held over in storage.

Total contributions for the year amounted to \$16,830.73. Family assistance expenses were \$8,591.46 and total expenses were \$14,072.89.²⁰ Special expenditures were authorized in April 1975: the Family Emergency Chairman was authorized to purchase needed underwear supplies; \$100 was donated to the Lorton Elementary School to enable the principal to buy shoes, as appropriate, for needy children; \$100 was spent for Easter hams for families; and the purchase of "a wringer washer, if one can be found," was authorized.²¹

The overwhelming increase in requests for assistance was putting a strain on ECHO's ability to keep up under their current business model. There was a need to re-evaluate the current structure and look for ways to improve operations so as to better allocate the work load. A resolution was considered for adoption regarding ECHO's organization:

Be it resolved that an ad hoc committee of at least three persons be appointed by the President with a majority approval of elected officers and committee chairmen;

That this committee shall be commissioned to evaluate ECHO's present method of operation and make recommendations for improvement as they deem necessary; and

Such recommendations, wherein they involve overall organization, will be presented to the ECHO membership at least one month prior to a vote. Recommendations involving operations within the committee may be implemented at the discretion of those involved.

Explanation: As the Nominating Committee reviewed ECHO's history and attempted to find officers to meet our present needs, we were struck with the growth of original programs and the growth in the number of services. In addition, we are now responsible for 5 properties for which no system of management has been devised. Finding solutions to problems as they arise has been the task of the president. Lacking an organization or a means, our presidents have cut grass, hauled trash, replaced locks, painted and done carpentry. We do not feel this is the president's responsibility. Though he may be willing to contribute, it should not be his sole responsibility. We felt it was time we took stock of our means and methods of dealing with problems with an eye to improved services and a shared work load.²²

²⁰ ECHO 1975 Annual Report.

²¹ ECHO Newsletter No. 65, dated April 1975.

²² ECHO Newsletter No. 66, dated May 1975.

A related article was written for the June newsletter:

Once upon a time, a group of interested people who were willing to be involved began an organization (ECHO) with members from nine churches in this area. These were good people with a wonderful vision of helping others. They quickly expanded their love and concern into many needed areas. Soon they began a family-to-family relationship which proved very beneficial to all. The helpers taught their friends such things as how to make their money stretch farther while still eating a balanced diet, as well as how to plan a budget to spend wisely. When emergencies arose, food was given from a Food Pantry provided by many, many friends. Almost from the first, transportation was provided for those needing a way to get to the doctor's office and other important places. Clothing and furniture were collected and shared. All of these expressions of love were willingly given and gratefully received. In fact, the requests for help by the little group grew by leaps and bounds and it was all the friendly helpers could do to keep up with them, although at least 12 or 13 churches were now involved. They had so many different programs and good ideas! Times got hard with food prices and rent going higher and higher and, worse yet, many of the people in that time lost their jobs. So the friendly workers worked longer and harder trying to keep up. But there were so many families who needed family workers to take them to get food and clothes from the ECHO house that not enough friendly workers were around who were willing to help.

This fairy tale can have a happy ending if YOU would be willing to join the friendly workers and help on a family-to-family basis.²³

²³ ECHO Newsletter No. 67, dated June 1975.

1976: Growing Pressure to Find Permanent Headquarters

Sixteen member churches, now including the First Baptist Church of Springfield, were supporting ECHO in 1976. The position of Church Rep Coordinator was added to ECHO's organization.

The lack of new volunteers willing to step forward to take on the necessary coordinating duties or to serve as "family friends" was a problem that had been growing for some time. It became more obvious in 1976. Two programs, in particular, suffered as a result. Alma Casa, a group home for teenage girls, was forced to discontinue. Although other factors were involved, the lack of an assistant to work with ECHO's coordinator presented challenges that could not be overcome.²⁴ Tutoring of elementary school children at Lorton also had to be eliminated this school year for lack of a coordinator. As a result, efforts were underway in 1976 to find volunteer assistants who could share the duties with coordinators and act as substitutes as the need arose. Springfield was a growing community with growing needs, and ECHO was desperate for additional volunteers if it was to keep abreast of those needs or even maintain the services currently being provided.

The Family Emergency program reported that most often a one-time help was all that was needed to put the individual or family on their feet again, or to sustain them until they received their first pay-check from a new job, help from Social Services or unemployment relief. In this way, ECHO helped in over 83 different situations: 26 emergency food deliveries, 27 for clothing, 5 for rent or mortgage assistance, and 25 for other financial assistance, such as shoe coupons, prescriptions, food stamps, fuel, utilities, car insurance, transportation to a medical center out of the area, or fire damage.

"Emergencies seem to be as different and varied as people -- very hard to describe in general terms. Young people just getting started on their own, families trying to keep their feet on the ground, established families or the retired can all be hit by one crisis more than their resources can bear. The overwhelming blow can come as a result of illness of a working member resulting in loss of income, or suddenly high medical bills, job layoffs without pay due to rain, freezing temperatures or snow, or major car repairs or major furnace repairs.

²⁴ ECHO's Newsletter No. 74, dated February 1976, reported the following regarding the Alma Casa group home: "[*It was reported by the president that*] the needs of the county have changed so that they no longer need the sort of home we established, but need one where girls with severe problems can be helped by a resident psychiatrist. This kind of home would be impossible for us to maintain (or even locate), let alone not having a coordinator. So [*it is recommended that*] the house be phased out in June this year."

"Aside from these one-time emergencies, we have 3 coordinators who try to keep in touch with some 50 families. Most of these families are living on an annual income of \$4,000 to \$7,000, leaving no room for error, mistakes or crisis. A few live in apartments in Springfield. With an income of \$372 a month, \$224 goes for rent and electricity, leaving \$148 for food, clothing, medical bills, public transportation (if such a lucky thing exists between the apartment and the job) or car (payments, repairs, gas, maintenance, tires, insurance, tags, inspections, etc.). Babysitting costs \$60 to \$125 a month depending on the working hours in relation to school hours. Many [*of our families*] are a hearty bunch putting up with many inconveniences like out-houses and lack of running water in the house in order to have lower rent or mortgage payments.

"A happy note! Our many new Vietnamese families seem to have made a comfortable adjustment to their new surroundings and have not needed ECHO's help."

Home repair activity in 1976 centered on two projects: the ECHO-owned residence in Alexandria and the headquarters building on Old Keene Mill Road. "Young people from Messiah Methodist Church provided great assistance to ECHO by volunteering to work on the exterior of the house in Alexandria. They spent several weekends, under the supervision of 2 men from the church, replacing windows and gutters; repairing the porch, siding and trim; removing old paint; sanding woodwork and applying at least 2 coats of paint to most of the house. A Boy Scout from Burke Community Church painted the downstairs bedrooms, bath and hallway of the house for his Eagle Scout project. Another Scout undertook an Eagle project by performing minor repairs and general clean up and by painting portions of the inside of the headquarters building. After the Election Day damage to the two buildings on Old Keene Mill Road caused by an out-of-control auto, much work was required to repair the buildings. ECHO volunteers and volunteers from Grace Presbyterian and St. Bernadette's installed a new furnace, removed old fixtures, moved freezers and storage shelves, constructed new shelving, installed new wiring and light fixtures and repaired plumbing. As a result, the bulk of activity is now centered in the larger house, providing ECHO with better facilities than it had before.

In addition to all those who assisted with these organized activities, we are also grateful to the Springfield Jaycees who performed complete repair work on a home owned by an ECHO family."

In 1976, ECHO had total receipts of \$28,034.23 and disbursements of \$14,683.19, including \$8,946.66 for family assistance. ECHO was able to set aside \$10,500 for a "Reserve for Permanent Headquarters".²⁵

²⁵ ECHO 1976 Annual Report.

Monthly newsletters kept volunteers and member churches up to date with current goings-on:

BEWARE of soft ground! Don't pull off the gravel road into the grassy areas at the ECHO house as the ground is soft and you may get stuck. It is O.K. to park around the trees by the white house though.

Some new items (underwear, pajamas, a few towels, washcloths and blankets) are available on the basis of need. They will be stored in the large white house in the green wardrobe, and you will need to arrange for a key from the clothing house workers. We need to keep a record of which family receives these new items and how many, so please record the things you take on the sheet inside the green wardrobe chest and lock it when you are finished. We are asking that workers only go in to pick up these items from the green chest – not our families, please.²⁶

THANKS and MORE THANKS to the Lynch Foundation who so generously continue to support ECHO with \$200 a month.

Report from the Ad Hoc Committee: The recommendation was given that ECHO should consider getting permanent headquarters. Due to the breaking of pipes there is now no water in one house; we are spending considerable money each year to keep the houses in repair. Our lease gives us only 30 days to find another place should we be given notice. The committee estimates the Alexandria house we own with a mortgage of \$10,000 is valued at about \$30-\$40,000, so if we sold it we would have some cash. It will take time to locate a suitable place, but we should be thinking about the possibility or (good heavens!) the necessity of finding one in a short period of time. The discussion at the meeting following the report included the suggestion that if we sold the Alexandria house we should help relocate the ECHO family that is renting it.

Attention Family Workers: Please check with your families to see if their children have been immunized against measles. Urge your families to check with the Hanover Clinic where they can receive the vaccination. Also urge them to keep personal medical records for each member of their family. Perhaps you can tell or show them how you do this for your own family.²⁷

The Food Committee reported that "the mice are making their nocturnal trips felt in the food cupboard, so the Food Chairmen must be very persistent about storing all uncanned food-stuffs away in the available cans, and lids must be put on tightly."²⁸

²⁶ ECHO Newsletter No. 74, dated February 1976.

²⁷ ECHO Newsletter No. 76, dated April 1976.

²⁸ ECHO Newsletter No. 80, dated September 1976.

Buying a new car? Is your trade-in still in good condition? If so, perhaps you would consider giving it to ECHO and taking credit for its fair market value as a donation. Some of our ECHO families depend on an automobile as their only means of transportation because bus service in their community is very limited or non-existent. In some instances, a reliable car governs whether the family's breadwinner can obtain employment or hold a job. For instance, there is an ECHO breadwinner, on her own with two children, who had a wreck and totaled her car. Since she lives in Newington and works in the Ravensworth industrial area, she now has to hitchhike either to the bus stop or all the way to work in order to keep her job as there is no one near her going that way.

A committee will be formed to explore finding a new ECHO headquarters. The two houses are getting in such poor condition (no bathroom facilities, lack of proper heating, no water, etc.) that it was felt we are probably losing volunteers to work in the houses because of the conditions.

A name change has been made as ECHO struggles to make things go even more smoothly – Family Workers will now be called ECHO Friends. Whatever name is used, these dear souls who contribute so much to the program for our families are desperately NEEDED!²⁹

²⁹ ECHO Newsletter No. 82, dated November 1976.

1977: A Resolution is Approved for a Way Forward

ECHO was supported by 17 local churches in 1977, Lake Braddock Church of God having most recently joined as a member congregation. Don Hilkemeier served as President for 1977-78.

Plans were made to move forward with the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation in 1976 to obtain a permanent headquarters. The June Newsletter No. 89 reported the following Resolution of Intent to obtain permanent warehousing:

WHEREAS: It may become necessary on short notice to vacate the houses on Old Keene Mill Road used for ECHO warehousing, since their availability is uncertain either because of rezoning or change of ownership, and

WHEREAS: The past method of using various locations in churches and garages to store different items was found to be unsatisfactory and inadequate, and since ECHO has grown both in numbers of clients and items stored, reversion to this method of storage is even less feasible now, and

WHEREAS: Past efforts to obtain rental storage have proven difficult to locate, both as to availability and suitability of locations, and too costly for ECHO's resources at the time, and

WHEREAS: Since contributions to ECHO are voluntary with no sure way of projecting annual receipts, it would probably be most difficult to secure a large mortgage even if ECHO were willing to burden itself with large monthly payments; therefore, a sizeable down payment would probably be necessary.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: ECHO make contingency plans to acquire permanent warehousing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: As financial conditions permit, but not at the sacrifice of meeting commitments to the needs and well being of the community that is being assisted, ECHO set aside money each year for the purpose of securing permanent warehousing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: Twelve thousand dollars be deposited in a separate interest-bearing account to establish such a fund.

This resolution was voted on and carried.

As part of this same overall plan, the ECHO house in Alexandria was sold. In September, the family that had been in residence was moved to the Cherry Arms Apartments. ECHO co-signed the lease for one year and agreed to subsidize the rent until government assistance could be acquired. The vacated house in Alexandria was then sold.

Meantime, business as usual was the order of the day. ECHO helped 65 new families and continued in different ways to strengthen 58 families.

The position of Housing Coordinator was added to ECHO's organization this year. "By designating a housing coordinator, ECHO recognizes the importance of housing problems in the community. The average resale price of homes in Fairfax County is now close to \$70,000 and rent for a two-bedroom apartment averages around \$250. Restrictive landlord policies with regard to families with children mean that many families must find housing outside the county, far away from their jobs. For those who stay, rising costs often mean that the family must choose between paying for shelter and paying for other necessities such as food or medicine. Thus more and more families find themselves in a crisis and in need of ECHO's help."

The Clothing Coordinator was spending many hours each month sorting clothing and seeing that various garments were in current style and in serviceable condition so that clients might "enjoy a feeling of being well dressed and adequately covered." Out-of-season clothing or items that were unusable by ECHO were being redistributed to other groups whenever possible.

New volunteers were provided with an Orientation session before beginning work at the ECHO houses in order to familiarize them with procedures. After orientation, at least two volunteers worked together so they could help and learn from each other. Volunteer "house workers" generally were on duty two hours per month, although some served more frequently. In 1977, there were a total of 61 volunteers, all women.

Receipts for 1977 were \$31,379.24 and disbursements were \$17,638.58, including \$10,933.59 for family assistance. ECHO ended the year with a reserve of \$17,638.61 for Permanent Headquarters.³⁰

The furniture warehouse was broken into five times during this period. Efforts were made to secure the building, but each time one means of breaking in was thwarted, another was found. A call for help was made for each member church to provide a person who could help with finding a solution to this problem. Word was passed that "there is no heat or electricity or water in the building, so dress warmly as if for outdoors and don't expect to use power tools."³¹ In May, it was announced that "the furniture house is once again secure. Plywood was added to strengthen the doors and chain link fencing was placed on all windows. A new concrete front porch was added to the clothing house and now the men are busy adding new walls to close the porch in."³²

³⁰ ECHO 1977 Annual Report.

³¹ ECHO Newsletter No. 86, dated March 1977.

³² ECHO Newsletter No. 88, dated May 1977.

1978: Exemplifying ECHO's Principles One Volunteer at a Time

ECHO was supported by 17 member churches:

Burke Community	St. Bernadette's Catholic
Church of the Nativity	St. Christopher's Episcopal
Community Covenant	St. John's United Methodist
First Baptist of Springfield	St. Mark's Lutheran
Grace Presbyterian	Springfield Christian
Kirkwood Presbyterian	Springfield United Methodist
Messiah United Methodist	Sydenstricker United Methodist
Prince of Peace Lutheran	Westwood Baptist
St. Andrew's Episcopal	

John Russell was elected President. The Springfield Ministerial Association enthusiastically endorsed the objectives and programs of ECHO. Two of its clergy members served as official ECHO Board members.

ECHO had total receipts of \$29,003.87 and disbursements of \$12,786.62, including \$8,977.19 for Family Assistance. The Reserve for Permanent Headquarters fund now totaled \$30,103.70.³³

The Thanksgiving and Christmas projects were again a huge success and went off smoothly. Eight-five Thanksgiving baskets were delivered and about 60 families were invited to select Christmas gifts. Springfield's merchants, groups and individuals were generous in their donations of new toys, food and gifts. Remaining items from the Christmas program were shared with the Lorton Community Action Center (LCAC) and an Indian tribe in North Carolina.³⁴

A member of First Baptist Church of Springfield who served on ECHO's Transportation Committee was acknowledged for her extraordinary efforts on behalf of one of ECHO's clients. "Arriving to take her assigned passenger to the doctor, [*the volunteer*] found [*the client*] too ill to go. The doctor was contacted and he sent an ambulance to take her to the hospital where she remained for three weeks. Our volunteer not only helped the patient, who lived alone, to get ready for the hospital stay, but during the stay visited her, kept tabs on her apartment, and assisted her in many other ways. This is service above and beyond the call of duty and truly exemplifies ECHO's principles."³⁵

³³ ECHO 1978 Annual Report.

³⁴ ECHO Newsletter No. 93, dated January 1978.

³⁵ ECHO Newsletter No. 102, December 1978.

1979: "A Healthy and Viable Organization"

John Russell remained as President of ECHO for a second term. Eighteen churches were now supporting ECHO.

"Thanks to the financial contributions of our supporting churches and other organizations and individuals, along with the willingness of so many good people to do God's work, ECHO has grown into a healthy and viable organization.

"During 1979, ECHO assisted 65 new families. Each case involves different circumstances, therefore different needs. Some requests are simple, perhaps food for a week; others require a deeper investigation to ascertain the way ECHO can most effectively assist the client. ECHO will continue to be supportive of 14 of these clients – the others were a one-time assist. In addition to the 65 new families, 62 continued to be assisted with clothing, an occasional bag of food, or Thanksgiving and Christmas food. Financial aid was provided when the request was found to be valid.

"ECHO volunteers are sensitive to every need and spend many hours locating resources that will benefit our clients. There are many resources available and ECHO appreciates each organization and individual that has offered their expertise, material items and financial assistance to make living more meaningful to our clients and to improve their standard of living."

Changes in society were reflected in the needs of the clients. This period saw many one-parent families struggling to make ends meet, with housing costs taking the largest portion of their incomes. Two of ECHO's families were assisted in obtaining subsidized housing through HUD's Section 8; twenty-five families were assisted in applying for housing in the soon-to-be-completed Green Hills neighborhood.

It was reported that 104 calls came into the Family Emergency answering service during the last six months of 1979. Twenty-two requests for assistance came from outside ECHO's service area, and these calls were referred to another agency. From within ECHO's area, 22 calls were for transportation; 17 from new individuals or families needing food, furniture, clothing, emergency shelter or financial assistance; and 17 from people who wished to donate furniture, clothing or time. The Coordinator for this program reported that "in an on-going series of calls, [*she was*] trying to convince a group of children who wish to speak to "The ECHO" that, in fact, we are not what they think we are." An estimated 50 additional callers did not wish to leave messages on the answering machine.

