



ECHO UPDATE

QUARTERLY NEWS TO KNOW FOR VOLUNTEERS



Notes from the Director's Desk

by Mike Baier, Executive Director

HOW ECHO LEARNS

ECHO is a learning organization, adapting our operations over 50+ years of change to continue to help our neighbors in need. We're now starting to adapt to a "new normal" post-COVID-19.

We all continue to learn by doing, and to learn from each other. For example, at the Food Room's initiative, our Client Services Co-Chairs – Food, Counselor, Clothing and Housewares – have re-established regular gatherings to exchange ideas and lessons learned about how to improve our support. Each day as the Choice Model continues, Food Room and Counselor volunteers gain new insights into what our clients indicate they need, insights the volunteers share across ECHO. As we change our procedures and operations to accommodate insights like these, we remember to consider how any change in one area is going to affect operations in other areas of ECHO. Communication among teams is a key to the continued success of the mission to serve our clients.

What we've learned we need to write down. Every learning organization has Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Ours need some work. For example, operations at the Donation Door have changed substantially since March 2020. We now weigh all food donations. We record donations via computer. (If you are interested, check out the attempt at a current SOP in the orange binder at the Door.)

continued...

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Notes from the Director's Desk . . . continued

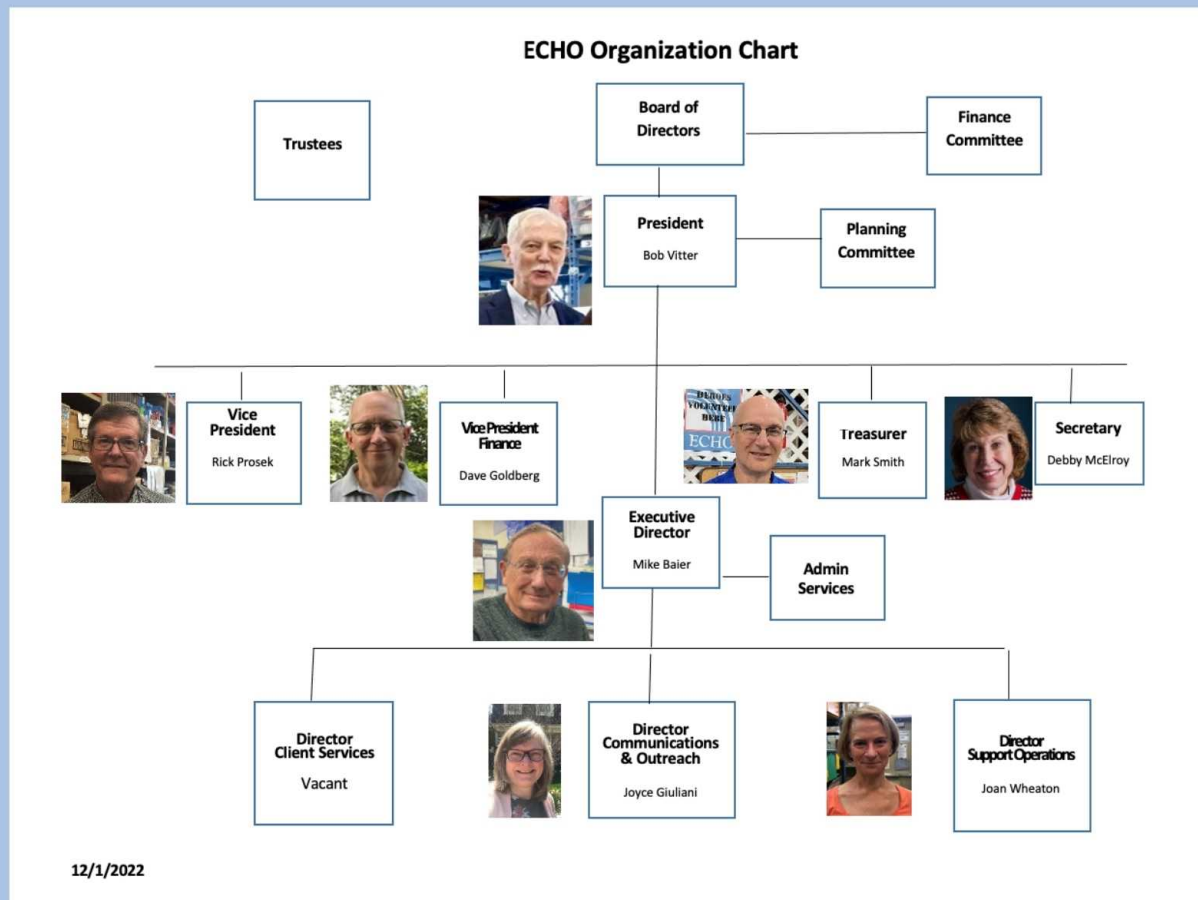
For even broader SOP revision, the Counselor volunteers are undertaking revising their Policies and Procedures Manual (variously dated in 2017, 2019, 2020). The revision grew out of individual efforts that all the Counselors enthusiastically endorsed at their very informative Listening Session on 21 January. They've formed a core team to perform a "bottom-up" review of the functions Counselors perform and how they perform them. An objective is to save time by reducing redundancy in procedures and where appropriate, computerizing those we now do manually. An ambitious goal is to eventually set a date after which all Counselor/client files will be digital.

All volunteers should feel empowered to share observations and ideas with team chairs and Executive Committee leaders. Sharing your input is a way of helping ECHO grow as a learning organization. It makes you a part of an "all-volunteer" team that learns and grows together in the service to our community.

Mike Baier

Who's Who...

Here are some names and faces of ECHO volunteers who would love to hear from you. They may have more responsibility, but, frankly, the pay and benefits are the same throughout.



VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Yard Sale Team

by Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair

The Great ECHO Yard Sale Endures and Prospers!

The Semi-Annual ECHO Yard Sales began in June, 1998, at the home of Executive Director Pat Gauthier and her husband John. Pat and other volunteers realized that ECHO needed money to support client financial assistance for housing or utility costs. They realized that selling excess inventory or donated goods that were impractical for clients would augment ECHO's income.



Pat Gauthier

The early Yard Sales proved so successful that they outgrew the storage capacity of Pat's basement and the sales area of her carport and yard. As ECHO looked for a weather-proof space that offered plenty of parking, St. Bernadette's Catholic Church came to the rescue. The church generously began hosting the Yard Sales in their school gymnasium in 2003 at no cost to ECHO.

Yard Sale events for the public, which were held twice a year until the Covid lockdown, resumed in 2022. In addition to the massive semi-annual sales events, ECHO operates an on-going fund-raising project within the ECHO building that is referred to as the In-House Yard Sale. While the public is invited to Yard Sale Events at St. Bernadette's, only volunteers may shop at the In-House Yard Sale.



Cele Frazee and Kathy Freund

Kathy Freund serves as Yard Sale Chair. Kathy, Cele Frazee, longtime chair of the Yard Sale Events, Mary Chasteen and Susan Taylor manage the in-house Yard Sale. To assure that the tradition would continue, Rachel Hoover and Debbie Moreau stepped up to lead the twice-yearly Yard Sale Events.

The In-House team recently faced the challenge of moving from their long-time position on the west side of the building into the former conference room to accommodate the expansion of Food Room operations. Yard Sale, like all other ECHO operations, must use every inch of space creatively.

Kathy says that the In-House Yard Sale and Yard Sale events not only continue to generate income for the organization, they help manage inventory from the generous donations our community provides. The four In-House Yard Sale volunteers set the prices for In-House merchandise. Volunteers who make purchases use the honor system to pay for them at the cash box in the main office.

Volunteer Profile - Yard Sale Team...continued

Kathy and Cele said that Yard Sale goods that do not sell quickly are moved to an area where they are free for clients to take when they come for appointments. Christmas decorations are extremely popular.

For 10 of the past 15 years, the Yard Sale project has generated between \$40,000 and \$50,000 annually, making it a considerable revenue source in support of ECHO's work. The Yard Sale events at St. Bernadette's not only generate income, they are a way of informing the wider community about ECHO's mission.



Rachel Hoover

Rachel and Debbie's work entails coordinating with St. Bernadette's staff; arranging for tables and signs to be put into place; scheduling volunteers for the set-up day and the day of the sale; making sure sale items are brought from many different storage places to the site; providing publicity; answering hundreds of questions; arranging for the take-down, clean-up and stowing away of everything after the sale.