One of the more interesting and unusual requests for assistance came from a migrant family of nine, stranded on I-95 with extensive car problems. ECHO provided motel lodging for one night and food until the Department of Labor for Migrant Services could take over. Bus tickets for four people were bought after determining the need was legitimate.

Twenty Vietnamese families were assisted with clothing, furniture and housewares.

Four used cars in good mechanical condition were donated to ECHO. Each was placed with a deserving family needing transportation to work.

Donations of clothing continued to come in and ECHO was well stocked with a good selection of seasonal clothing. New items purchased included diapers, underwear of all sizes, extra large ladies sizes, blankets and some special needs. Excess clothing was passed on to American Rescue as well as to a group in Appalachia, Lorton Human Resources Department, and a Spanish-speaking group in Alexandria.

During 1979, there were 291 pieces of furniture donated to ECHO, including mattresses, box springs, bed frames, appliances, sofas, chairs, baby furniture, dressers and dinette tables.

The Enlistment and Training Committees were combined to meet the training needs of church representatives and other ECHO volunteers. On May 7, 1979, the first training session was held and an informative guide for techniques and ideas to recruit new volunteers was distributed. Prior to the regular October ECHO meeting, a session was held just for the church representatives in order for them to get to know each other and exchange ideas about recruiting volunteers.

At Christmas, "this special season of loving, sharing, giving and receiving was made more meaningful and happy for a large number of area persons." ECHO provided new and used toys for 85 children, gifts to 32 teenagers and 102 adults, plus bags of new underwear, socks, nightgowns and pajamas, gloves and mittens, scarves and hats to each ECHO family. Sixty-two area families received two bags of groceries, baked goods and either a chicken or a turkey. As in the past, this event was hosted at and by Springfield Christian Church.

The Lynch Foundation continued its support during 1979, donating funds and providing a house in which to store furniture.

Seventy-six thank you letters were written to individuals, businesses, and civic, school, church and youth groups.

As in recent years, the major concern at this time was the need for a permanent home for ECHO. With the spiraling cost of land and construction, funds which had been set aside for this purpose were proving to be inadequate. ECHO began exploring possible funding for a future home.

ECHO ended 1979 with total receipts of \$18,069.36 and disbursements of \$10,903.14, including \$7,103.57 for family assistance. ECHO had a reserve of \$39,455.21 for Permanent Headquarters and Community Service.³⁶

³⁶ ECHO 1979 Annual Report.

1980: Expanding Hours of Operation

John Russell served a third term as President of ECHO in 1980. Two members of the Springfield Ministerial Association continued to serve as official members of the Board. Regular communication between the Association and the Board was maintained so that this clerical group could stay informed of the continued work of ECHO and render needed encouragement and support.

ECHO expanded its hours in 1980 to all weekdays during the school year. They were open from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. During the summer, ECHO operated only on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As of January 1980, fifty-nine families were receiving some form of assistance from ECHO. Sixty-seven new families were helped for the first time during 1980. Twenty-four of these "first timers" became part of the group receiving financial assistance. The most unusual request during the year was for a wheelchair for a four-year-old child who was severely retarded and handicapped. ECHO, with the assistance of two other groups, responded and purchased a specially-designed wheelchair for the child.

The Housewares Committee helped several ECHO families with household items, including towels, dishes, sheets, pillow cases, bedspreads, small appliances, etc. There was a need for blankets this year in order to assist families in fuel conservation.

ECHO's Meals-on-Wheels program averaged about 16 clients daily. The number of clients served fluctuated since this type of assistance was often needed only for a short period of time due to temporary illness or incapacity, although there were some who were served on a more permanent basis. ECHO had been providing meals to the elderly and other shut-ins in the Springfield and Burke areas since 1972.

ECHO ended the year with total receipts of \$26,283.56 and disbursements of \$11,986.73, including \$8,421.16 for family assistance. ECHO had \$50,193.90 in their Reserve for Permanent Headquarters and Community Service.³⁷

³⁷ ECHO 1980 Annual Report.

1981: The Search for Permanent Housing Continues

Ninety-six new families in 1981 were helped by ECHO. Twenty-six of these families received on-going assistance.

Donations of 249 items of used, but usable furniture and appliances enabled ECHO to help 63 needy families or individuals. Furniture was picked up from the donors and distributed to recipients each Saturday afternoon. The work was handled by rotating crews from participating churches. Fairfax County provided a truck and driver to assist.

Ten transportation coordinators, representing their respective churches, worked an eight-week rotating schedule to provide rides for an average of ten Springfield residents each week.

A total of 70 ECHO families – approximately 95 adults and 120 dependents – received new gifts, socks, gloves and hats for Christmas. Two bags of groceries and a turkey also went home with these families in need.³⁸

Work continued to locate a permanent site for ECHO's operations, and all leads were being pursued. The Building Committee looked into the possibility of having Fairfax County donate land to ECHO for its headquarters. A suggestion that ECHO consider the purchase of a residence that could be used as headquarters was being worked. The feasibility of erecting a building on school property was also investigated.³⁹

³⁸ ECHO 1981 Annual Report.

³⁹ ECHO Newsletters Nos. 126, 127, and 132, dated February, March and September 1981.

1982: Stumbling Blocks

The Family Emergency Assistance Committee reported that an average of 18 new clients received assistance from ECHO each month. Seventy-five percent continued as ECHO clients using the clothing center and receiving assistance with Thanksgiving and Christmas. Under new County policies, ECHO could no longer handle transients. All matters regarding transients were referred back to the County.⁴⁰

While the need for food increased dramatically, donations more than matched demand. There was greater school participation, the churches increased their donations, and the business community also responded to the need.

There was a continuous year-to-year increase in the number of calls coming in to the answering service: 163 in 1979, 379 in 1980, 455 in 1981, and 677 in 1982.

ECHO ended the year with total receipts of \$32,340.00 and total disbursements of \$18,404.14, including \$14,404.56 for family assistance.⁴¹

A letter was received on January 21, 1982, from Lynch Limited Partnership to Mr. John F. Russell, ECHO President, which stated in part: "Lynch Limited Partnership would be most happy to assist ECHO in its need for a permanent home. In response to your request dated January 13th, the partnership has agreed to donate the 39,000 square foot lot at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road to ECHO for the purpose of constructing a permanent home and office facility." There were, however, several stipulations to the offer. The most serious problem to the property was the lack of sewer connections. Cost estimates to reach the existing lines approached \$50,000. Discussions with Lynch continued.⁴²

By March, the Lynch Partnership had officially approved ECHO's request for the Old Keene Mill Road property. ECHO filed applications with the County for zoning, tax exemption, and a septic tank system.⁴³ When the property did not pass the 'perc' test needed for use of a septic tank, the Lynch Foundation contacted the major owners of adjacent properties along Lyles Road to ascertain whether they would participate in the installation of a sewer. This effort proved to be unsuccessful.

With this avenue now in doubt, the possibility was raised of obtaining a lease on a parcel of church property. In the meantime, "Church Reps were asked to talk to their ministers

⁴⁰ ECHO Newsletter No. 139, dated April 1982.

⁴¹ ECHO 1982 Annual Report.

⁴² ECHO Newsletter No. 137, dated February 1982.

⁴³ ECHO Newsletter No. 138, dated March 1982.

about the availability of technical people (architects, engineers, contractors, etc.) who could assist ECHO should the building become a reality.”⁴⁴

In November, it was reported that progress had been made on the possible use of adjacent church property of Springfield Christian Church for an ECHO building. It was also suggested that ECHO look into the possibility of obtaining space at Edsall Park School. With the plan to rehabilitate the present ECHO facilities now scrapped and no longer viable, ECHO was actively searching for new space.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ ECHO Newsletter No. 143, dated September 1982.

⁴⁵ ECHO Newsletter No. 145, dated November 1982.

1983: Plans Realized

Bill Crouch was elected the new President for 1983.

At long last, the plan to build a new headquarters for ECHO was being realized. "Personnel and financial support from our area churches continued strong, and several individuals and organizations made substantial donations to our operation and building funds. The houses we operate from continue to deteriorate and the need for our own warehouse is ever more pressing. The following major events have occurred:

- Title to the lot at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road has been received by ECHO from the Lynch Limited Partnership, effective September 13, 1984. How can we ever fully thank the Lynch family!
- Fairfax County has awarded ECHO a grant of \$40,000 toward construction of a building on the donated lot, and has agreed to loan ECHO \$60,000 interest free for one year pending action on our request for a grant of \$60,000 in 1985.
- Request for the 1985 grant has been filed.
- A site plan and a builder's set of drawings for a warehouse of 4,000 square feet have been procured. Approval of the site plan is pending with Fairfax County offices, after which we can advertise for construction bids. Assuming that the bids do not push the total cost of the building above \$225,000, I expect construction to take place this winter, with occupancy in the spring of 1985."⁴⁶

It was reported that a consultant had informed ECHO that installation of a sewer line across the Garfield School property should be within ECHO's means. Accordingly, the ECHO community was informed in a letter dated August 11, 1983, "that we will proceed with plans to put a building on the Lynch lot. The president will monitor the project – key is a \$100,000 grant we will apply for from the county. Purchase orders for the preliminary engineering and design work and the required easements will be in early September."⁴⁷

ECHO ended the year with total receipts of \$25,730.24 and disbursements of \$18,527.80, including \$13,387.32 for family assistance. ECHO had a building fund reserve of \$100,000.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ ECHO 1983 Annual Report.

⁴⁷ ECHO Newsletter No. 144, dated September 1983.

⁴⁸ ECHO 1983 Annual Report.

1984: Construction on Hold

ECHO helped approximately 3,000 people in 1984 “with both money for rent deposits, gasoline, utility bills, food, medicine and clothing, and ‘monetary substitutes’ in the form of donated cars, food, clothing, housewares, furniture and transportation.”⁴⁹

The Family Assistance Coordinator met with local clergy to establish new guidelines for handling transients. It was agreed that the same level of assistance would be provided by each church to those transients who sought help: \$2.50 in McDonald’s coupons, \$10 for gasoline, and referral to the missions, including \$3 for transportation thereto if no car was available. In addition, a phone chain was set up to notify other churches when help had been given so as to prevent overlap of such services. The system appeared to work well from the start.⁵⁰

Efforts were well underway in 1984 to move ahead quickly with the building project for ECHO’s new headquarters. According to documents filed by ECHO in its request to Fairfax County for a Development Block Grant, “ECHO’s total operations were being carried out in ‘three condemned and deteriorating old houses’ – in recent times ECHO’s operations have been hampered both physically and financially by the lack of a single, safe and attractive location from which to function. The old houses currently used have no toilet/bath facilities, no adequate parking, and are a disincentive for attracting volunteers. Because of the condition of the houses, volunteer hours were limited to 2 hours [*per day*]. Volunteers who worked in these ramshackle houses tell of snakes and rats, not an unusual sight. Food had to be stored in covered tin trash cans to keep the critters out.”⁵¹

With rezoning cleared by the Fairfax County Planning Commission and expecting no problems in final clearance at the Board of Supervisors, ECHO was ready to proceed with final design and construction. On May 19, 1984, Fairfax County officially awarded \$100,000 in grants toward the cost of the planned construction of a 4,000 square foot warehouse, and ECHO was able to add another \$25,000 to the building fund, thanks to several generous donors. Engineering and architectural work had progressed such that ECHO was at the point of obtaining bids on actual construction of the warehouse. It appeared as though the building would finally be a reality.

Then another stumbling block arose. The building project was put on hold because the low bid was \$97,000 more than the \$200,000 ECHO had available after allowing for \$40,000 in architect, engineering and other expenses. This was discouraging news for ECHO given the project was 82% funded and the prospect of another year in the old houses was not a

⁴⁹ ECHO 1984 Annual Report.

⁵⁰ ECHO Newsletter No. 147, dated January 1984.

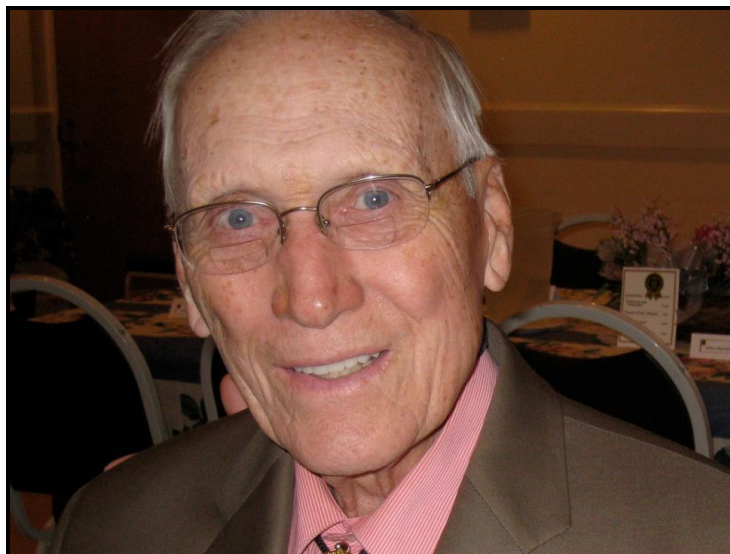
⁵¹ ECHO Newsletter No. 151, dated May 1984.

pleasant one. Appropriate county officials were apprised of the situation and aid was solicited from individuals who might assist with additional funding.

ECHO's President, Bill Crouch, stated in the 1984 Annual Report that "this is a challenging time – the project cost is high, but we live in a high-cost area and the proposed facility should be a community asset for 50 years or more. Money is the greatest need, but the low-bid contractor (Hitt Construction Co.) has indicated that donations of the following materials would significantly reduce our net costs:

- 11,000 bricks
- 2,950 concrete blocks
- 1,200 cubic yards concrete
- 7,500 board feet lumber
- 5,000 square feet plywood
- 97 trees (county requirement)."

At the end of 1984, ECHO had total receipts of \$29,224.68 and total disbursements of \$22,695.33, including \$18,468.34 for Community Assistance. The Building Fund had a balance of \$113,314.12.⁵²



Bill Crouch, ECHO's President 1983 - 1985

⁵² ECHO 1984 Annual Report.

1985: Supporters Enable Groundbreaking

In 1985, with strong financial support from the Lynch Foundation, Fairfax County, and numerous private donors, ECHO was able to overcome its last stumbling block and build its new headquarters on the property at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road. The Lynch Limited Partnership of Springfield donated the lot, valued at \$200,000 according to the ECHO application for Community Development Block Grant. Fairfax County had awarded ECHO a grant of \$160,000 for construction purposes. Additionally, there were numerous significant donations made by other individuals and business entities.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held on May 23, 1985, and the new building was dedicated on January 1986.



ECHO President Bill Crouch, Springfield Christian Church minister Earl Caudill, Albert Dwoskin, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jack Herrity, Wayne Lynch and Ann Odom

At year end, ECHO had total receipts of \$38,233.51 and total disbursements of \$20,129.83, including \$16,284.33 for Community Assistance.⁵³

⁵³ ECHO 1985 Annual Report.

1986: "A Splendid and Unique Building is Now a Reality"

Michelle Goodman was elected President in 1986. For the year, ECHO had total receipts of \$32,442.91 and disbursements of \$23,719.62, including \$17,426.85 for Family Assistance. A separate Building Fund status was included in the financial reports which indicated that ECHO received a grant of \$160,000 from Fairfax County for building construction.⁵⁴

The highlight of 1986 was the dedication of the new ECHO headquarters building on January 19, 1986. The dedication program calls it "The new warehouse of ECHO, INC". President Bill Crouch made the opening remarks. The program recognized a number of persons and organizations, who were instrumental in the building process; including "ECHO's volunteers - without whom the rest of us would not be needed," Lynch Limited Partnership for the lot donated to ECHO, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for substantial grants, several prominent local business persons and benefactors for fundraising.⁵⁵



The following is a letter dated February 14, 1986 from ECHO's President, Bill Crouch:

This year the news is all good, in great contrast to last year's report in which we reported the building project on hold.

⁵⁴ ECHO 1986 Annual Report.

⁵⁵ "Program of Dedication", January 19, 1986.

"First, our ECHO volunteers were able to assist approximately 2,400 needy persons with 'money substitutes' in the form of food, clothing, housewares, furniture, transportation, meals-on-wheels, and donated cars, and by actual disbursements for rent, rent deposits, gasoline, utility bills, food, medicine and clothing. As always, this is the principal good news, that we helped our fellow citizens when they were in need.

Second, the building project was reactivated on May 21st by the signing of a contract for construction. This followed only 64 days after opening the bids and finding ourselves almost \$100,000 short of the minimum amount needed. Almost before the ink was dry on that report, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors awarded ECHO an additional grant of \$60,000, several larger donations were made by area businessmen and individuals, and two charitable foundations awarded us a total of \$35,000. As a result, the building at this writing is constructed; we dedicated it with appropriate ceremonies on January 19, 1986; and we expect that after final settlement with the builder there will be funds to adequately equip the building with shelving, clothing racks, partitions and other needed items.

Because many people worked together, a splendid and unique building is now a reality and will greatly facilitate the accomplishment of ECHO's noble purposes into the years ahead.

This building has served as the ECHO headquarters ever since. The building was expanded to double its original size in 2006.

ECHO's wonderful new facility has been a hub of activity. June and July were very busy months, in which 32 families were helped with furniture, 31 families were assisted financially, 76 families (257 people) received clothing, 55 families (186 people) were given food and 26 families (97 people) received housewares. In addition, five children of ECHO families were sent to Police Camp and eight children went to Grace Presbyterian Camp."⁵⁶

In October, ECHO added an evening opening to its schedule, opening Thursday evenings 7 to 9 PM for client appointments and donations. Four volunteers would be needed to man these evening openings.⁵⁷ In December, daytime hours were extended by a half hour, opening from 9:30 a.m. to noon. There was also a change from following Fairfax County School schedule holidays and closings to closing on Federal holidays only. However, ECHO continued to follow the Fairfax County School closings for inclement weather.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ ECHO Newsletter No. 176 dated September 1986.

⁵⁷ ECHO Newsletter No. 177 dated October 1986.

⁵⁸ ECHO Newsletter No. 179 dated December 1986.