Debbie Moreau

Rachel is a second-generation ECHO volunteer, following in the footsteps of her mother, Judie Hoover. Rachel is a Licensed Professional Counselor who works as a school counselor. She says that she has seen ECHO's impact on the lives of families whose children attended her school and she is enthusiastic to offer her time and skills to help ECHO.

Debbie graduated from a Yard Sale shopper to an ECHO volunteer around 16 years ago, and now is co-chairing the event. Debbie's husband Rick is a long-time volunteer for the sale as well. He helps with the heavy jobs of setting up the tables and displays. When asked what she considered the biggest challenge, Debbie said that getting shoppers back after Covid cancellations is a primary goal since ECHO volunteers have collected plenty of merchandise to have a successful sale.

A recent innovation for Yard Sale events is to offer coupons to clients. They will be able to purchase up to \$20 worth of items with the coupons. At Yard Sale prices, people should be able to find some nice things.

The next Yard Sale event at St. Bernadette's is scheduled for Saturday, April 15, 8:00 am to noon. Debbie and Rachel are recruiting volunteers for set-up on April 14 and to help with the sale and take-down the next day. Sign up to help in the ECHO Admin office. Yard sale set-up volunteers get the "bonus" of being able to shop on set-up day. Come join the fun!



Yard Sale Treasures

You Never
Know What
You'll Find!



**Help Spread
the Word**



ECHO Semi-Annual Yard Sale

Saturday April 15th, 2023

8:00 am to 12:00 pm

**St. Bernadette's School Gym
7600 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22152**

**All proceeds go to the ECHO Operating Fund
which benefits our clients**

Items needed for our Yard Sale include vintage items, jewelry, pottery, glass, camera's, linens, quilts, pictures, artwork, figurines. Also, toys, CD's, books, and much more.

Items donated for the Yard Sale must be dropped off at ECHO at least one week prior to the sale.

ECHO is located at 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22150

For more Information contact Debbie Moreau at debbiemoreau@mac.com
or Rachel Hoover at hooverrach@gmail.com

Supervisor Lusk Visits ECHO

submitted by Mike Baier

Mr. Rodney Lusk, Franconia District Supervisor, started his new year with a visit to ECHO on January 4th. His District includes ECHO's headquarters and extends into the eastern edge of ECHO's Springfield boundary. His experience suggests a natural affinity for ECHO. Before he became Supervisor, Mr. Lusk spent 32 years as a Fairfax County Employee. His roles included delivering human services in the Historic Richmond Highway Corridor area, serving on the staff of two former Supervisors, and as National Marketing Director for the County's Economic Development Authority. He and his staff are ardent ECHO supporters, especially helpful in steering our parking lot project through the County's complex, plodding bureaucracy. During his visit, he attentively toured all areas of ECHO operations – Clothing, Housewares, ADMIN, Counselor engagement with clients, and the Food Choice operation. Based on his positive comments throughout, he left impressed with the depth and breadth of ECHO's services and with the dedication of ECHO's all-volunteer force. At his departure, he offered his continued support for ECHO, and repeated that offer to the ECHO President during the District Open House on January 28th. Mr. Lusk also set up a drop box for collecting food for ECHO.



Mike Baier, Rodney Lusk, Bob Vitter, Rick Procek

Teen Volunteer Activities

Metropolitan School of the Arts Community Service Project at ECHO

submitted by Mike Baier, Executive Director

At the recommendation of the Office of the Franconia District Supervisor, Mr. Rodney Lusk, the Metropolitan School of the Arts (<https://metropolitanarts.org/>) in Alexandria spent February 21st at ECHO. The School is a non-profit performing arts organization offering classes, experiences, and performances in dance, music, and theater for students of all ages for extracurricular, pre-professional, and daytime training opportunities. The School's Co-Director, Michelle Collier, led a team of nine students and one other parent chaperone. The day was a mutual education experience for our visitors and our volunteers. We educated these community servants about ECHO. We gave them an extensive orientation and tour about our history, current work, and future direction. The students then broke into smaller teams, joining volunteers in the Clothing area, the Donation Door, Housewares, and the Food Room. They spent the rest of the morning learning how ECHO supports our neighbors in need. They all brought helpful energy, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn. Our volunteers thrived in the engagement with the students from whom they learned as well. We look for to future "performances" at ECHO from the Metropolitan School of Arts.