1987: The Building is Completely Paid For

Donald Bettge served as President in 1987. There were 19 churches participating in ECHO, with the addition of Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church. The financial report showed total receipts of \$35,644.71 and disbursements of \$29,579.72, including \$22,069.68 for Family Assistance.⁵⁹

A full year after the headquarters building was completed and in use, the mailing address for ECHO was c/o St. Mark's Lutheran Church at 5800 Backlick Road.⁶⁰ ECHO received its mail through St. Mark's for many years.

By June, The Hitt Construction Company had been completely paid for construction of the headquarters building.⁶¹

A new policy for serving transients was put into use. When transients came to ECHO for assistance, volunteers listened kindly to their requests for assistance, gave them a small bag of food, and referred families to Social Services for assistance acquiring housing or singles to the Shelter.

Having gentlemen volunteers present in the building on open evenings provided a welcomed sense of security. Their duties included loading and unloading furniture and deliveries, sorting food and checking out electrical appliances. They were asked to always feel free to sweep or vacuum any part of the building if there weren't enough of their regular tasks to keep them busy. They were also advised to bring something to read in case of a really slow evening.

During August, 19 families were helped financially with such items as prescriptions, dental bills, medical equipment, utilities and gasoline. In addition, 8 families were given furniture. 24 families were given food, and clothing was given to 159 people.⁶² ECHO matched donated items such as automobiles, beds, washers and dryers with families in need.

⁵⁹ ECHO 1987 Annual Report.

⁶⁰ ECHO Newsletter No. 182 dated March 1987.

⁶¹ ECHO Newsletter No. 185 dated June 1987.

⁶² ECHO Newsletter No. 189 dated October 1987.

1988: New Opportunities and New Challenges

The new ECHO headquarters presented wonderful new opportunities, as well as new challenges for its volunteers.

Over 3,100 families – 11,200 people – were helped by ECHO this year. Examples of the way in which families were assisted included:

- A number of families relocating from West Virginia and Texas for employment reasons received rent deposits, housewares, furniture, clothing and food.
- A seven-year-old child received leg braces and a four-year-old received a hearing aid.
- A young mother of five received one chemotherapy treatment.
- An elementary-aged boy with learning problems was sent to summer school for additional help with his lessons.
- A young mother recently released from prison was provided with gasoline money which allowed her to get job training and return to work.
- Several ladies returning to work or to job training received shoe coupons; in fact, shoe coupons were provided to 29 adults and children during the year.
- An elderly lady and her grown, mentally handicapped son received two cords of firewood.
- A working mother and her eleven-year-old daughter received financial support to cover their rent. This was the first time they were able to live in an apartment of their own.
- Three automobiles were donated to ECHO and, in turn, were given to families needing transportation.
- Sixteen people were lent medical equipment.

The new building expanded ECHO's outreach extensively, and having everything under one roof proved to be a tremendous asset. ECHO was helping more Springfield/Burke families than ever before. Approximately 120 volunteers assisted in the headquarters building on a monthly basis and ECHO opened two evenings per week so that client families could receive aid and contributions.

ECHO's increased visibility greatly boosted church and community contributions and involvement, and ECHO soon found itself in the pleasant situation of becoming a "redistribution" center because of the largess. Volunteers took on the additional duties of sharing donations with other service and outreach groups, thereby making it possible for ECHO to be the best possible stewards of all they received.

Monthly trips were made to Lumberton, NC with clothing and toys for distribution to the Lumbee Indian Reservation. American Rescue picked up donations each week for redistribution to their eight inner-city thrift shops whose profits went to their Alcohol Rehabilitation Center. Adult clothing, as well as crafts and games, were taken to Northern Virginia Training Center in Fairfax, and Western State Hospital in Staunton, VA. Food was shared with Lorton Community Action Center when their larder ran low. Eyeglasses usually went to the local Lions Club, but, in one instance, seventy pairs were sent to India by a missionary for use in a hospital. Items of clothing, some health and beauty aids, and dolls and stuffed animals were taken to Leewood Nursing Home in Annandale. Items inappropriate for our families, such as furs, leathers, and formal wear, or items in excess were consigned. This enabled ECHO to earn extra money for food and supplies.

During 1988, canned and dry food for families continued to be provided regularly, on a rotating basis, by the member churches. Food donations were also received from various local civic groups and from individuals. Perishable foods, such as hamburger, chicken, eggs and bread, were purchased as required.

Among the items of furniture and appliance donations were 10 washers, 6 dryers, 9 refrigerators, 2 stoves and 28 sofas.

Individuals, civic groups, and scout troops, as well as member churches, filled about 120 Thanksgiving and 120 Christmas food baskets for area residents. In addition, about 80 food baskets were filled from the headquarters building.

Income totaled \$36,805.33 and expenses totaled \$30,627.76, including \$18,704.03 for family assistance.⁶³

⁶³ ECHO 1988 Annual Report.

1989–1990: Corporate Changes

In 1989, ECHO changed from a calendar to a fiscal year reporting system. Going forward, financial reporting to the IRS would cover the period July 1 to June 30 each year. As a result, no financial information is available for the period 1/1/89 – 6/30/89. The last annual report had been produced one and a half years ago.

ECHO continued to improve its physical plant to provide a safer and more comfortable workplace for its volunteers. The parking area was expanded and exterior lighting was installed. An air conditioning system was added for the center room where food stocks were stored. Commercial shelving was purchased for storing out-of-season clothing.

ECHO was growing. Its leaders knew this growth would cause ECHO to re-evaluate its all-volunteer staffing pattern and perhaps consider adding professional help in the future. Nevertheless, it was always believed that volunteers would remain the heart and soul of ECHO, and its goal would continue to be supportive rather than supporting, with the intent to help its clients become self-sufficient.

In its Annual Report for 1989, ECHO restated its corporate policy. The Articles of Incorporation established in 1968 authorized ECHO to engage in certain charitable activities. They provided a “menu” from which activities were selected which seemed to be the most needed in its geographic area. In addition, ECHO was operating in cooperation with Fairfax County welfare organizations and other similar charitable, non-profit organizations in Northern Virginia.

ECHO was concentrating its efforts on providing aid in emergencies, supplying transportation, supporting Meals-on-Wheels, and acting as a distributor of special food donations at Christmas and Thanksgiving. In evaluating the assistance to be provided, Family Emergency workers determined the type and extent of the need of the petitioner. Each case was individually reviewed. When needed, food, clothing, furniture, or help with utility bills, rent and transportation were provided. When available, ECHO provided automobiles.

In order to accomplish these tasks, it would be ECHO’s policy to assist those in need when they could not be assisted by the established governmental organizations, and then only to the extent of temporary or emergency support. ECHO did not wish to engage in such activities that tended to make the recipient permanently dependent upon welfare when they could, through their own efforts, achieve independent living.

ECHO further stated that because of the interdenominational nature of its organization, it would not engage in activities promoting specific religious points of view.

For the fiscal year 1989, ECHO had an income of \$50,178.37 and expenses of \$46,623.20, including \$26,361.19 for Family Assistance. Donald Bettge served his third term as President this past year.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ ECHO 1989 Annual Report.

1991: Keeping Up with Demand

ECHO's ministries continued to be challenged by increased demands for its services. Economic conditions, single parenthood and increased unemployment were leading more people to seek out ECHO.

Although all the aid ECHO provided was important, two areas of special interest were noted in the Annual Report in 1991. The first was clothing assistance. "ECHO volunteers spend countless hours sorting and selecting donated clothing so that our clients have a large selection of good, clean and fashionable clothing. This is important so that our clients can extend their income as much as possible and still have the right clothing to wear to work or to be well-dressed and warm during inclement weather."

The second was ECHO's food ministry, the one program that continued to be the most challenging. Demand for food was increasing and the gap between incoming and outgoing food was widening. ECHO tried two new food drives in 1991. The Boy Scouts added over 1,000 bags of food to ECHO's pantry in November. The Food for All Seasons food drive during May provided 255 very full grocery bags donated by customers at three area Giant food stores.

For the fiscal year July 1, 1990 through June 30, 1991, ECHO's income was \$35,333.64 and its expenses were \$37, 510.36, including \$26,074.72 for Family Assistance. Tim O'Brien served as President.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ ECHO 1991 Annual Report.

1992: Helping While Encouraging Independence

Art Davis was elected President. A challenge for the upcoming year included application to the United Way/Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) to attract new sources of income.

At the end of the fiscal year, ECHO had income of \$26,098.75 and expenses of \$34,542.94, including \$24,037.19 for Family Assistance.⁶⁶

The main functions of ECHO during this year were providing clients with free food, clothing, housewares, transportation, referrals, Meals on Wheels and financial assistance for rent, medicine, and utilities. The annual report contained the long time ECHO principle that:

“ECHO assists those in need when they can’t be assisted by established government organizations and then only to the extent of temporary or emergency support. ECHO does not want to engage in such activities that tend to make the recipient permanently dependent upon welfare when they can, through their own efforts, achieve independent living.”⁶⁷

In addition, ECHO provided a washing machine for an elderly couple and wood for heat. Virginia Power employees cut, split and delivered 6 cords of wood to three families.⁶⁸

Continuing the long standing ECHO policy of providing something special for its clients at Thanksgiving and Christmas, “over 110 families were given Christmas food baskets by ECHO churches, local businesses and concerned citizens. These baskets were very generous, containing a ham, a turkey or a gift meat certificate, plenty of vegetables and fresh produce and products to use with leftovers.”⁶⁹

During this year, “ECHO voted to eliminate furniture distribution. This decision was made in order to better utilize our space. With the increased number of families we now serve, office space for private interviewing and work space for sorting is necessary, and we are currently reconfiguring the warehouse interior. Furniture took a lot of space and served few clients, so the Board reluctantly voted to eliminate its operation.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ ECHO 1992 Annual Report.

⁶⁷ ECHO 1992 Annual Report.

⁶⁸ ECHO 1992 Annual Report.

⁶⁹ ECHO Newsletter No. 240 dated February 1992.

⁷⁰ ECHO Newsletter No. 240 dated February 1992.

1993: An Ecumenical Organization

Art Davis served a second term as President. ECHO had income of \$31,811.03 and expenses of \$35,494.13 in 1993, including \$9,957.96 for Family Assistance.⁷¹

In addition to the usual assistance provided by ECHO to its needy clients, it provides donated automobiles, when available. Ten washing machines were donated by Giant Foods and Tide. Holiday Inn provided a large number of bedspreads and pillows.⁷²

A statement in the annual report reminds us that it is the policy of ECHO, as an ecumenical organization, to not engage in activities promoting specific religious points of view."⁷³

A monthly newsletter offers a few housekeeping reminders volunteers: "If you have brought your own cup, please put your name on its bottom with permanent marker. Please wash your own cup after use - the "clean-up" fairy gets weary sometimes. Ditto for taking home some ECHO garbage, please."⁷⁴

NOTE: To get an idea of how ECHO has grown, ECHO volunteers were asked to take home the plastic bag or two of trash which had accumulated during the morning. In 2011 we fill a commercial trash bin every week with trash and another one with recyclable material.

⁷¹ ECHO 1993 Annual Report.

⁷² ECHO 1993 Annual Report.

⁷³ ECHO 1993 Annual Report.

⁷⁴ ECHO Newsletter No. 253 dated March 1993.

1994: Creation of the Executive Director Position

Twenty-four congregations and approximately 200 volunteers supported ECHO in 1994. James Singsank was elected President.

In recognition of the growing size, scope and complexity of ECHO's operations, the establishment of an Executive Director position was authorized. The person holding this position would be responsible for day-to-day operations. The job was filled by the then-Building Coordinator, Pat Gauthier.





Pat Gauthier served as ECHO Executive Director 1993 - 2009

Requests for assistance continued to rise. In order to keep up with demand, volunteers increased the hours they worked sorting clothes, food, and household items by extending the morning shift one-half hour and adding two afternoon shifts each week. Through all this, ECHO continued to do its job entirely with volunteers; there were no paid employees.

There were several significant events noted for 1994.

- ECHO's 25th Anniversary was celebrated.
- ECHO's application to participate in the Fall 1994 United Way/Combined Federal Campaign was approved.
- The use of consignment shops was re-activated. This allowed ECHO to dispose of items that were not practical for families in need or items that were received in excess of ECHO's needs and the needs of organizations with which ECHO shared its donations.
- ECHO was the beneficiary of a very successful Boy Scout food drive in November as well as a major food donation from the U.S. Postal Workers Union of the Springfield Post Office in May.
- Ten additional parking spaces were added with the expansion of the parking lot.
- Two dividing walls in the donation receiving area as well as a pass-through window between the office and the receiving area were constructed.

The Family Counseling staff had grown in number. There were now twelve staff members who interviewed clients and determined how ECHO might best assist. One counselor was

bilingual. ECHO hoped to add several more counselors to the staff who were proficient in Spanish, the foreign language that ECHO counselors encountered most often. Policies had changed to “reflect kindness, generosity, and consistency.”

During the past year, 372 families were assisted with approximately 3,665 bags of food and an even greater number of bags of clothing. Monetary assistance included \$10,434 for rent and housing, \$10,052 for fuel and utilities, \$12,978 for special clothing and dry goods, \$330 for transportation and auto repairs, and \$100 for childcare. With the support of the Holiday Food Basket Committee, 110 Thanksgiving baskets and 150 Christmas baskets were given to ECHO’s most needy families.

With the re-activation of the Furniture Committee in September 1993, a new program was established whereby donations of furniture and large appliances were held by the donor until ECHO identified individuals or families needing such items. Unfortunately, there were frequent instances of people not meeting their appointments. The ECHO Board agreed to discontinue the furniture re-distribution program in June 1995.

A Public Affairs Committee had been established in the fall of 1993. Significant accomplishments of this group included:

- representing ECHO at the Springfield Interservice Club Council meetings, providing reports on ECHO’s activities, and identifying ways ECHO could assist other organizations in their charitable enterprises;
- speaking at meetings of the Springfield Civitan Club, two Lion’s Clubs, three Methodist Women’s Circles and the Burke Clergy Association;
- conducting tours of ECHO for youth groups, women’s circles, and pastors of member congregations;
- orientation of new volunteers to provide a better understanding of their duties and their importance; and
- assisting in writing articles on ECHO for publication in the local newspapers.

ECHO’s income for the year was \$41,392 and disbursements were \$35,493.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ ECHO 1994 Annual Report.

1995: Forming Liaisons Around the World

ECHO, under the continued leadership of President James Singsank, was now comprised of 25 member congregations.

Abiding Presence Lutheran	Messiah United Methodist
Accotink Unitarian Universalist	Prince of Peace Lutheran
Adat Reyim Congregation	South Run Baptist
Burke Community	Springfield Christian
Burke Presbyterian	Springfield United Methodist
Burke United Methodist	St. Andrew's Episcopal
Christ Church Evangelical Presbyterian	St. Bernadette's Catholic
Community Covenant	St. Christopher's Episcopal
Fellowship Baptist	St. John's United Methodist
First Baptist	St. Mark's Lutheran
Grace Christian Reformed	Sydenstricker United Methodist
Grace Presbyterian	Westwood Baptist
Kirkwood Presbyterian	

Fifteen family counselors assisted more than 1,100 families in 1995. The counselors worked two at a time whenever possible so as to keep up with the caseload of client appointments, walk-ins, and "the incessantly ringing telephone." Volunteers with Spanish language capability were added to the staff, working both in the office and in the counselor work stations. A second office/client interview room was constructed.

In order to help with the counselor workload, key people took on the added responsibility for assisting families and staffing ECHO on several afternoons each week. Other volunteers helped by pre-packing food bags for the clients.

No donation ever went to waste at ECHO. When ECHO's needs to serve local clients were met, staff members sought to find the right destination for the overflow. "Our outreach to other geographical areas and other groups continues and the liaisons we form continue ECHO's influence and impact as far away as southwestern Virginia, Kentucky, and even to foreign countries such as Russia and Guatemala, where we help orphanages. We now give bric-a-brac to eight senior centers and one nursing home for bingo prizes. Even the animals are not neglected as we share old bedding with two animal shelters." In addition, expanding ECHO's use of consignment shops to dispose of unusable donations also proved to be a continuing source of income.

The 1994 United Way/CFC results brought approximately \$23,000 in designated funds to ECHO. Application to participate in the 1995 campaign was approved and submitted.

St. Bernadette's Catholic Church sponsored a Christmas Giving Tree program which provided ECHO with many gifts of toasters, clocks, radios, irons, toys and balls for our neediest families. St. Christopher's Episcopal Church also donated many new toys.

ECHO's income for the year was \$60,675 and disbursements were \$42,618.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ ECHO 1995 Annual Report.

1996: Needs Never Stop

Requests for assistance from ECHO continued to surpass previous years. During this reporting period, ECHO assisted more than 2,150 families with approximately 2,000 bags of food and 1,900 bags of clothes. Clients were also given housewares, linens, small appliances, computers, toys, books, telephones, radios and other donated and needed items. Additionally, 120 Thanksgiving and 135 Christmas baskets were given to our most needy families. ECHO's monetary family assistance included \$14,890 for rent and housing, \$22,390 for fuel and utilities, \$1,658 for special clothing and dry goods, and \$1,022 for transportation and auto repairs.

Fortunately, the increases in requests for assistance were matched by increases in donations and in the number of volunteers. Approximately 220 volunteers worked harder than ever to keep up with the "mountains" of donations.

Upgrades to the headquarters building continued. Lights and a fence were added to the rear of the building. The newer section of the parking lot was paved and the existing lot was re-sealed and re-lined.

Approximately \$31,000 was designated for ECHO from the 1995 United Way/CFC.

The financial report for FY1996 showed a \$19,000 increase in operating funds, primarily the result of donations from the United Way/CFC campaign, a grant from the West*Lynch Foundation, and income from the sale of unusable donations. Total income for the year was \$95,240 and disbursements were \$76,294. Donations by member congregations increased from \$22,272 to \$28,632.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ ECHO 1996 Annual Report.

1997: The Governor's Award

During 1997, more than 250 volunteers lent their time and talents to ECHO. There were no paid employees. James Singsank served his fourth term as President.

ECHO's work in the community was honored with the presentation of the Governor's Award for Community Service and Volunteerism.