**Metropolitan School of the Arts
Volunteers**

Teen's Coat Drive Tops Goal

Daniel Belloni's Braddock Winter Coat Drive

November 2022 thru December 17, 2022

submitted by Paula Kvartunas, Clothing Co-Chair

Clothing is thrilled when someone wants to do a Winter Coat Drive! Eagle Scout Candidate Daniel Belloni contacted Paula Kvartunas Clothing Chair about planning/executing a Winter Coat Drive. Daniel decided to do a Coat Drive as a project to support his goal to earn the Eagle Scout ranking. Daniel's goal was 100 winter coats. He collected about 300 winter coats from early November 2022 thru December 17, 2022! The drive was a huge success for Daniel and for us too! Daniel's Winter Coat Drive supported our coat inventory throughout the 2022-2023 Fall/Winter Season.



Daniel Belloni and Mike Baier

Teens are making a difference at ECHO. Find ways of including them in your area.

submitted by Jane Gordon, Teen Volunteer Co-Chair

The ECHO Teen in-person program relaunched this past fall and has been a great success. We meet every Wednesday evening from 7-8:30 pm. The program started with 6 teens each week and has expanded to 8 teens each week. We'd love to grow even more, but to do that we need your help with more tasks! Please consider teens helping out in your area of expertise. Some of you have been very helpful in setting aside activities for the kids to work on. We have completed tasks in sorting through expired food, creating hygiene kits, creating candy and gift bags, sorting and labeling all sizes of underwear, putting toys and games together, neatening up the clothing bins, and more. We hope to be updating flyer information soon and are ready to take on additional tasks. Please contact Jane, Andrea, or Liz at ECHOTeenVolunteers@gmail.com with your ideas and let's see what we can accomplish together. Thank you!



Housewares News

submitted by Kathy Siner, Housewares Co-chair

In an effort to learn more about our clients' needs, an Inventory was conducted over four weeks. The Housewares volunteers worked with the Clothing volunteers to tally the Housewares items that were given to clients at their appointment. This will help us to use our budget to purchase those items that are most requested, if they are not donated. We are hoping to establish about 15 items that we hope to "guarantee" will be in stock.

ECHO strives to help clients stretch their budgets by supplying basic household items that would ordinarily be paid for in a store. Generous donations do not always sufficiently supply the items needed by our clients. To meet these needs ECHO will purchase household goods but there is a way you can help. The ECHO Amazon Wishlist has selections of sheets, towels, comforters, pots, pans and dishes. By ordering any of these items you will be helping to defray the cost to ECHO of making these purchases. By selecting the delivery location ECHO c/o D McElroy the item will come to ECHO.

That's it!

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1NPONMD7U0IS2?ref=wl_sha

Food Room News

Why ECHO Requests Lemon Juice

Submitted by Lucinda Marvin, Food Room Co-Chair

ECHO has changed its model of food distribution. Volunteers no longer pack bags of food for clients from a predetermined list. Clients now choose foods in a mini-mart type setting, getting amounts based on family size. Besides adding dignity to the process, this model cuts waste by giving clients the food they actually serve their families.

Our donors have probably noticed that ECHO's most-needed list now includes foods like lemon or lime juice, masa flour, honey, tortillas, green tea, sardines, and nuts. These are among the items our clients from diverse backgrounds are reaching for with gratitude.

We have found that lemon and lime juice are extremely popular. Limes and lemons are a normal ingredient to give a sour/acid contrast to a large variety of dishes in many countries' cuisines. When shopping to donate to ECHO, please consider including a bottle of lime or lemon juice or even some fresh lemons or limes.



ECHO Prepares for Food Stamp Changes

With the current variant of the COVID pandemic behind us, everyone is adjusting to "new normal." At ECHO, we are anticipating the end of the temporary increases to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, commonly known as Food Stamps. Many of the people ECHO provides with donated clothing and housewares receive SNAP benefits. We know that adjusting to the lowered limits will be difficult for them. Lowered benefits won't lower need. We hope our donor community continues the extraordinary generosity they have shown over the past three challenging years to make sure no one in our community goes hungry.

Please share the Food Room Shopping List on the following page to help meet increased demand.