According to the 1997 Annual Report, ECHO worked hand-in-hand "with Fairfax County's Department of Family Services and other community-based organizations like ECHO as we struggle together to implement the new directives coming from all levels of government toward encouraging people toward self-sufficiency and off welfare. ECHO's terrific counseling staff uses all their combined skills to empower and enable people to navigate through the new system in which they are now living, encouraging them to use the skills they have to acquire new skills in this new environment. The clients' tragic experiences continue, of course, but it is greatly satisfying to be of some solace and comfort to them with ECHO's tremendous resources of food, clothing, money, 'things' and especially, caring volunteers."

Requests for food assistance continued to show marked increase, but donations also increased. As a result, ECHO was able to maintain an exceptionally well-stocked food room. Two of ECHO's member congregations were making food donations on a monthly basis.

A program to refurbish donated computers and system components for clients got its start in 1997. One of ECHO's volunteers began taking home computers that had been donated. From his basement workshop, the volunteer checked the equipment out, wiped the hard drive clean, installed current licensed software and added components so that the client received a complete working system. This program grew over the years, until nearly 50 computers were being recycled each year through a waiting-list system.

ECHO's income for FY1997 was \$112,207; disbursements were \$73,286. It was reported that the previous year's United Way/Combined Federal Campaign brought approximately \$33,000 to ECHO.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ ECHO 1997 Annual Report.

1998: Yard Sales and Databases

Four congregations joined ECHO in 1998: Baha'i Community, Church of the Nativity, New World Unity, and Rolling Valley Congregation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Christ Church Evangelical Presbyterian merged with another congregation. James Singsank continued his tenure as President. Volunteer totals now stood at more than 320.

Fourteen Family Coordinators, three of whom were bilingual in Spanish and English, assisted more than 1,560 families with approximately 5,700 bags of food and 2,500 bags of clothing. Families received 127 Thanksgiving baskets and 130 Christmas baskets. The Christmas Gift Shop provided gifts for 163 adults and 264 children ranging in age from infant to 18 years. Family financial assistance included \$33,700 for rent and housing, \$29,600 for fuel and utilities, \$1,900 for special clothing and dry goods, \$2,600 for transportation and auto repairs, and \$3,100 for prescription medicines and drugs.

ECHO continued its practice of sharing its largess with several other non-profit groups, including American Rescue, Lewis Lincoln Vannoy in Centreville, Caring and Sharing of Manassas, the Mustard Seed Project in Africa, and Leewood Nursing Home. "One neat thing to see happening is that as our Caring and Sharing friends deliver goods to the Appalachian area and beyond - now nine states, they are seeing little 'mini ECHOs' spring up. There are people of good will everywhere!"

Orientation for ECHO's daytime volunteers continued, with emphasis placed on the importance of the commitment that the new volunteer was making to the overall work of the organization. "Buddies" were assigned to the new volunteers to help them learn procedures and become part of the groups with whom they would be working.

ECHO's Board of Directors approved a Reorganization Plan in 1998 that called for substantial upgrades to the property. Individual furnace and air conditioning units were to be installed in each bay. This work included changing from electrical to gas units with an eye to both additional comfort and efficiency. The south bay (former garage) was to be added to the comfort zone since its use had increased tremendously. Additional work under the Reorganization Plan included changing the layout of clothing racks, tables, and shelves throughout the building; expanding the Interview/Counselors office; removing the overhead door in the warehouse bay and installing a wall, window and double door; adding ceiling insulation in the warehouse bay; and constructing an outside storage shed to hold lawnmowers and grounds maintenance equipment.

ECHO began holding semi-annual yard sales as a money-raising project in 1998. The first event, and every one after that for the next five years, was held in the front yard of one of the ECHO volunteers. This effort grew to be so successful that the fall sale in 2003 was moved into the gymnasium of St. Bernadette's Catholic Church. Sales have continued there twice a year ever since. These yard sales have produced a substantial income for ECHO and

have provided quality items at a bargain price to the buyers. Dedicated volunteers work year-round to select, organize, box and store the yard sale items. The sale itself is a major undertaking that involves scores of volunteers to set up, conduct and then clean up after the event. It is, however, a community-building celebration that is thoroughly enjoyed by the participants and the buyers. Sale items are selected using the same criteria as items selected for sale at consignment shops; that is, those items either inappropriate for our clients or in excess of ECHO's needs for clients. Proceeds from the yard sales fund ECHO operations, including client assistance.



Two scenes from an early ECHO yard sale at the Gauthier's house



Setting up for a yard sale at St. Bernadette's



Shoppers at a yard sale at St. Bernadette's

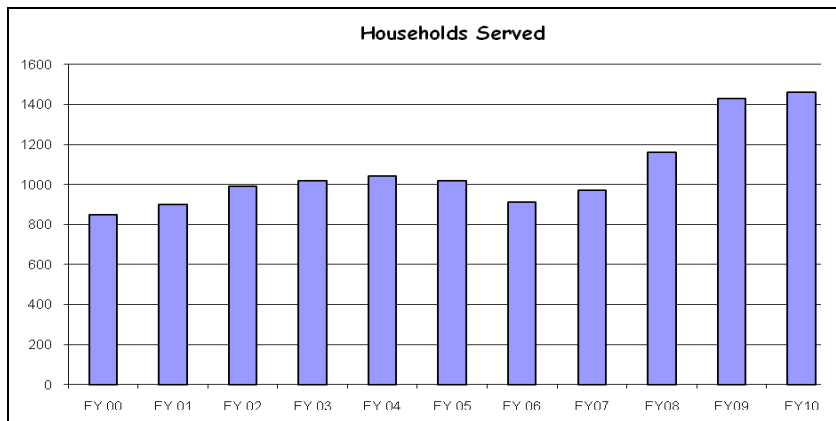
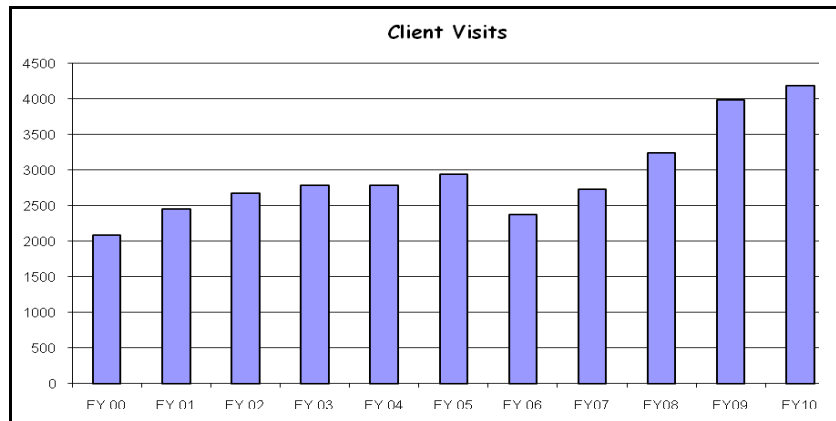
With ECHO's growth over the years came the pressing need to convert administrative and client files to a computer-based operation that would be accessible to ECHO's workers. A plea for help went out to find individual volunteers with some expertise in computers in order to assist in the conversion.⁷⁹

A friend of ECHO, a retired computer programmer with experience in database design, came forward to assist ECHO in building such a client database. Working closely with the Executive Director, he designed a program that was specific to ECHO's needs and one that would allow ECHO to gather statistical information and aggregate that information to

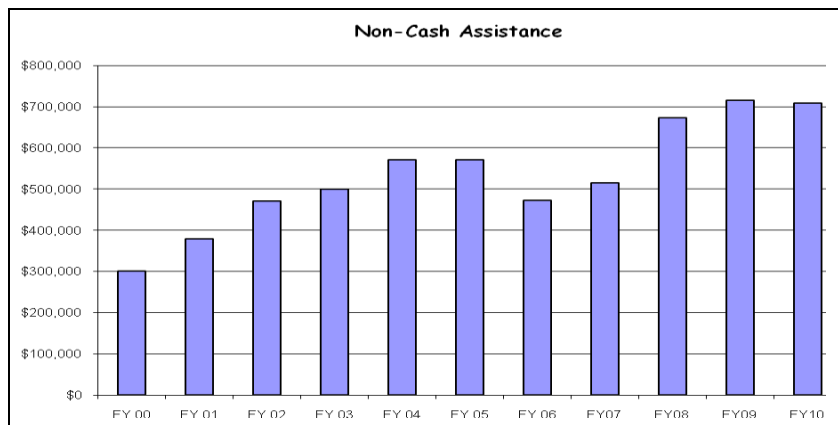
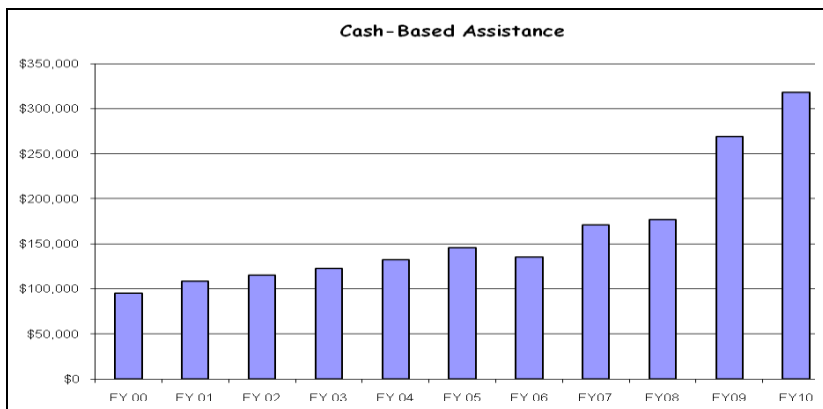
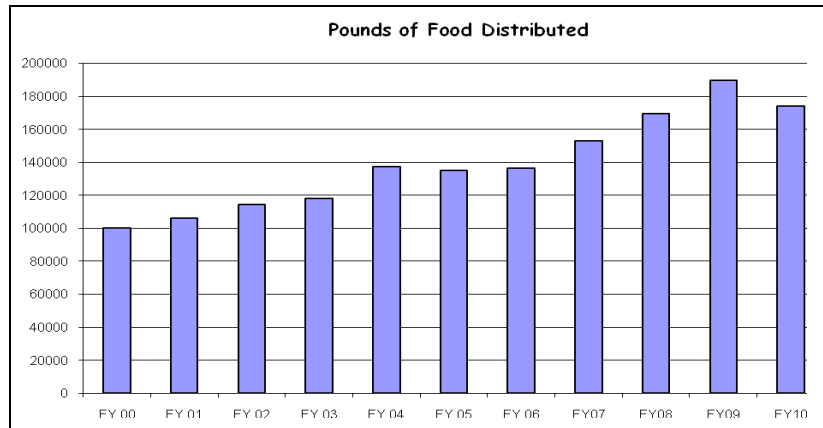
⁷⁹ Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held January 19, 1998.

manage the client assistance program. By July, the database was up and running and files were being entered by a group of ECHO volunteers as new clients were accepted. Current files were entered as time permitted.⁸⁰

Since that time, data has been entered in the database on a daily basis. The client database has proven invaluable in providing statistical information to keep management aware of the status of client operations, apply for grants and contracts, and educate audiences of all kinds as to what ECHO is doing and how much is being done. The charts below are only a small sample of the data that has been captured for such use.



⁸⁰ Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held August 10, 1998.



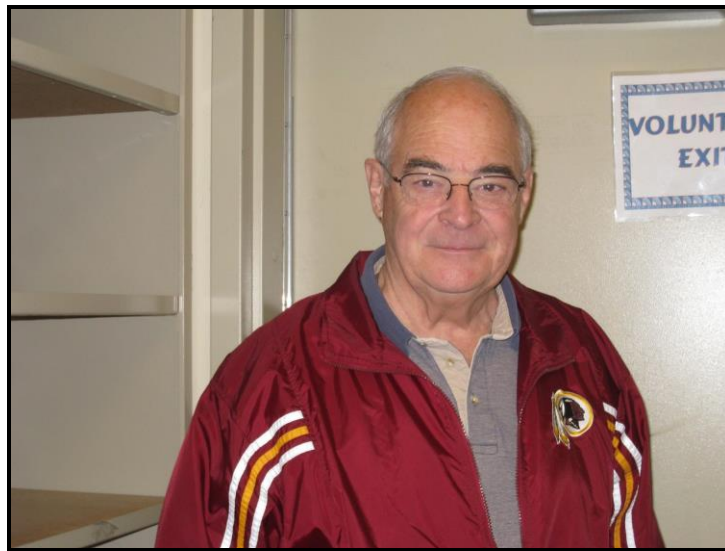
(Note a downturn in the charts, generally in FY 05, FY 06 and FY 07. This was due to the construction of the building expansion project in those years. During portions of that time, ECHO was forced to stop providing certain kinds of client assistance because portions of the building were inaccessible.)

According to the annual report, ECHO's income for 1998 was \$118,738 and disbursements were \$105,520.⁸¹

⁸¹ ECHO 1998 Annual Report.

1999: In the Computer Age

Two new congregations joined ECHO: New Hope Unity Church and Word of Life-Assembly of God. Fellowship Baptist Church discontinued its membership. In all, twenty-eight congregations supported ECHO in 1999. James Singsank served his sixth, and final, year as President of ECHO. The Reorganization Plan approved in 1998 for property renovation was completed in 1999. The Articles of Incorporation, revised February 17, 1997, were approved by the State of Virginia on July 10, 1998.



Jim Singsank served as ECHO's President 1993 – 1999.

ECHO's staff of seventeen counselors, working in teams of two or three, spent innumerable hours addressing client needs. Their wealth of knowledge and problem-solving skills, as well as remarkable reservoirs of patience, were tremendous assets to ECHO's operations. Family assistance in 1999 included \$39,482 for rent and housing, \$34,101 for fuel and utilities, \$2,197 for special clothing and dry goods, \$3,440 for transportation and auto repairs, and \$2,965 for prescription medicines and drugs.

The Food Room began pre-bagging basic food items in order to make assembly of food packages less time consuming for the counselors. While the need for food continued to increase considerably, donations also increased to keep pace with demand.

This year saw truckloads of clothing go to Macedonia to aid in Kosovo refugee relief.

By the end of June 1999, the records of all clients who had been assisted by ECHO since January 1, 1998 – approximately 1,300 families – were entered into the new client database. As both new and current clients came in for assistance, records were updated to reflect their visits. As a consequence, a myriad of facts were tracked on a weekly and monthly basis: everything from the number of visits made over any time period, to how many persons were assisted, to what kind of help was provided and for what purpose and to whom. Additionally, ECHO's client demographics proved useful for the Fairfax County Human Services organization.

Paper files continued to be the main source of daily record-keeping and a complete paper file was maintained on each client. It was expected that this process would soon reverse, with the computer file becoming the primary file to be accessed and updated directly by the family counselors.

It was through the efforts of volunteers with expertise in computer software and hardware that ECHO was able to design its own database specific to its needs, install and maintain state-of-the-art software, install a network system that allowed volunteers to access the ECHO computer and enter data from home, and maintain and upgrade its computer hardware at minimal cost.

Income for the year was \$124,097 and disbursements were \$122,195. Especially significant this year was the increase of nearly \$10,500 for family assistance and approximately \$6,000 in Headquarters improvement expenditures. In addition, word was received that the 1998 United Way/CFC would bring approximately \$44,735 to ECHO's coffers.⁸²

⁸² ECHO 1999 Annual Report.

2000: Web Page Ready

Anthony Pomilla was elected President, effective March 1, 2000. Member congregations had decreased to 26 faith groups, as the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church and New World Unity Church discontinued membership. To meet current client needs, ECHO's total number of volunteers increased to approximately 350 persons.

During the past year, seventeen family counselors, six of whom spoke Spanish, assisted more than 1,878 families. ECHO's neediest families received 149 Thanksgiving baskets and 156 Christmas baskets. The Christmas Gift Shop provided gifts for 224 adults and 363 children. Family assistance included \$39,108 for rent and housing, \$35,496 for fuel and utilities, \$4,288 for special clothing and dry goods, \$1,589 for transportation and auto repairs, \$4,846 for prescription medicines and drugs, \$3,207 for miscellaneous family services that included assistance to clients residing outside of ECHO's normal area of assistance but within Fairfax County, and \$5,974 for perishable foods.

Nearly 9,500 bags of food were distributed to clients in 2000, an increase of 8% over the previous fiscal year. Member congregations increased their food donations by nearly 12% compared to last year. In addition, the Food Room was the beneficiary of two very successful food drives in 2000. The Scout fall food drive and the Mail Carriers spring food drive each brought in nearly 20,000 pounds of food. Both drives produced a record-level number of donations. While total food stocks were generally adequate to meet current demand, many items remained below the levels necessary to provide a balanced package to ECHO's clients, particularly those clients with children.

ECHO established its own web page, www.onwashington.com/groups-echoinc, found on the Washington Post's no-cost web service for community groups. "On our pages, you will find a presentation of ECHO's location, hours of operation, purpose, services provided, a solicitation for volunteers, and a list of member congregations. You will also be able to view the current needs of ECHO for donated items, the current issue of the Volunteer Newsletter, an Events Calendar and more. We have links to two member congregations, and we welcome additional links. We are encouraging ECHO volunteers to sign up on the web site as 'members'. As members, ECHO volunteers can send email to other members, post messages, add events to the calendar and invite other volunteers to become members." [Note: This website evolved into the current site at www.echo-inc.org.]

Other computer operations continued throughout the year. Client data was entered almost daily by ECHO's team of volunteer data entry professionals and the database was available to serve the needs of the family counselors and ECHO management.

Expansion was once again a subject of discussion. Over the last few years, the increasing client needs and the increase in donations supporting those needs had caused the existing

facility to become extremely cramped for both clients and volunteers. ECHO began exploring ways in which the existing facility on Old Keene Mill Road could be expanded.

As a first step in this effort, the Executive Committee and Board of Directors developed a long-term vision plan for ECHO for the next five to ten years. This effort confirmed that the existing building and land, after 14 years, were approaching the end of their useful life. It became clear that ECHO needed a physical plant to support its vision and needs. An adjoining lot on Old Keene Mill Road came on the market during this period and ECHO pursued its purchase as a means of executing its vision. The pursuit proved to be unsuccessful. ECHO would now take time to evaluate the feasibility of expanding on its current land while exploring options to carry the organization beyond the next 5-7 years.