ECHO PANTRY

THANKS FOR ADDING ECHO TO YOUR GROCERY LIST



March 1, 2023

Thank you for including ECHO Food Room needs on your shopping list.

ECHO continues to see a deficit of several thousand pounds a month between food donated and food given to clients. Since the beginning of the pandemic ECHO has seen an increase in need and this need has not abated. Any donation, large or small, is most gratefully welcomed.

- *Choose sizes appropriate for our average family size of four.*
- *Include an assortment of food to ensure a variety of items for our clients.*
- ***Because of the wonderful generosity of our community, ECHO is blessed to already have a more than ample supply of canned vegetables, stuffing mix, canned soup, and canned beans. However, we are short on many other items such as personal care products and the items listed below.***
- *ECHO cannot give our clients food whose expiration date is long past, open food, or repackaged food (no zip-loc bags).*

FOOD ITEMS

- Lemon or Lime Juice
- Instant Potatoes
- Honey/Jelly
- Instant Coffee
- Juice (Large bottles or box drinks)
- Pancake Mix
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Shelf Stable or Canned Milk
- Hot Chocolate
- Sugar
- Flour
- Masa Flour
- Rice (White, Jasmine, or Basmati)



www.echo-inc.org
for more details

- Bag Beans (Red or Black especially)
- Canned Fruit
- Tin Fish such as sardines
- Canned Meat (Spam is a favorite)
- Spices (Garlic and Onion Powder, Cinnamon, Salt)

NON-FOOD ITEMS

- Laundry Detergent
- Shampoo
- Shaving Cream
- Razors
- Facial Tissues
- Dish Detergent
- Toilet Paper
- Brown Paper Bags

Notes from the Clothing Room

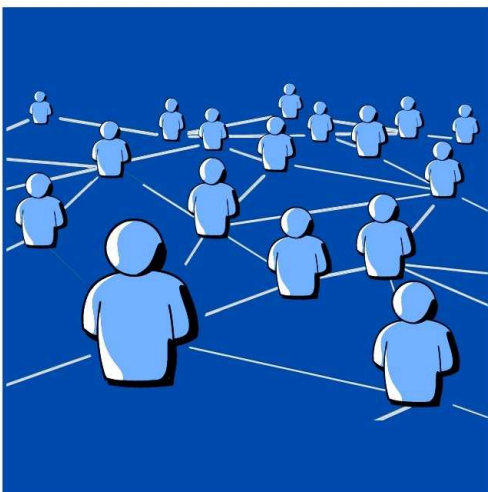
submitted by Paula Kvartunas, Clothing Co-Chair



Emilee Eastman and Paula Kvartunas

Counselor Jodi O'Hern put me in touch with Emilee Eastman from Comfort One Shoes regarding a donation of 60 pairs of women's and men's shoes. (Emilee dates Jodi's son.) Emilee and I connected. Emilee told me she has 60 pairs of gently used shoes that she wants to donate to ECHO. Emilee donated the shoes on Thursday, 3/2/2023. The shoes were in really good condition. We were thrilled to receive the shoe donation.

Making Connections



ECHO volunteers are awesome. Whenever you can represent ECHO to people who are learning about our mission, you are networking for us. ECHO appreciates these connections and congratulates all volunteers for getting the word out.

We are still looking for volunteers to join ECHO's Speaker's Bureau. Training and tools will be provided. All we need is your ability to share ECHO with others. Contact Joyce Giuliani: communications@echo-inc.org.

Check out these Great Deals for Volunteers

ECHO T-Shirts

T-shirts are still available in all sizes and only \$10. Wear yours when you come to volunteer at ECHO or show your colors at the Yard Sale. Even when you're out and about you can let the world know about our work in the community. Stop by the office and get yours soon,



**ECHO T-SHIRTS
FOR SALE** **\$10**

Use them for ECHO Events!!

Use them for Fun!!

SIZES: M, L, XL, XXL

Get YOURS at the Front Office

**ALL Proceeds will go to
ECHO's New Parking Lot**



Turn gift cards to cash for ECHO

Donating Gift Cards to ECHO- Please Consider This

From time to time, ECHO receives generous donations of gift cards however they are difficult for ECHO to use, and retail gift cards are among those. We make food, clothing and household goods available to clients, but we do not give out store gift cards.