ECHO's annual report described additional significant events occurring this year:

- ECHO received the Bob Westmoreland Community Service Award from the Inter-Service Club Council of Springfield.
- The State of Virginia approved ECHO's petition for exemption from retail sales and use tax.
- ECHO's application to participate in the fall 2000 United Way/Combined Federal Campaign was approved. In addition, word was received that the 1999 campaign would bring approximately \$50,200 to ECHO's coffers.
- ECHO began sharing surplus donations with Virginia Rescue Mission, a group working in southern Virginia that was patterning much of their activity and outreach along the lines of ECHO.
- ECHO's Clothing Department prepared color coded cards in English and in Spanish to make it easier for clients to shop efficiently.

Operating funds in 2000 increased nearly 21%, or more than \$27,000. The majority of the increase was due to substantial increases in contributions from member congregations as well as income from United Way/CFC. This year, ECHO began calculating the value of non-cash donations received and the value of non-cash assistance provided. This resulted in more accurate financial statements. During the past year, ECHO provided more than \$300,000 in non-cash assistance to clients in the way of food, clothing, and small household items and appliances. The total amount of assistance provided this year was more than \$526,000, a most noteworthy accomplishment.

"This booming economy still leaves many people behind; the single parent, the aged, the immigrant, the handicapped, trying to make it on meager or limited incomes. ECHO is the life-line that often makes the difference in keeping families healthy, stable and independent instead of hungry, despairing and even homeless."⁸³

⁸³ ECHO 2000 Annual Report.

2001: Planning for Expansion Once Again

The need to expand ECHO's 15-year-old facility in order to respond to increasing demands from those in need in our community was once again a critical issue. ECHO had always been a frugally-run organization, with no paid staff and almost nothing donated going to waste. As a result, the decision to invest in expanding the building was not an easy one to grapple with for ECHO's Board of Directors and Executive Committee. However, by FY 2001, it had become clear that lack of space was significantly impacting ECHO's ability to meet client needs. It was difficult to serve more households because there was insufficient space to store or display the additional food and clothing needed to serve them. The counselor/client interview area was so small and cramped that it afforded no privacy or dignity to clients as they explained their personal circumstances.

In June of 2000, the Board of Directors, composed of representatives of all the member faith congregations, unanimously approved a projected three-year budget to expand the existing facility. While focus would remain on expanding the existing property, which would serve ECHO's needs for a projected 5-7 years, it was agreed that a longer-term vision was also in order.

Work began in 2001 to develop specific plans both for the expansion and for fundraising mechanisms that would avoid impacting ECHO's mission of providing assistance to clients in need. ECHO's Board approved a new financial account for designated funds specifically earmarked for the building expansion. They also approved the allocation of 25% of all donations without specific designation for building expansion. However, 100% of all United Way/CFC contributions were to continue to be used for direct client assistance. ECHO's Board also set aside reserve funds to ensure that client assistance would not be impacted as fundraising for the building expansion was pursued.

Meanwhile, ECHO's normal business operations continued full steam ahead. Nineteen Family Coordinators, including 6 Spanish speakers, distributed \$486,984 in cash and non-cash assistance to clients. Record receipts and record disbursements of food were reported. A total of 10,188 bags of food were given out to clients and other agencies. Food donations by member congregations increased 42% over last year. Despite these efforts, ECHO's food stocks were at the lowest level in four years at the end of this fiscal year, testament to the increase in requests for assistance from those in need.

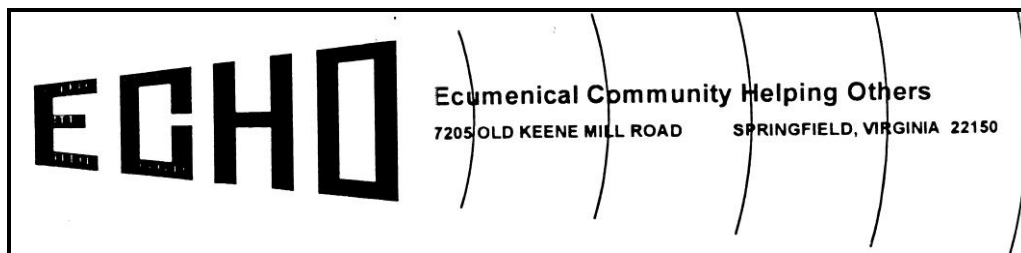
Computer operations were now an integral part of ECHO's recordkeeping. Major concentration was on maintenance of the client database, including a current record of client visits, client demographic information and assistance provided to clients. In addition, three new efforts were started this year. Donations receipts written by ECHO volunteers since 1977 were counted and recorded in order to estimate the flow of donations into ECHO. Not unexpectedly, data indicated that the number of donations climbed steadily, increasing by about 39% between FY 98 and FY 01. Secondly, paper-and-pencil calculations regarding

various types of in-kind assistance which ECHO had been providing to clients and to other organizations were computerized to assist ECHO management in collecting and maintaining important financial records. Thirdly, historical and current data regarding the number of ECHO volunteers were computerized. This information gave an important new perspective to the growth of the organization.

The Treasurer reported a strong growth in both cash and non-cash donations for the two-year period FY 2000 and FY 2001. During this period, income increased by over \$40,000 to \$180,802. Non-cash donations of food, clothing and housewares increase by 57% to an astounding \$714,290. Financial assistance was also up by 14% to \$108,590, and non-cash assistance increased 26% to \$378,394.

The net result of all this activity during the year led to a cash balance of over \$56,000. As a result, the Board of Directors took two significant actions. It set aside \$146,250, an estimated one year of expenditures, as a cash reserve to cover potential future shortfalls in meeting client assistance needs. The Board also formally allocated \$76,000 of its cash balance as the starting point for its building expansion fund.⁸⁴

Design for a new logo for ECHO was presented and accepted at the Board of Directors meeting on November 19, 2001.



Original ECHO Logo



Logo adopted in 2001

⁸⁴ ECHO 2001 Annual Report.

2002: Generosity from Tragedy

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 prompted an incredible outpouring of generosity from the community. Cash contributions from individuals were more than double in quantity and dollar amount than what they had been in any previous year.

At the same time, ECHO was pressed to meet the expanded needs of the community in the wake of the economic downturn following 9/11. Efforts began in earnest to address ECHO's space constraints by expanding the existing facility. Site plan options were provided by an engineering firm and, with the help of an internal design firm, work progressed to evaluate which option provided the best work flow environment for ECHO's volunteers and clients. Funds necessary to complete the project were now at \$381,200; work was planned for the coming fiscal year to address raising further funds.

One of ECHO's member congregations, South Run Baptist Church, donated funds to purchase three new freezers for the food room, while funds to replace two refrigerators came from the building expansion program funds. The new cold storage devices increased capacity to allow ECHO to maximize efforts to buy cold items in quantity when they were on sale.

The Community Relations Committee worked with the Expansion Committee to begin issuing press releases, post a "thermometer" sign to remind the community about ECHO's fundraising efforts, and regularly issue newsletter/bulletin articles for member congregations. A Speakers Bureau was formed and potential speakers were armed with statistics and up-to-date information about ECHO.

The first small step toward establishing a computer network at ECHO was made this year. The purpose of the network was to allow simultaneous use of the client database by data entry persons and family counselors. A wireless network system to accommodate up to 16 computers was put in place; two computer work stations were currently up and running in 2002. Expectation was high that all family counselors would soon become comfortable entering and accessing client data directly into the database so as to take over all the functions currently performed by data entry persons.

Several ECHO Filipina volunteers initiated an effort to extend ECHO's reach to the Philippines. Donated items, including clothing, shoes and school supplies, that were in excess of the needs of ECHO's clients or that were not appropriate for clients, were collected and set aside. At their own expense, these volunteers periodically shipped the items to their family homes in the Philippines. When they returned to their home country on short visits, the volunteers then distributed the items to the needy in their neighborhoods. Children's items were distributed to public school children in the town of Taal in Batanga Province, while adult clothing was distributed to needy persons in various villages near Taal.

During FY 2002, the organization implemented what the Board enacted at its meeting in June 2001: the establishment of a Building Expansion Fund. At the same time, steps were taken to ensure that sufficient resources were maintained to serve ECHO's clients. The building fund grew from the \$76,000 originally set aside by the Board to more than \$163,000. Nearly \$55,500 was raised through the sale of unusable donations; \$21,400 came into the fund as 25% of undesignated non-United Way/CFC donations; designated gifts and fundraisers contributed another \$10,300. In addition, ECHO was able to conserve budget dollars as a result of the \$5,032 in donated pro bono legal services from Venable, Baetjer and Howard.

Cash-based client assistance increased to \$115,475. This included direct financial assistance of \$97,664, plus indirect financial assistance of \$17,811 in the form of food, clothing and other items ECHO purchased for clients. Adding in the estimated value of non-cash donated items; assistance totaled \$586,572, an increase of 20% over last year. A cash reserve of \$144,644 was maintained in operating funds.

With the loss of Burke Community Church from its membership, ECHO consisted of 24 member congregations in 2002.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ ECHO 2002 Annual Report.

2003: Giving and Receiving

ECHO's Executive Director, in the 2003 Annual Report, stated that "because of the solid relationships we have with other care-giving groups, as well as Fairfax County, we are able to refer clients to other organizations for assistance which is beyond the capability of ECHO to deliver. ECHO continues to urge its clients toward self-sufficiency and family stability, in an effort to break the cycles of poverty and distress and to help the children of clients to become competent, caring adults.

"Donations of clothing received by ECHO are far greater than we need for our clients, or even that volunteers can sort. We are always searching for places to share the generosity of our local community. We have found several new and exciting charities. Medical Missionaries works out of Bristow, Virginia and provides assistance to many trouble spots around the globe, as well as to Appalachia and several neglected Indian reservations in the Dakotas. Mission of Love does much of what ECHO does, in a somewhat less affluent area on the border of Prince George's County and the District of Columbia. We also share with our old friends at American Rescue and the Salvation Army.

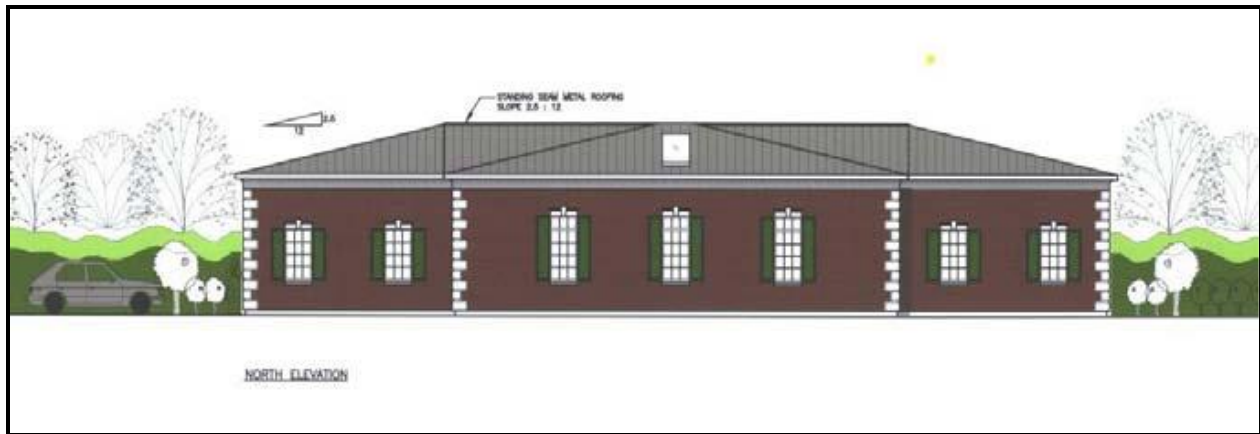
"It is good that we receive such a wealth of donations, and that we have places to share our excess. However, with the abundance the community provides us, comes a great deal of badly soiled and torn clothing, worn out shoes, and other items ECHO and its clients cannot use. So, for the first time in 35 years we have had to resort to a trash removal service. ECHO would prefer to have this money available for client assistance, so we continue to educate our donors of our true needs and to remind them that it is not true that 'poor people can use anything.' ECHO's local focus means the people being helped may be our own neighbors trying to live among us with dignity during a period of hardship."

In 2003, twenty Family Coordinators, eight of whom spoke Spanish, handled 2,788 client visits from 1,019 households, comprised of 3,210 family members. Clients received a total of \$104,712 in cash financial assistance, including \$46,106 for rent and housing, \$48,825 for fuel and utilities, \$6,730 for medical/dental care and prescription drugs, and \$3,051 for other family emergencies. In addition, the Holiday Basket and Gift program distributed 343 Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets valued at \$12,020. The Holiday Gift Shop distributed stuffed stockings and gifts valued at \$57,000 to 163 families, including 306 adults and 415 children ranging in age from a few weeks to 18 years.

ECHO continued to receive and give record amounts of food. A total of 11,336 bags and 118,121 pounds of food were given to clients and other agencies. Nine volunteers received, sorted, stored, stocked, and packaged the food distributed to clients.

A video was developed for ECHO's clothing sorters to view before starting their shifts. This was found to be a good way to pass on and review information and ensure a more consistent application of standard procedures.

While ECHO's business of helping those in need continued on a daily basis, plans for expansion were in full stride. The necessary papers were filed with Fairfax County on June 30, 2003, to start the formal county approval process for ECHO's planned building expansion. Specifically, a request was filed to change current zoning from R1 to R3 and to receive special exceptions to normal residential zoning restrictions. The net result, if approved by Fairfax County, would be to allow ECHO to construct a 28'x95' northern addition, build a 22'x80' western addition, add a 1,600 sq ft mezzanine in the northern addition, expand our storm water management area on the north, add a second vehicle exit on the western side, add additional parking on the west, repave existing asphalt, add a new sign, add fencing and equip the new facility. Assuming approval by Fairfax County, and concurrence from ECHO's Board of Directors, construction was expected to commence between spring 2004 and spring 2005.



Architect's drawing of the planned building addition

The project was over twice as large as originally envisioned, primarily due to the rezoning proposal. Initial estimates were that the northern addition, plus all the other work, would increase the cost of the existing budget of \$381,000 to approximately \$555,000. Adding the mezzanine would increase the price to approximately \$671,000, with a 10% increase planned for environmental rules applicable to the property. On June 30, 2003, ECHO had raised \$459,000 towards the expansion, with \$64,000 spent to date, primarily for professional services. A line of credit, in lieu of a mortgage, with Prosperity Bank was put in place to provide temporary funding until fundraising efforts raised the additional funds needed.

Assisting ECHO's team were a pro bono architectural firm, InterSpec Consulting Services, and a pro bono law firm, Venable, Baetjer and Howard, LLP. Additional pro bono or at-cost assistance for the construction phase was sought. Special fundraising efforts included a Golf Tournament at Springfield Golf and Country Club and a planned appeal to individuals, congregations, professionals, and locally-based large businesses. ECHO's Speakers Bureau,

staffed by knowledgeable volunteers, crafted a public relations program to spread the word about ECHO and its needs.

ECHO's neighbor to the west approached Fairfax County to abandon Lyles Road (on ECHO's western boundary) and to split the property with ECHO. The conditions Fairfax County proposed would have been costly to ECHO, and would not have added any buildable property to the project due to existing easements on the west. Therefore, ECHO advised Fairfax County that there was no interest in sharing the property, although there was no opposition to abandonment in entirety to the neighbor.

The building expansion fund stood at just over \$270,000 by year end. \$319,000 had been raised, and \$25,100 had been expended for design work and county fees. A new roof was installed for \$22,500. The fund continued to grow through designated contributions, 25% of undesignated contributions, the sale of unusable donations, and transfers from operating reserves (\$53,800 in 2003). The campaign to raise funds for the building was showing results in increased contributions from member churches and the community, including \$10,000 from VFW Post 7327. Contributions from the business community in support of the golf tournament scheduled in July 2003 were unprecedented in the organization's history. Pro bono professional services were valued at \$42,000 in 2003.

In addition, a new source of funding for ECHO this year was the corporate match of employees' and retirees' volunteer hours, as well as their cash gifts. ECHO also continued to receive significant support from United Way/CFC.

ECHO's President summarized 2003 as follows:

This year's report, I believe, highlights how blessed ECHO has been with dedicated and caring volunteers. As a result of the increase in volunteers, ECHO has been able to help more clients, process more donations and take on significant new challenges, such as expanding the facility and organizing a golf tournament fundraiser. Our volunteers allow ECHO to handle a volume of clients and complex projects that just a few short years ago, we could not have imagined. But as needs arise, we are amazed at how there always appears to be someone who is able to step up to share their time and talents to meet the need. We are more grateful than words can express for all those volunteers who have helped ECHO over the years, some for over 35 years, and for those who have recently joined us to help us meet new challenges. Without them, ECHO would not be the unique, 100% volunteer organization that it is and would not be able to channel over 99% of its donors' financial contributions to clients, as it does.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ ECHO 2003 Annual Report.

2004: Beating One's Own Record...and Still Growing

Building expansion was a full time job for ECHO's team of volunteers. The effort had begun nearly six years ago out of frustration with the cramped work and storage spaces at ECHO's headquarters and the resultant inability to serve more clients. Now the reality of tackling a construction project of this magnitude was hitting home. Initially, a budget of \$250,000 was established. By 2004, it was over \$800,000 to accommodate plans to build three times as much space as originally expected. More than \$600,000 in funding had been raised. The County unanimously and enthusiastically approved ECHO's rezoning and special exception requests, and progress was being made to move the site plan and building permit applications through the system. Hiring of a contractor with a spring 2005 start date was the next target.

"Our building project chairman has done an incredible job shepherding us through a process he learned on the job, but he would also be the first to tell you that he could not have done it without the help of others, too numerous to name here, who brought the skills, knowledge and talents we needed to accomplish this task; many of whom had never volunteered for ECHO before this project started. One of the miracles of ECHO is that we are continually provided with the resources we need when we need them."⁸⁷

During the past year, twenty-six Family Coordinators and office assistants, including twelve Spanish speakers, handled 2,790 client visits from 1,042 households. Clients received \$111,347 in financial assistance, including \$48,487 for rent and housing, \$53,156 for fuel and utilities, \$7,047 for medical/dental care and prescription drugs, and \$2,657 for other family emergencies.