Volunteers have been asked to help us turn these cards to cash by buying them from ECHO. If you shop at Giant, Safeway, Food Lion for your groceries or eat at Domino's, Taco Bell or PF Chang, we have cards you could use. We also have a number of cards for baby products.

Your help is greatly appreciated in turning these cards to cash to use in assisting our clients. Stop by the office or contact admin@echo-inc.org for details.

HELP WANTED: SPECIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Contributed by Beth Clark, Volunteer Coordinator



*There are so many ways to help at ECHO.
See if your skills match a need*



Check the ECHO website to see new opportunities as they come available. Go to www.echo-inc.org and click the Volunteer tab and go to Adult Volunteer Positions Needed Right Now, or email Volunteercoordinator@echo-inc.org.

Volunteer Needs – March 2023

Clothing – 1 volunteer Tuesday evenings (at least 2nd & 4th). Assist clients as they “shop” for clothing for their families

Clothing support – 1 volunteer Monday and Friday mornings

Counselors – Assistant Counselor Monday mornings

Donation door – 1 volunteer Tuesday evenings

E-Bay/online sales

Food Room – 1 volunteer Tuesday evenings. Work with clients while they shop for food, stock shelves, sort incoming food. Must be able to lift and carry up to 40 pounds and comfortable on a 5- step industrial ladder. Spanish speaker desirable.

Housewares – 1 volunteer Thursday evenings



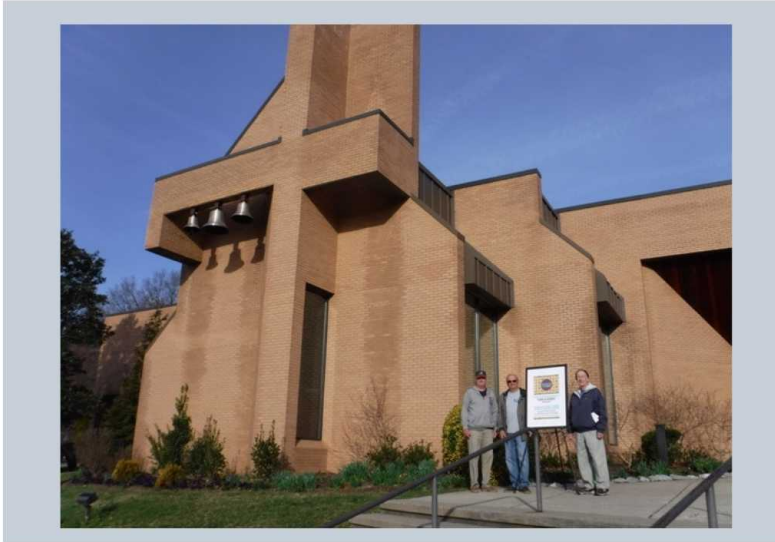
VOLUNTEERS



BOD FAITH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

St. Bernadette's "Can A Week" Food Collection for ECHO

By Jane Curtis, ECHO Outreach Chair



St. Bernadette's parish is the home congregation for many ECHO volunteers, the site of ECHO's semi-annual Yard Sales and, more recently, of an on-going food drive for ECHO's Food Pantry. They call this food drive "Can-A-Week." Its mission is to encourage parishioners to contribute one item a week from ECHO's Food Pantry needs list, or to contribute the time to gather those items for delivery to ECHO.

Parishioners Dr. Dave Campbell and Tom Nally created the ministry in 2015. Members are asked to bring their contributions to the vestibule as they gather for any of the six Saturday or Sunday Masses. Volunteers come a few minutes before Mass or stay a few minutes after to manage and store the donated goods. The stated goal of the program is to donate 1000 cans a week which represents a significant boost to ECHO's food program. It also represents a significant effort to combat hunger in our very own neighborhoods.

Each Monday morning, volunteers sort and bag the donated items and drive them to ECHO. Volunteers have tracked donations since the beginning when annual totals topped 40,000 items per year. Covid closures and, perhaps, the resulting inflation of food prices have had the effect of reducing the number of donations from the early years' totals. Though donations have not recovered to pre-Covid levels, amounts are considerable and extremely meaningful to ECHO's food assistance program, averaging over 350 pounds a week.



"Can-a-Week Team, St. Bernadettes