Among the many outreach programs that benefited from ECHO's surplus housewares donations was the non-profit Lincoln-Lewis-Vannoy. LLV accepted ECHO's overflow career clothing to help rehabilitate young women in the Fairfax area. They also distributed bingo prizes to local senior centers. Another beneficiary of ECHO's surplus was a local lady who sent craft items to southern missions. Mariah Center was the recipient of overflow baby food and clothing. A local animal shelter benefited from the worn and torn blankets and sheets that were worthless to ECHO's clients. Last, but not least was the "drama box".

This box received vintage clothes and very unusual outfits that were then given to the drama departments of local high schools. All in all, very little passed through the Housewares Department that could not be put to good use by someone.

Having started the computerization of certain ECHO activities in 1998, there was now more than six years' worth of data. The data reflected that ECHO had been on a continuous growth pattern over the years, and that growth continued through FY 2004. ECHO was now

⁸⁷ Executive Director's Report, ECHO 2004 Annual Report.

the largest it had ever been in terms of the number of volunteers serving actively; the amount of donations being received; the number of clients being served; and the amount and value of financial, food, clothing and housewares assistance being given. The Treasurer's Report for 2004 backed this data up. This past year, donations of food, clothing, housewares, holiday gifts and various miscellaneous items valued at close to \$998,000 were doubled since ECHO began estimating and recording their value four years ago. The sale of donations not usable by clients contributed \$62,138 to ECHO's income, 13% more than the previous year.

With the assistance of a volunteer, who served as writer and director, ECHO contracted with the Fairfax High School Academy for the Arts to produce an information video.

In FY 2004, the Board of Directors acted to establish a Capital Replacement Reserve, setting aside \$19,000 from operating reserves as initial funding.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ ECHO 2004 Annual Report.

2005: A Slow Down in Progress

On March 13, 2005, a Ground Breaking Ceremony was held, where Supervisors Sharon Bulova and Dana Kaufman and Delegate Dave Albo, joined ECHO volunteers in celebrating the plans for the building expansion. Unfortunately, despite the hard work of both the Community Relations and the Building Expansion Committees, the explosion of housing and office construction throughout Fairfax County had slowed the approval process for ECHO's new building by many months. ECHO was in limbo as to an actual start date. The good news was that the approval delays provided more time to raise funds to minimize the amount and length of the loan ECHO would have to take out and the interest it would have to pay.

ECHO's volunteers exerted a great deal of energy on fundraising, including a second Springfield Golf and Country Club golf tournament, yard sales in the fall of 2004 and the spring of 2005, and volunteer contributions. Over one-fourth of ECHO's volunteers responded to a letter soliciting contributions to the building fund, some with very significant donations. Total volunteer contributions for the year amounted to nearly \$90,000. Another \$21,000 was raised from congregations, business and foundations. Delegate Dave Albo obtained a Virginia state grant of \$25,000 to be applied to our expansion costs. This year for the first time, ECHO received a \$10,000 grant from the Fairfax County Consolidated Community Funding pool, which was then extended to an additional \$10,000 grant for 2006.

The Building Expansion Committee remained busy despite the delays in county approvals. Documents were prepared for the follow-on VDOT and Public Works permit and bonding processes. The Committee also developed a draft maximum-price construction contract that ECHO could award once county processing was complete. Four temporary storage locations were obtained and a concept of operations was developed in conjunction with the contractor in order to continue client financial and food support during construction. Expectations were that construction would start in early 2006.

The project cost estimate in 2005 was \$865,000, with most of the increase from last year due to the impact of environmental regulations, county permit fees, and the increase in prices for construction material. ECHO raised \$668,533 towards the expansion, with \$112,639 spent to date, primarily for professional services and county fees.

In the midst of all the construction planning, fundraising and public relations events, normal business operations continued to outpace all previous levels once again. ECHO provided more financial assistance to client families in 2005 than ever before, even while also making substantial progress in raising the funds necessary to complete the warehouse expansion project. Client needs were greater than ever as the cost of living, especially for housing,

climbed dramatically. The number of requests for payments of prescriptions was also unprecedented. Interestingly, the number of households served during the past year was essentially the same as the previous year; however, the number of client visits increased by 5% to the highest number since ECHO started keeping statistics. Despite the record amount of financial assistance dispensed, the amount of food, clothing and household items given out remained substantially unchanged from the previous year.

Clients and other agencies received 13,325 bags of food, weighing in at nearly 135,000 pounds. Major donations by the Postal Letter Carriers Union, the Scout Annual Food Drive and Giant continued to be significant sources of food, in addition to drives by member congregations, corporations, local schools, and private individuals.

Much of the downturn in statistics for food, clothing and household items was the result of ECHO's decision to stop donations of clothing on March 1, 2005, in anticipation of the start of construction. When clothing donations were cut off, donors misunderstood and thought ECHO was not taking any donations. They stopped coming. Although ECHO fairly quickly resumed normal donation collections when it became apparent that the start of construction would be delayed, operations were impacted by that temporary change and recovery was difficult. The level of donations never returned to last year's level and, in fact, was down more than 20%. Reduced donations caused some loss of revenue from sales of excess donations to consignment shops, the spring and fall 2005 yard sales and through eBay. This experience made it clear that disruptions in ECHO's operations once construction started would have a significant impact on the ability to serve clients and accept donations from the community.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ ECHO 2005 Annual Report.

2006: Challenges Abound

By far the biggest news in FY 2006 was the near completion of the building expansion project. All Fairfax County approvals were received and construction began on March 27, 2006.

In addition to continued support from the engineering firm, Walter Phillips, and architect, InterSpec Consulting Services (ECS), ECHO hired Chamberlain Construction as the general contractor and ECS as the third party inspector. Venable LLC provided extremely responsive legal support throughout the process.

In 2006, ECHO received \$66,970 in building donations from individuals and member congregations. Additionally, ECHO successfully met a \$25,000 matching grant challenge from a private Richmond foundation in May, and another \$25,000 grant was received from the State of Virginia. The generosity from ECHO's community continued to the spring and fall yard sales which, in total, yielded nearly \$26,000. A 50/50 fund raffle netted another \$2,500.

Despite the good news of the construction project, ECHO faced extraordinary challenges in FY 2006. With the delay in the construction start-up, physical resources of food, clothing and housewares ebbed and flowed as all operations were significantly impacted, especially for the last quarter of the year. Donations, which had already been down due to the premature anticipation of the start of the building effort a year earlier, fell even further with the arrival of construction equipment, chain link fences, and severely reduced parking facilities. The number of donation receipts given out during the year was about 3,800, down from 4,900 the previous year.

Outreach to clients was significantly reduced in early May, when ECHO closed the clothing room and shipped all of the clothing and household items, including racks and shelves, to off-site storage. The number of client visits decreased from almost 3,000 last year to less than 2,400 this year. Except for food, all areas of client assistance, including cash and non-cash assistance, decreased. ECHO distributed \$119,821 in client financial assistance; the bulk of these monies were for rent and utilities payments. Donations of food, clothing, housewares, holiday gifts and various miscellaneous items were valued this year at over \$636,000, down 25%.

Since ECHO was unable to give clothing to clients during this period, for those clients who did show up, Family Counselors compensated where they could by providing additional food to help free up resources to purchase needed clothes. More than 136,000 pounds of food were distributed, a record level for the past two years. It was also reported this year that ECHO was seeing a trend in which an increasing immigrant population with far fewer personal resources was coming for assistance, thus requiring food and clothing in an

amount larger than their more established counterparts having the same financial difficulties.

Holiday baskets were distributed in November and December. However, because of the anticipated start of construction, instead of setting up the Holiday Shop this year, gifts were distributed to families who came for their regular appointments in November and December.

In anticipation of construction, ECHO secured the following low-cost, off-site storage capabilities to handle clothing inventories:

- Interstate Van Lines donated an old moving van trailer and ECHO received permission to park it in the Mason Lodge parking lot on South Backlick Road. After the stored clothes were moved back into the expanded building, the trailer was sold on eBay for \$700.
- ECHO was able to inexpensively rent a storage container. St. Mark's Lutheran Church allowed the use of their property to hold the container during construction.
- Burke Shurgard Storage allowed ECHO free storage space through their program to assist non-profit organizations.

While construction impacted work in the housewares department, volunteers were able to maintain an adequate supply of small appliances, linens, pots and pans, and dishes. Reduced storage and work space limited the ability, at times, to accept donations of larger appliances, such as microwave ovens, vacuum cleaners, and sewing machines. Many of the smaller household donations were placed in storage for a portion of the construction period.

The number of volunteers overall, which had been growing steadily until it leveled off in FY 2005, declined this year. On average, through the year, there were about 360 active volunteers, down from a high of 395 in 2004 and slightly less than in 2005. Some volunteers became inactive because evening hours ceased when construction began. Also, with a significantly reduced client and donor load, there was much less for volunteers to do. Orientations for potential new volunteers also were stopped due to the reduced need for help.

For those volunteers who remained active, challenges abounded. For the last quarter of the year, volunteers had to park off-site and were taxed to the building by other volunteers. Work spaces at ECHO were temporarily eliminated or moved, and volunteers were asked to work around construction equipment and noise and dust. Everyone had to adjust to daily changes in procedures and schedules, and worked without water and restroom facilities, at times.

Other challenges for ECHO included the very disappointing loss of Combined Federal Campaign funds for this fiscal year. ECHO renewed efforts to not only recoup CFC membership, but also to obtain additional funding, if possible. Thanks largely to the superb

efforts of a new grant writer, ECHO was successful. During FY 2006, ECHO applied for and was accepted in both the United Way and Combined Federal Campaign programs.

To help plug the gap created by the one-year loss of CFC funding, the grant writer applied to receive funding for client assistance from the United Way's Community Impact Funds program. These efforts were again successful and ECHO was awarded a contract for \$20,000 to apply to our basic assistance program. ECHO also applied to Fairfax County for funding under the Consolidated Community Funding Pool program. ECHO had first received funds under this program in fiscal years 2005 and 2006 (\$10,000 in 2005 and \$13,150 in 2006); a contract for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 was awarded to augment the client assistance program. In addition, ECHO requested additional funding to help cover the CFC funding shortfall and was awarded \$30,000 in fiscal year 2007.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ ECHO 2006 Annual Report.

2007: Approaching "Back to Normal"

With the completion of the new building addition, ECHO was once again in full operation by September 2006. Warehouse space was doubled and the client counseling area was significantly increased. As a result, ECHO was able to serve its clients with greater privacy and dignity as well as process, store and distribute donations more efficiently. The new space was dedicated on October 15, 2006. By the time the building was dedicated, enough construction funds had been raised to pay off ECHO's loan in its entirety. ECHO was now debt free once again.



Front and west side view of building addition



East side view of building addition

Focus now turned to getting organized in the new space and rebuilding the base of clients, volunteers and in-kind donors who had been lost during periods of reduced services due to the construction. By the end of the fiscal year, numbers had rebounded to pre-construction levels. However, ECHO was still off its all-time highs in several areas. According to the Computer Operations Chair, a possible longer-term, slightly downward trend in some areas may have started in FY 2005. As more clients, donors and potential volunteers became better aware of ECHO's greater ability to serve the community, it was hoped that a much clearer picture of where ECHO was would begin to take shape in 2008, the first fiscal year completely unaffected by the expansion project since 2004.

With business "back to normal", the Board of Directors approved the establishment of a new Vision Committee. ECHO had pursued the building expansion as a result of a Vision Committee effort in 2000. With the completion of the expansion, the primary recommendation of the 2000 Vision Committee had also been brought to completion. It was now time to look forward again and establish strategic direction for the next 2-5 years. By the end of the fiscal year, the 2007 Vision Committee had completed most of its work and expected to finalize its recommendations to the Board of Directors in early July.

Underlying much of the work of the 2007 Vision Committee was the realization of how generous the Greater Springfield community had been in supporting ECHO's construction efforts. As a result, there was an obligation on the part of ECHO to find ways to better the investment the community had made through improved and increased services to its clients. There was also a realization of the surprising level of community support ECHO could attract if it clearly articulated its goals to benefit the community and its most vulnerable residents. As the Vision Committee finalized its work, it was recommended that a plan of seeking community feedback and support for its long-term goals be pursued. By aligning community and ECHO's supporters, the Vision Committee hoped to find the long-term financial, volunteer and community support it would need to attain those goals.

Client requests were greater than ever in 2007, as it became ever more difficult to exist on a limited income in this prosperous county. Twenty-seven family counselors distributed \$171,288 in assistance in FY 2007. The majority of this aid went for rent and utility payments. In May 2007, \$10,000 was added to the family assistance budget to keep up with increasing client need. Even so, the total budget was exceeded by \$2,700.

The counselor-client interview process was sharply upgraded in 2007 thanks to the additional space gained in construction of the new facility. In the cramped counseling office of the old building, counselors and clients sat nose to nose and elbow to elbow with no privacy at all for discussion of the problems and situations that brought the clients to ECHO to solicit assistance. In the new building, individual counseling cubicles allowed client interviews to be held in a setting of privacy and confidence. The new office arrangements encouraged more open and candid discussion and also contributed to the attainment of ECHO's goal of maintaining client dignity through the entire ECHO experience.

In 2007, counselors saw the first effects of the sub-prime mortgage loan crisis as a number of clients realized they could not meet the extremely high mortgage payments that

characterize such loans. The secondary effects of the crisis also became obvious to ECHO counselors as the slowdown in the construction industry created higher unemployment and a consequent increase in requests for ECHO financial assistance. With more clients seeking such help and seeking it in larger amounts, counselors sought and received a supplemental financial assistance allotment to finish out the year. By year's end, \$148,000 in financial assistance had been extended, a new record for ECHO.

Discussion in the Vision Committee had revealed a consensus that ECHO might be able to do more to encourage some ECHO clients to help themselves to break out of the poverty cycle. This was a broad topic that would be explored in depth and over time. However, the counselors agreed that for a first small step they would make it a point to encourage non-English speaking clients to learn English. To this end, counselors stressed to clients the importance of speaking English and pointed out the multiplicity of opportunities to learn English as a second language.

With the completion of building renovations, changes in the Clothing area were subtle, but necessary. More shelving space had been gained, cardboard boxes had been replaced by plastic bins, lighting was improved, and the room was rearranged to make it appear more spacious and items more accessible.

A total of 14,934 bags, weighing 153,042 pounds, were given to clients and other agencies. Food was distributed to 754 families and 2,670 family members, with each family receiving slightly over 200 pounds of food per visit. Expenditures for perishables, including meat, eggs and oleo, increased by 131% to meet this need.

The completion of ECHO's building expansion further enabled ECHO to turn its school supplies distribution program into a year-round operation. With a much larger space dedicated to the collection and storage of backpacks and school supplies, ECHO was now able to maintain an inventory and keep backpacks on hand, ready for distribution to clients at any time of the year.

A \$7,500 grant was received from the Poole Foundation for the purpose of enhancing the school supplies program. The money from this grant was divided over five years, beginning this year. These funds were used to purchase backpacks and supplies that were not usually donated in sufficient quantities to meet need. ECHO distributed 550 backpacks filled with school supplies during the 2006-07 school year.

Monthly communications with ECHO's member congregations and their representatives were handled by the Community Relations Committee. A brochure that described ECHO's mission was also published and updated, when needed.

The Treasurer reported that for FY 2007, total cash expenditures for the building expansion project were estimated at \$860,000, as of June 30, 2007. In order to fund the project, \$110,000 was borrowed against the Prosperity Bank line of credit on September 18, 2006. As a result of continued donations from individuals and businesses, this amount was paid in full by March 30, 2007, leaving no further debt on the building expansion. Once all building

related invoices were processed, any remaining funds in the Building accounts were to be transferred to the Operating account and the Building accounts closed.

Generous contributions from member congregations, community organizations, businesses and foundations helped push the total for the year beyond the original budget by 54%. ECHO budgeted \$45,000 for this line item and received \$69,395. In addition to the \$7,500 grant from the Poole Foundation, ECHO received \$10,000 from the John E. Fowler Foundation. These monies were used toward family assistance. Individual donations exceeded budget by an incredible 77%. The budget for individual donations was \$35,000 and \$61,896 was received.

The annual Entertainment Book fundraiser netted \$1,264 for ECHO. In addition, \$20,000 received for Community Impact Funds helped fill the United Way gap from FY 2006. An additional \$30,000 was received from the Fairfax County Consolidated Community Funding Pool. Pledges received from the fall 2006 United Way/CFC campaign totaled approximately \$70,000. Additional Workplace Campaign monies netted another \$8,500. America's Charities and the Verizon Employee Incentive Program were two examples of workplace campaigns that benefited ECHO.

Calvary Christian Church joined ECHO's roster of member congregations, bringing the total to 25 in 2007.⁹¹

⁹¹ ECHO 2007 Annual Report.

2008: Developing a Vision for the Way Ahead

In the FY 2008 Annual Report, ECHO President, Tony Pomilla, described the challenges ahead for the organization as well as highlights from the report of the 2007 Vision Committee:

I am writing this in October when the economy is grappling with the housing crisis, the credit crunch and the stock market slump. During this fiscal year, the effect of the housing slowdown can be seen in the statistics and financials presented in this report. Many of our clients are vulnerable to slow-downs in the construction industry, and so our statistics demonstrate that while the community has, in many cases, responded with record setting donations, they have not kept up with client needs. ... [W]hile ECHO has provided record amounts of financial assistance, non-cash assistance and food to our clients, on a per household basis, our numbers are down because the number of households seeking assistance is up 20% from the prior year. As we look into FY 2009, ECHO is seeing food donations dropping, as have many similar organizations around the country. With the additional pressure of debt crisis, stock market drop and increasing signs of a coming economic slow-down, ECHO expects that client requests for assistance may continue to increase dramatically while donations may continue to slow down. These are the challenges that ECHO will be facing in FY 2009. In response, in early FY 2009, the Board of Directors has already approved a budget augment of \$20,000 to buy food to make up for the decline in food donations.

On a more positive note, with the building expansion completed last fiscal year and the volunteers settled in to their routines and procedures in the new space, we finally had the bandwidth to step back and review ECHO's missions, policies and procedures, and develop a vision for the next 3-5 years. It had been 7 years since our last Vision Committee effort, but that time had been consumed in completing the major goal from that effort; expanding the warehouse to provide an environment that created more dignity for the clients, better workspace for the volunteers, and more storage for out-of-season and yard sale items.

Approximately 25 volunteers formed the 2007 Vision Committee and met for a period from April through July 2007. The results of those efforts were presented at the September 2007 Board of Directors meeting and approved at the November meeting. ... [H]ighlights from the report are as follows:

- Focus on the following goals:
 - Improve ECHO's services to the needy in the community by:
 - reducing the dependence of repeat clients for emergency assistance by establishing programs aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty,
 - improving and expanding services, and
 - anticipating and addressing new causes for families in financial crisis.
 - Ensure ECHO's long-term viability assisting the needy in Springfield and Burke
 - through improved organization, and
 - by developing improved long-term sources of financial and community (volunteers, congregations, etc.) resources and support.
- Achieve the above goals by focusing on the following objectives:
 - Develop feedback questionnaires to be given to clients, volunteers, the county and congregations to improve ECHO's services.
 - Improve volunteer resources to meet increasing needs by:
 - creating, identifying and filling new volunteer positions focused on meeting specific goals, especially a position focused on maintaining and increasing the number of ECHO volunteers, and
 - planning for succession, especially for the Executive Director position, so ECHO can continue to staff this position with a volunteer and maintain its status as a 100% volunteer organization.
 - Improve ECHO's services to the needy in the community by:
 - initiating mentoring services for clients,
 - creating/increasing ECHO's ability to help children to stay/succeed in school to break the cycle of poverty,
 - creating a financial reserve in ECHO's budget in anticipation of new financial pressures for clients,
 - expanding financial assistance,
 - objectively reviewing all client service areas to evaluate effectiveness of processes and procedures for clients' benefits and best utilization of volunteer and financial resources, and
 - considering the implementation of a financial planning class for clients.
 - Develop improved community sources of resources and support by:
 - strengthening outreach to congregations, and
 - increasing communications with the county to better define ECHO's relationship with the county.
 - Develop improved long-term sources of financial resources and support.

- Review and update as necessary ECHO's Articles of Incorporation and By-laws.

Progress in achieving a number of the goals can already be documented:

- Two Assistant Executive Director positions have been created and filled to provide the succession planning that was required for the Executive Director position.
- A financial planning course is being developed to assist our clients with budgeting and improving their computer proficiency.
- A higher level computer training course is being developed to assist some clients in enhancing their work skills and marketability to assist them in materially improving their career earning potential.
- The number of teen volunteers has increased 2- to 3-fold, and new programs for utilizing teen volunteers are in development.
- A volunteer with extensive focus group experience has been identified to take the lead in developing feedback mechanisms from clients, volunteers, the county and congregations.
- A committee was formed to recommend changes to ECHO's Articles of Incorporation and By-laws. These changes were approved by ECHO's Board of Directors at the May 2008 meeting.

ECHO's two Assistant Executive Directors, Meg Brantley and Marianne DeHart, were named Co-Directors to replace Pat Gauthier, the current Executive Director, who retired from that position on March 31, 2009, after having served since 1993. The office also added six administrative assistants to help cope with the ever-increasing administrative work load.

FY 2008 saw increases over the previous year in almost every measurable category of operations. This was the first full fiscal year since FY 2004 in which operations were completely unaffected by the building expansion project. A record number of clients came through ECHO's doors and were helped with a record number of pounds of food and a record amount of financial assistance. The number of bags of clothing distributed increased greatly, reversing a multi-year downward trend. The number of donation receipts given also increased greatly over last year, though it was still somewhat below the pre-construction level.

The daily counseling staff increased in this fiscal year, enabling ECHO to schedule an additional counselor for each shift. ECHO was fortunate to have 13 Spanish-speaking counselors, and one of them was on duty for most shifts. However, the importance of speaking English continued to be emphasized in client-counselor interviews and clients were encouraged to attend local English classes. During the fiscal year, \$154,800 in financial

assistance was provided to clients. Counselors provided clients with resource information and advice on responsible budget management, and encouraged clients to break the poverty cycle.

ECHO distributed a total of 18,754 bags, or 167,242 pounds, of food to clients and other agencies. Food was given to 943 families and over 3,200 family members. Despite record amounts of donated food, the increase in client families forced ECHO to reduce food support for individual clients to meet this need. Even with the cut back in food support, end-of-year inventory was the lowest ever recorded.

The fall and spring sales in FY 2008 brought in \$32,142 for ECHO's client assistance program. In order to run each yard sale, it takes nearly thirty people to collect, prepare and price items for sale; dozens more to transport tables and sale items, set up, and supervise during the sale; and numerous others to collect and count money, wrap customers' purchases and clean up after the sales. The profits made from these sales provide funds that support clients by paying for necessities, such as rent, utilities and medical bills.

During FY 2008, ECHO volunteers filled 617 backpacks with school supplies for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Most of the backpacks were new, but a few were gently used ones that volunteers laundered. Each backpack contained every item on the grade-appropriate lists of basic supplies that have been developed. In addition, extra donated items such as pencil sharpeners, index cards, Post-it notes, protractors, compasses, graph paper, book covers, etc. were added to the backpacks. Also included were two grade-appropriate picture, story or chapter books in each kindergarten through third grade backpack. All donated dictionaries and thesauruses, and a few dictionaries purchased by ECHO, were included in the backpacks of the older students.

During the peak demand time between July 1 and mid-September, ECHO gave out 546 fully-loaded backpacks. An additional 71 backpacks were requested by clients during the remainder of the year. Throughout the school year, ECHO makes additional school supplies, such as loose leaf paper, notebooks, pencils, and crayons available for clients in need of them. The school supplies program is funded each year by generous donations of money and school supplies from ECHO's supporting congregations, community businesses and organizations, and numerous individual donors. In addition, funds received in FY 2007 from the Poole Foundation grant helped support the program.

A success story from the client records of the Family Counselors clearly demonstrates how ECHO can make a difference in the lives of a family suddenly devastated by an emergency situation:

A young immigrant couple, parents of three small children, came to ECHO for help earlier this year. They had been doing well since arrival in this country.

While they were both employed at a menial level, both were hard and dependable workers with long uninterrupted records of employment. They had saved their money and finally managed to purchase a home in a residential district known for its good schools. The children reacted positively to their new environment, and their study and attendance habits reflected the parents' work ethic and determination. From all sides, the situation for this family appeared wholesome and stable, and the basic components of the American dream were in place.

The dream started to fade quickly when the father had an accident that left him with a broken hip. The immediate consequence of that accident was the abrupt loss of 2/3 of the family income. That loss meant that the family suddenly found itself without the means to cover its mortgage and to put food on the table. It was at that point that the mother came to ECHO.

The family needed prompt and substantial financial assistance to avert the beginning of foreclosure action, the first step toward homelessness. The mortgage payment and penalties amounted to over \$1700, of which the clients had only \$800. A brother-in-law offered to contribute \$100 to the final payment, boosting available funds to \$900. ECHO consulted with a caseworker at the Hispanic Committee who brought another community-based organization into the picture with a contribution of \$335. We now had \$1,235 of the total needed, and we were very pleased to cover the \$465 gap that remained, thus reaching the magic number of \$1,700.

There were two other elements to ECHO's contribution in this case. One was our payment of the family's \$107 water bill. Perhaps more importantly, ECHO provided a very generous supply of food for the family and arranged for the family to receive distributions of like amounts of food over the extended period of the father's recovery.

The prognosis in this case is very encouraging. The father's employer has agreed to provide him with limited part-time work until he is fully recovered. His part-time earnings, together with the earnings of the mother, will give the family sufficient funds to cover mortgage payments. Our food assistance will hold hunger and malnutrition at bay, and we are prepared to help in the payment of utility bills as the need arises.

In sum, this was the story of a family that might very well have lost its place in society without the help of ECHO.⁹²

⁹² ECHO 2008 Annual Report.

2009: Weathering Change And Embracing Growth

As noted by ECHO's Co-Executive Directors in their 2009 report, "In a year of economic uncertainty, ECHO has weathered change and embraced growth in so many areas." ECHO's accomplishments this year included the following:

- Financial assistance to clients reached an unprecedented high, reflecting the economic crisis.
- Fundraising events reached record amounts as ECHO's community responded generously.
- Policy and procedure manuals were changed to better support client growth and the programs impacted by the financial climate; ECHO's mission statement was updated and the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation were revised.
- ECHO's phone system was updated.
- Client focus groups met, and a review committee was formed to determine past and ongoing client needs, and to ensure that assistance provided over an extended period of time is justified.
- An expanded use of computers not only improved ECHO's administrative operations, but also provided tools for clients to improve their financial literacy skills and learn computer programming.
- Volunteers taught basic Spanish conversation skills to enhance communication between clients and volunteers.
- ECHO celebrated its 40th anniversary in November 2008.

FY 2009 saw historical highs for client visits and families and family members served, in all client assistance categories. Counselors distributed nearly \$237,000 in financial assistance, as well as 190,000 pounds of food, 3,836 bags of clothing, and household items valued at \$139,000. Due to a backlog for clothing and financial assistance, ECHO Counselors and other volunteers agreed to stay open on Fridays during the summer months to handle the extra work load.

Thanksgiving baskets were distributed to 140 clients and December Holiday baskets to 100 clients. Fifty clients received grocery gift cards and 60 refurbished computers were provided to clients during this fiscal year.

The winter months of FY 2009 saw ECHO's food room operating with a lower-than-normal inventory. In response, Board members prepared to hold special food drives at their congregations and ECHO's Executive Committee set aside reserves in anticipation of having

to use financial resources to purchase food, if necessary. "But, as the holidays approached, word must have gotten out and the community's generosity filled our food pantry and kept filling it after the holidays and through the Postal Carrier's food drive [*in April*]. As a result, ECHO's food pantry was amply supplied during a time when many food pantry shelves across the country were empty."

Records for FY 2009 show 722 backpacks were given to students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This represented a 17% increase over the previous year. All backpacks were either new, or like new and laundered. ECHO bought an additional 350 backpacks to supplement those received as donations and those on hand from last year's purchases.

A desperate need for volunteers willing to answer phones and assist in the office was first identified in 1998. Just over ten years later, a new group of volunteers, known as "Office Angels", was added to the counseling staff in answer to that long-outstanding call for help. Office Angels assisted counselors by answering the phones, directing calls, making clothing appointments, packing food for clients, and filling and assigning Holiday gift appointments. Their help has allowed the counselors to spend more time interviewing and counseling clients on their food, financial and budget management needs.⁹³

ECHO transitioned to a computerized appointment calendar during this year. The effort involved the lead counselors and ECHO's two major experts in computer hardware and software, and demonstrates not only the depth of skills among ECHO volunteers, but also the value of the close working relationship among those volunteers. The process of development, training, and fine tuning the program to meet all the needs of the counselors was a months-long job that is ongoing. Overall, those who are responsible for scheduling client appointments are finding that this new automated system is making the task more efficient and much easier.⁹⁴

In FY 2009, ECHO's business was managed by twenty-four support teams:

Administration	Housewares
Facility	Fundraising Inventory
Clothing	Internet Fundraising
Community Relations	Newsletters
Computer Operations	Phone Calls
Data Entry	Receiving
Environmental Activities	Teens
Family Counselors	Thank You Notes
Food	Volunteer Coordination
Grants	Volunteer Orientation
Holiday Baskets	Volunteer Scheduling
Holiday Shop	Yard Sales

⁹³ ECHO 2009 Annual Report.

⁹⁴ ECHO 2010 Annual Report.

Twenty-seven member congregations supported ECHO:

Abiding Presence Lutheran Church
Adat Reyim Congregation
Baha'i Community
Burke Presbyterian Church
Burke United Methodist Church
Calvary Christian Church
Church of the Nativity
Community of Faith Tabernacle
First Baptist Church of Springfield
Grace Christian Reformed Church
Grace Presbyterian Church
Kirkwood Presbyterian Church
Messiah United Methodist Church
New Hope Church

Praise Covenant Christian Church
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Rolling Valley Congregation of the
Church of Jesus Christ of LDS
South Run Baptist Church
Springfield Christian Church
Springfield United Methodist Church
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
St. Bernadette's Catholic Church
St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
St. John's United Methodist Church
St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Sydenstricker United Methodist Church
Westwood Baptist Church

2010: Good Work Continues Under New Leadership

Tony Pomilla resigned as president of ECHO in May 2010 after serving ten years in that capacity. During his tenure ECHO has grown, matured and flourished, while it has maintained its primary focus of providing emergency assistance to residents of the Greater Springfield area in times of need. On his departure, and the election of the new president, Bob Diegelman, Tony noted that "this is a good time for new leadership with new energy and new visions."⁹⁵ Tony will continue to be very active at ECHO as he serves as vice president.



Outgoing President Tony Pomilla began serving as ECHO's Vice President in 2010.



Newly-elected President Bob Diegelman has taken up the challenge of leading ECHO into the future.

Data collected during the year shows a record performance in almost every category of operations. "During FY 2010 we saw the highest number of client visits and the largest number of families and family members served in ECHO history."⁹⁶ ECHO gave a record amount of more than \$258,000 in financial assistance to clients.

The Holiday programs for ECHO clients continued this year. Clients received 383 Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, the majority of which were sponsored by donors from our supporting congregations and individuals, groups and businesses in our community. Our December Holiday Shop served 209 client families, providing toys, games and other gifts for 500 children.

For the first time since ECHO started collecting quantitative data, the amount of food given to clients this year was less than in the previous year. We don't have an explanation for this unusual occurrence, but we are monitoring several possible causes.

⁹⁵ ECHO 2010 Annual Report.

⁹⁶ ECHO 2010 Annual Report.

In FY 2010, the fall and spring yard sales generated about \$42,000 that went into the client assistance fund.

We have distributed 900 backpacks for students in kindergarten through 12th grade this year. Each year we have given out more backpacks than the previous year. Our program has evolved into a year round effort, and filled backpacks are kept on hand for client needs all the time.

ECHO has continued its recycling efforts with the intention of achieving 100% recycling. We are now trying to recycle all paper, plastics, glass and metal.

The Enrichment Program for Children was started in January 2010 by two volunteers who saw a need to provide age-appropriate educational and fun toys, stuffed animals, games and books to clients' children. Volunteers assemble about 40 packages each week. When clients come in for clothing and housewares, they are given a package for each of their children ages newborn through age fourteen.

During this fiscal year ECHO distributed more than \$226,000 in financial assistance, plus \$25,405 from a separate program of financial assistance under which Fairfax County provided funds to ECHO for distribution to qualified clients (TANF-EF). This was the largest annual amount of financial assistance provided in ECHO's history. On the income side ECHO experienced a 13% decline from the previous year in revenues received from individuals and a 9.5% decline in donations from member congregations. Additional income included about \$42,000 from the spring and fall yard sales; more than \$97,000 contributed through the CFC and United Way; a \$35,000 Fairfax County grant awarded ECHO through the Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP); and a contract in the amount of \$25,405 issued to ECHO by Fairfax County's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - Emergency Funds program (TANF-EF).

ECHO has several volunteer-driven publications that are distributed on a regular basis to communicate with volunteers and supporters and to recognize the special efforts of the many volunteers who share their time and talents to perform special service to ECHO. These publications include the monthly Congregation Representatives Letter (familiarily known as the Rep Letter) and Supporter Letter, the Volunteer Newsletter and Schedule, the Volunteer Highlights Newsletter, and minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

The Congregation Representatives Letter (Rep Letter) is prepared monthly and sent to our 27 member congregations to keep them apprised of all of ECHO various accomplishments, activities, meetings and special events and to thank volunteers for their efforts in making ECHO such an alive, vibrant, cheerful, involved place to volunteer. As noted in the Congregation Representatives letter of February 5, 2010, ECHO has joined the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. This decision will enable ECHO to become more closely involved in the local community.

The Rep Letter of November 2, 2010 contained the following: "On October 20, 2010, ECHO finally closed on the acquisition of the half-acre undeveloped lot at 7209 Old Keene Mill Road, adjacent to our present location. The purchase price was \$275,000 which is considerably lower than the price at which the property was originally listed." ECHO has a critical need for more volunteer parking which this land will provide. Other future uses of the land are being explored.

The Volunteer Highlights Newsletter is the work of one of our outstanding volunteers with a

unique and creative writing talent. The newsletter is put out once or twice a year and is packed with cartoon depictions, photos and clever reports of the activities of some of our volunteers. It also highlights some of the more interesting donations to ECHO, fundraising activities, volunteers who go the many extra miles to make life better for our clients through their work with yard sales, the Holiday Shop, the backpacks for kids effort, the Thanksgiving and the Christmas food baskets program, food drives, and countless other, often unnoticed and unrecognized, acts of kindness and plain hard work.

The Volunteer Newsletter and Schedule is a monthly publication of the day and evening schedule of individual volunteers who work directly with clients and donors. In addition, this publication contains information about upcoming meetings and events, ECHO's needs, upcoming food drives, recycling news, a report of the total assistance given to clients in the previous month, and other items of interest to the volunteers and supporters.

The Executive Committee meets quarterly, and the minutes are prepared and distributed and posted for review by all interested parties. During the Executive Committee meeting of July 19, 2010 a motion was made to "create a Vision Committee to lay out the full range of options for utilizing the new property at 7209 Old Keene Mill Road for expanding ECHO's services in the next ten years. This motion passed unanimously".⁹⁷



Pastor Duane Carlson, the driving force behind the founding of ECHO, stands on the newly purchased property at 7209 Old Keene Mill Road.

⁹⁷ July 19, 2010 ECHO Executive Committee Meeting Minutes.

The Board of Directors meets quarterly, and the minutes of the meetings are distributed to the Board and the Executive Committee and posted for review by others. The Board meeting of July 28, 2010 contained the following: "Two motions passed by the Executive Committee tied together the purchase of the property at 7209 Old Keene Mill Road with the formation of a renewed Vision Committee to present options for the use of the land. Two broad strategies are to expand the current building (7205 Old Keene Mill Road) by approximately 1,700 square feet or to eventually put up a new building on the new property. A motion to accept the Executive Committee's recommendation to go forth with the purchase of the property at 7209 Old Keene Mill Road was made and passed unanimously. A motion to create a Vision Committee to explore options for the uses of the new property was made, and passed unanimously."

ADDENDUM

- ❖ ECHO's Policy Statement

- ❖ ECHO Presidents

- ❖ Chronological History of ECHO Services

- ❖ Awards

- ❖ Yard Sale Proceeds

- ❖ Results from Annual Food Drives by The National Association of Letter Carriers and Boy Scouts of America

- ❖ Information for ECHO Family Emergency Volunteers (September 1970)

ECHO'S POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of ECHO is to help people in need in our community by assisting those who suffer the effect of long-term poverty as well as people who are experiencing an emergency need.

The revised Articles of Incorporation of ECHO permit ECHO (Ecumenical Community Helping Others) to engage in six specific areas of service and one general area:

1. Aiding families in emergencies,
2. Providing family guidance and assistance,
3. Supplying transportation to adults and children for needed services,
4. Providing adequate shelter for clients,
5. Educating citizens with regard to social and charitable needs,
6. Operating a day-care center for children, and
7. Other such lawful activities.

These areas provide a menu from which ECHO has selected activities which seem to be most needed at the time, in the geographic area in which ECHO operates. ECHO also cooperates with the Fairfax County Department of Human Services and with other community-based organizations in Fairfax County.

Currently, ECHO focuses primarily on providing aid in emergencies. We provide financial assistance in paying bills for essential client needs, including housing, utilities, prescription medicines and other essential needs. Additionally, we provide clients with emergency supplies of food, household items, clothing, and school supplies. Our assistance includes providing family guidance and counseling, to help the person or family to overcome their difficulties in the longer term. We sponsor and assist in providing Thanksgiving and Holiday meals to families in our area.

It is the policy of ECHO to provide temporary or emergency assistance to enable persons and families who have encountered a difficult situation and who require a measure of assistance beyond that provided by federal, state and local governments. ECHO strives to provide enough assistance to solve, or help to solve, the immediate problem and to encourage the client to take steps to overcome their difficulties without making the client dependent on continuing assistance. We also recognize, however, that there are unfortunate persons and families in our area who, despite their best efforts, will need continuing assistance from ECHO.

ECHO has been, from the very beginning, an all-volunteer organization. We have no paid staff. Because we are comprised of persons from many faith communities, and persons who do not belong to any faith community, we serve the needy in the Springfield and Burke area without regard to religious belief or ethnicity; nor do we discriminate in any other way in providing services. ECHO does not engage in any activities which would promote any religious, political, cultural or other point of view. The Virginia relay number is used to assist hearing impaired clients.

ECHO PRESIDENTS

1968-69	Paul Hayes	St. Mark's Lutheran Church
1969-70	Robert Fisher	Grace Presbyterian Church
1971	Gaylord Leonard	Grace Presbyterian Church
1972	Bill Eldridge	
1973-74	Jack Chambliss	Grace Presbyterian Church
1974-75	Carl Kohlmeier	Springfield United Methodist Church
1975-77	Ed Jones	
1977-78	Don Hilkemeier	Messiah United Methodist Church
1979-82	John Russell	
1983-85	Bill Crouch	Springfield Christian Church
1986	Michelle Goodman	Sydenstricker United Methodist Church
1987-90	Don Bettge	Springfield Christian Church
1991-93	Art Davis	Westwood Baptist church
1993-99	James Singsank	St. Bernadette's Catholic Church
2000-10	Anthony Pomilla	St. Bernadette's Catholic Church
2010-	Robert Diegelman	St. Bernadette's Catholic Church

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF ECHO SERVICES

1969:

- Family Emergency Services, including financial aid, food, clothing and household items: Continuous to present day
- Food distributed from St. Mark's Lutheran Church: 1969.
Food distribution transferred to ECHO headquarters at 7309 Old Keene Mill Road: Summer/fall of 1971.
- Household furnishings stored at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church: 1969.
Additional storage in the basement of the committee chairman: 1970.
Storage, both household furnishings and clothing, transferred to Grace Presbyterian Church: Starting early 1971. *On March 16, 1971, "summer clothing collected since last fall was laid out on tables at Grace Presbyterian Church and families were brought in to select needed items; it was estimated that clothing was distributed to over 100 people that day."*
Storage transferred to ECHO's building at 7309 Old Keene Mill Road: Summer/fall of 1971.
- Thanksgiving Food Baskets: Continuous to present day
- Transportation: Discontinued 2008
- Furniture stored and distributed from the ACCA furniture warehouse at Annandale Methodist Church: 1969.
Additional storage in a garage at 6323 Franconia Road, Springfield: 1969-72.
Furniture stored in a warehouse at 7117 Braddock Road, Springfield: 1972.
Additional storage in the garage of an ECHO volunteer: 1973.
Storage transferred to ECHO's building at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road: 1974.
Furniture re-distribution program discontinued: 1995.
- Housing Advocacy for low- and moderate-income housing in Fairfax County: Discontinued 1978

1970:

- Valentine Food Baskets: No mention can be found after 1972
- Mother's Day Out program to improve homemaking skills of client families: Discontinued in 1977

- Home Repairs program organized work parties, obtained materials and made repairs on client houses: Discontinued 1980

1971:

- Adult Basic Education Classes started at Springfield United Methodist Church and St. John's United Methodist Church: ECHO no longer active in this program by 1973
- Owned a home in Alexandria that was rented to a needy family: House sold in 1977

1972:

- Meals on Wheels: Discontinued 2007
- Tutoring at Hunt Valley Elementary School and later at Lynbrook and Lorton Elementary Schools: Discontinued by 1978
- Christmas Toys, Gifts and Food for Families distributed from Springfield Christian Church: Continuous; became Holiday Store and December Holiday Baskets

1973:

- Alma Casa, a group home for girls, opened: Discontinued in 1976

1974:

- School Supplies Program: Continuous to present day

1997:

- Refurbishment program for donated computers and system components with distribution to clients: Continuous to present day

2010:

- Enrichment Program for Children for children ages newborn through age fourteen provides toy packages that include some items that are educational, something soft to cuddle and some that are just fun. Started January 2010

AWARDS

1992-93 and 1994-95

*Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services
Northern Virginia Training Center*

Presented to ECHO in recognition of outstanding volunteer service rendered in behalf of residents through active participation in the Volunteer Program of the Northern Virginia Training Center.



April 18, 1993

Governor's Award for Volunteering Excellence

The 1993 Governor's Award for Volunteering Excellence is bestowed upon ECHO (Ecumenical Community for Helping Others) for successfully addressing the concerns and needs of its community. Presented with genuine appreciation by Lawrence Douglas Wilder, Governor.



October 25, 1996

*Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor*

Dear Fellow Virginians:

On behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, it is a privilege for me to present ECHO – The Ecumenical Community Helping Others – with the 1996 Governor's Community Service and Volunteerism Award. This award recognizes the noteworthy volunteer activities of your group and the significant improvements these efforts have made to the quality of life in Virginia.

The efforts of the volunteers of the churches and synagogues of ECHO to provide for the needs of the citizens of the Springfield and Burke areas of Fairfax County are an outstanding example of this year's theme of community building. The citizens of Virginia's communities are better able to independently care for themselves and their families because of your many hours of selfless work.

Thank you for your countless efforts to improve the lives of others. It is my sincere hope that you will continue to work toward improving our communities and your good example will encourage others to help build a better Virginia for all our citizens.

With warm regards, I remain,
Sincerely,
George Allen



October 24, 1996

*House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
James P. Moran, 8th District of Virginia*

Ms. Pat Gauthier
Executive Director
ECHO
7205 Old Keene Mill Road
Springfield, Virginia 22150

Dear Ms. Gauthier:

I would like to offer you and your organization my congratulations on being selected for the 1996 Governor's Community Service and Volunteerism Award for the Commonwealth of Virginia. ECHO's receipt of this prestigious award properly recognizes all the fine contributions made by volunteers and staff who comprise this service community.

It is my hope this well deserved recognition will inspire other individuals and organizations to become more involved in their communities and share resources to help those less fortunate.

Please pass on to all those who made this award possible, my appreciation for their efforts. Sharing of their time and talent serves to make our communities better places to live.

Congratulations again on such a wonderful achievement.

Sincerely,
James P. Moran
Member of Congress



December 9, 1996

County of Fairfax, Virginia

Certificate of Recognition presented to Ecumenical Community Helping Others for being selected to receive the Governor's Award for Service and Volunteerism for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for outstanding community service to the Springfield and Burke communities.

Katherine K. Hanley, Chairman
Board of Supervisors



April 1998

Fairfax County Volunteer Service Award granted to ECHO in recognition of outstanding volunteer service.

Katherine K. Hanley, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Jane S. Kornblut, Executive Director
Volunteer Center of Fairfax County, Inc.



2000

The Bob Westmoreland Community Service Award

Presented to ECHO (Ecumenical Community for Helping Others) in grateful recognition of your outstanding and dedicated service to the people of our community.

The Inter-Service Club Council of Springfield



July 9, 2007

The County of Fairfax, Virginia presents this certificate of Recognition to Ecumenical Community Helping Others for selection by a review committee of experienced grant writers and members of local nonprofit organizations for its excellence, innovation, cost effectiveness and diversity of field to be included in the 2006-2007 Catalogue for Philanthropy.

Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

YARD SALE PROCEEDS

Spring 1998	\$848.00	Fall 1998	\$1,019.60
Spring 1999	\$2,136.45	Fall 1999	\$2,695.25
Spring 2000	\$2,683.79	Fall 2000	\$3,883.03
Spring 2001	\$5,136.00	Fall 2001	\$4,116.90
Spring 2002	\$4,562.65	Fall 2002	\$3,848.20
Spring 2003	\$3,826.00	Fall 2003	\$7,501.35*
Spring 2004	\$11,885.00	Fall 2004	\$13,605.00
Spring 2005	\$12,300.00	Fall 2005	\$14,000.00
Spring 2006	\$11,174.00	Fall 2006	\$12,000.00
Spring 2007	\$12,561.50	Fall 2007	\$17,700.00
Spring 2008	\$20,784.00	Fall 2008	\$22,330.13
Spring 2009	\$20,040.01	Fall 2009	\$24,415.03
Spring 2010	\$17,755.00	Fall 2010	\$22,094.60

*First sale at St. Bernadette's Catholic Church

**RESULTS FROM ANNUAL FOOD DRIVES BY THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS and
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

	LETTER CARRIERS' "STAMP OUT HUNGER" FOOD DRIVE	"SCOUTING FOR FOOD" DRIVE
Year	Total Pounds of Food Collected	Total Pounds of Food Collected
1997	N/A	12,700
1998	11,700	18,172
1999	16,196	19,936
2000	19,414	20,890
2001	16,330	19,249
2002	12,699	21,400
2003	13,155	21,415
2004	21,793	21,531
2005	21,416	19,258
2006	16,465	21,299
2007	13,504	20,650
2008	11,883	18,414
2009	19,000	18,524
2010	17,000	22,600

INFORMATION FOR ECHO FAMILY EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS

WHO CAN BE AN ECHO FAMILY EMERGENCY VOLUNTEER?

Anyone can become an ECHO Family Emergency Volunteer who:

- cares deeply about others and wants to become involved on a person-to-person basis in helping to meet the needs of his or her neighbors, particularly those who happen to be poor;
- has an average amount of common sense;
- has – or is willing to make – some time available, occasionally at some inconvenience;
- has available transportation, at least occasionally;
- is not easily discouraged by the lack of quick success or the availability of quick solutions;
- does not expect constant gratitude and recognition for help given; and
- respects the dignity of every person as an individual.

WHAT AREA DOES ECHO SERVE?

ECHO has no precisely defined boundaries. Generally, however, it works in the Greater Springfield area. ECHO works closely with similar groups such as CHO in Vienna, FOCUS in Fairfax, ACCA in Annandale, SHARE in McLean, KOINONIA in Franconia and ALIVE in Alexandria.

HOW DOES ECHO FIND OUT ABOUT THE FAMILIES WITH WHICH IT WORKS?

ECHO works with families which are referred to it by such agencies as the Fairfax County Department of Social Services (Welfare), Fairfax Community Action Program, Headstart, Public Health Nurses and Visiting Teachers. Others are referred by churches, relatives or friends. These families are usually referred to ECHO because they are in immediate need of some kind of assistance which that agency or individual is not able to provide. Most frequently, the need is for food, clothing, household goods, a job, or money to pay rent, utilities, fuel, etc. Sometimes it is a need for housing – or it might be a combination of all of these. Sometimes the immediate need is a one-time-only situation and once met, the family will require no further assistance. More often, however, the immediate need is merely the most urgent problem at the moment, the culmination of a host of other difficulties with which the family by itself is unable to cope.

WHAT DOES AN ECHO VOLUNTEER DO?

The Family Emergency Committee Chairman or File Box Keeper assigns the family to a volunteer, giving the volunteer as much information as possible about the family and its problems, along with the names of others who can be contacted for advice and insight into the situation and how to proceed.

On the first visit, by casual observation and through friendly conversation (not interrogation), the volunteer attempts to learn something of the family's problems and to establish a relationship which will hopefully lead to friendship, trust and confidence.

It is difficult to predict just what the volunteer will find herself doing during the period of her relationship with her "family", since each situation is different. For some families, only one or two visits may be necessary. For others, whose problems are more complicated, the volunteer may find that her assistance and friendship are required over an extended period of time. In this connection, it might be pointed out that while one of the major roles of ECHO is to give emergency assistance, equal importance is given to helping solve, if possible, some of the deeper problems which have led to the crisis situation in the first place.

WHAT SERVICES AND FACILITIES DOES ECHO HAVE UPON WHICH THE VOLUNTEER CAN DRAW IN WORKING WITH HER FAMILY?

1. Family Emergency Chairman and Telephone File Box: They refer and assign families and also assist and advise the volunteer if problems or questions arise. Please call the File Box Coordinator to let her know of assistance given to your family.

2. Food Center: St. Mark's Lutheran Church Hours: 9 am – 4 pm
5800 Backlick Road PH: 451-4331 Mon. – Fri.

Volunteers are asked to pick up the food and take it to the family and not bring families to the center. Please record date, family name and number of members, amount of food (1 bag, 6 bags, etc.) and your name on cards in the cupboard.

3. Clothing Center: United Church Women
3464 Annandale Rd. PH: 560-5800 Hours: 10 am – 1 pm
(Salvation Army Bldg.) Tues. & Thurs.

You may take your family or give your family a referral note with the ECHO name on it and also your name, and they may go get clothing by themselves.

4. Household Goods: St. Christopher's Episcopal Church Hours: 9 am – 5 pm
6320 Hanover Ave. PH: 451-1088 Mon. – Fri.

We have a small supply of linens, dishes, silverware, etc. Please record items, family and date on the sheet provided.

5. Furniture Warehouse: Annandale Methodist Church (old building)
6935 Columbia Pike, Annandale

Furniture pick-up and delivery on Saturday mornings. When furniture is needed, consult the schedule in the newsletter and call the appropriate individual. Give the furniture needs in detail. Remember that the demand is greater than the supply, so the center usually will not have everything you order. You do not need to go to the warehouse unless you so desire – your "family" is not to be taken or sent to the warehouse.

6. Transportation: Consult newsletter for schedule. The Transportation Committee functions on a rotating schedule of churches listed in the newsletter. It is best if the volunteer can do as much transporting as possible for her family as the Transportation Committee must also be available to help many families referred to it which do not have assigned volunteers.
7. MEDCAP: MEDCAP referrals may be made only through the people listed on the newsletter information schedule. These are designated "FCAP Worker" for the purposes of this procedure.

8. Legal Assistance: Call Legal Aid (273-2337) or call the Family Emergency Chairman.
9. Financial Aid: Treasurer. This can take several forms:
 - Aid for rent, utilities, security deposits, etc. Do not promise aid until you have checked with the Committee Chairman or the Treasurer.
 - Purchase of new clothing. If urgently needed items are not available through the Clothing Center, appropriate purchases may be made by you with subsequent reimbursement from the Treasurer.
 - Perishable food. These items to supplement the staples from the Food Center should be charged at Bon Food at 10% discount. If you have not been authorized to make charge purchases, call the Committee Chairman for the name of a volunteer who is authorized.

Note about Financial Aid: Any expenditure over \$50 requires consultation with the President or Vice President and Treasurer.

10. County Services:

Dental Clinic (children & pregnant women).....	691-2330
Nursing Services.....	691-3141
Medical Clinic Appointments.....	691-3141
Food Stamps.....	691-2800
Visiting Teacher.....	481-1400

11. Eyeglasses: Lions Club (256-1001). The Lions Club will purchase glasses for our families. Call the Lions Club for information.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH ECHO FAMILIES

1. Consider what you wear. Don't overdress. Something neat and simple is best. You might find it best to wear shoes that are sturdy, and to carry a pair of boots in your car. Sometimes you may have to walk a distance from where you are able to park. Many of our families live in areas where the roads are unpaved and often muddy.
2. Introduce yourself to the family and explain the purpose of your visit, e.g., "Hello, I'm Mrs. Brown from ECHO. Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So (person referring family) has told us that we might be able to be of help to you. I've brought some food. Would it be alright if I bring it in?" If the family has a telephone, you may wish to call first, with the same approach, and arrange a convenient time for your visit.
3. Be warm, friendly and sincere; most of all, it is important to be accepting of the people you meet and their way of life. Keep in mind that your facial expression and your manner may reveal much more of your real attitude than the words you use or your tone of voice.
4. Always remember to dignify the adults in your family by their proper title, "Mr." or "Mrs." unless and until they indicate they wish to be on a first-name basis. This is especially important with black families, who are so frequently not accorded this title of respect.

5. Leave at home any stereotypes you may have about "the poor" and remember that each person you meet is an individual, different from any other, with dignity and pride.
6. Avoid the tendency of a new volunteer to over-react and over-do. Sometimes upon her first contact with a poor family, a volunteer tends to become so overwhelmed with the family's many needs that she inundates them with assistance and tries to tackle all the problems at once. Take it easy. Too much help can cause over-dependency. It can also offend the family's pride. Remember that the role of the volunteer is to give the helping hand needed for a family to be able to do things for itself.
7. Be aware of your limits as a non-professional and be ready to guide the family to professional assistance when needed. The Committee Chairman can be of assistance to you in this regard.
8. Be discreet. Remember that most of a family's problems are private. If it is necessary to discuss them with others, avoid using names if possible.
9. Never let yourself feel overburdened with the problems of your family. Remember that another volunteer can always be assigned to assist you and that advice and help are always available to you for the asking.
10. Please let the File Box Coordinator hear from you from time to time so that our files can be kept up to date on your family. It is also important to let her know when and if you feel ready to take on another family.

Prepared: September 1970