



ECHO UPDATE

QUARTERLY NEWS TO KNOW FOR VOLUNTEERS

Notes from the Director's Desk

by Mike Baier, Executive Director



Mike Baier with
Clothing
Department Co-
chair Paula
Kwartunas

*In the last two newsletters we took tours of the Counselor and Food sections to review how we were all adjusting to the post-pandemic “new normal” of our current work/life environment to continue to help meet our neighbors’ needs. The goal of the tours is to nurture a collective appreciation for what each section does to meet our mission of helping our neighbors. This tour takes us to the **Clothing Department**.*

IN THIS ISSUE:

- NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK
- NOTES FROM THE CLOTHING ROOM
- ECHO'S COVID POLICY UPDATE
- PARKING LOT PROGRESS
- VOLUNTEER PROFILE: WEDNESDAY MORNING FOOD ROOM VOLUNTEERS
- SPRING YARD SALE - APRIL 6th
- ECHO FOOD PANTRY LIST
- DON'T FORGET YOUR NAME BADGE
- SUGGESTION BOX
- HOUSEWARES UPDATE
- ECHO TEEN VOLUNTEERS PROJECT
- ECHO DONATIONS – HELP SPREAD THE WORD
- HELP WANTED: SPECIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
- FAITH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES: ECHO CONGREGATIONS PROVIDE SHELTER FROM THE COLD

After food, the most immediate client need is for clothing, and meeting that need requires coordinated, complementary actions across the ECHO enterprise. Counselors engage clients to determine eligibility for ECHO support and general areas of need, and they set up clothing appointments as appropriate. We use our Communications and Outreach platforms (social media, newsletters, etc.) to educate donors - current and potential - about the types of clothing that we can and cannot accept. Our Donation Door volunteers continue that education every time a donor arrives at the Door with bags or boxes of clothing. Those donations are passed to the Clothing Department, where the team effort continues.

Clothing Department's Major Responsibilities//Tasks:

Volunteers in the Clothing Department process donations and buy limited in-season clothing and shoes so that clients can choose outfits for themselves and family members. Volunteers may work in the client room or in the support area.



continued....

Notes from the Director's Desk . . . continued

Clothing Support volunteers process incoming donations, stock the client room shopping area and store off-season clothing. These volunteers:

- Evaluate and sort the incoming items for client suitability.
- Check to make sure items are clean, have no rips or tears, have zippers that work and have all their buttons.
- Empty pockets and check for questionable graphics or logos.
- Assure that donated socks and underwear are new.
- Pass to Consignment, Yard Sale or B-thrifty most items that require costly dry cleaning.
- Sort in-season clothing by size and gender and store in designated bins or racks in the Client room.
- Store off-season clothing in boxes in the support area.
- Change out clothing twice a year to reflect the season (spring/summer from mid-March to mid-August, fall/winter from mid-August to mid-March).



Clothing Support volunteers Anne and Joan

Clothing Volunteers help clients find clothing for everyone on their shopping list and coordinate with Housewares volunteers to help clients get the kitchen, bath and bedroom items on the lists provided by the Counselors.

These volunteers:

- Engage with clients during clothing appointments using the list from the counselors that indicates what the client is eligible to receive during that day's appointment.
- Ensure clients find what they need, while following the rules ECHO has established for the numbers and types of clothing items they may receive (e.g. adult clients may receive a winter coat every two years)
- Bag the clothing with the client's name, gather any housewares items on their list and provide a pre-packed enrichment bag for any children in the family, up to the age of 14.
- Assist clients in returning to the Counselor area and getting items to their vehicles in the parking lot.
- Check off items on the shopping list that the clients receive and return the lists to the Counselors so that they may be recorded.



Client Clothing volunteers Lynne and Roz

continued....

Notes from the Director's Desk . . . continued

Major challenges:

- Handling clothing that does not meet ECHO's needs, due to a lack of storage space or because the items are inappropriate for our clients. This clothing is passed to other organizations, such as B-thrifty or Medical Missionaries.
- Acquiring clothing items that we lack or are in short supply. Some high-demand items such as children's shoes, socks, underwear, men's jeans and winter coats are purchased from local vendors (Walmart, Target, Costco, etc.).
- Educating our donors, clothing drive coordinators, and ECHO volunteers about ECHO's clothing needs
- Keeping Clothing volunteers across all shifts up-to-date on ECHO's clothing policies and procedures.

What other volunteers need to know about what each section does to help them in the work in their own sections:

- Clothing and Clothing Support Volunteers work together closely, often helping each other in meeting client needs and processing donations.
- Counselors answer questions from Clothing Volunteers as they work to assure the clients are getting as many of the items on their list as possible.
- Housewares Volunteers help the Clothing Volunteers by pulling items from the Housewares stock to meet the client needs.
- Donor Door Volunteers provide an initial screening of clothing donations to limit the handling of unneeded or inappropriate items.

Mike Baier with Paula Kwartunas and Carole Ochs, Clothing Department Co-Chairs

NOTES FROM THE CLOTHING ROOM

by Paula Kwartunas, Clothing Co-Chair

Clothing Donations Needed Spring/Summer 2024

- Big Boys/Girls Sneakers-sizes 1-6
- Boys/Girls Tops/Bottoms
- Boys New Underwear-Sizes 2T-20
- Men's New Underwear-Size 28/30, 32/34
- Men's Jeans-Sizes 30/30, 30/32, 32/30.32/32
- Men's Short Sleeve Tops-Sizes Small/Medium/Large
- Baby Wipes
- Diapers Sizes 3 thru 5
- Sanitary Pads



Visit the Amazon Wishlist to order needed items directly.

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

Thank you!

ECHO's COVID POLICY UPDATE



The CDC has recently issued an update for a shortened period in their COVID-19 isolation guidance. In light of the risk factor faced by many of ECHO's volunteers, we are requesting that a five-day isolation period from the onset of symptoms be followed. This winter has been a difficult season for COVID as well as flu and other respiratory ailments. Staying updated with vaccinations, testing at the onset of symptoms and staying at home if ill are helpful in containing the spread of sickness among volunteers.

Based on this guidance, ECHO's current COVID Policy is as follows:

- Masks are a personal choice. Those volunteers that are working/interfacing with clients (their choice) may ask the client to wear a mask and the volunteer would obviously wear a mask while working with them. Volunteers and clients may use masks at anytime, anywhere while in ECHO.
- ECHO continues to encourage all volunteers to follow CDC guidance for staying up-to-date on vaccinations. This now means an injection developed to handle the latest COVID variant based on CDC and personal physician guidance. Encouraging/recommending vaccinations is also part of the recruiting interview process for new volunteers.
- Counselors will encourage/recommend to all clients that they follow CDC guidance for staying "up-to-date" on COVID vaccinations. This guidance will be provided as a part of the in-take process, along with information on COVID vaccination availability. ECHO will continue to provide clients with COVID at-home test kits (as available). As with volunteers, Counselors will also advise clients that they may use masks at any time while inside the ECHO building.
- COVID Positive Notification.
 - If a volunteer tests positive for COVID, the volunteer will notify the Shift Lead, Committee Chair.
 - The volunteer will follow ECHO preference for isolation (currently for five days). If asymptomatic, they can then return to ECHO. (Positive Volunteers please follow the CDC website for Care – What to Do if You Are Sick).
 - The Shift Lead/Committee Chair will handle notification to volunteers within the shift who may have had prolonged contact with other volunteers and to the Director.

ECHO PARKING LOT UPDATE

Fom Bob Vitter, ECHO President

First – thank you to all the volunteers that are parking offsite or carpooling to help ease the parking situation during construction. In the worst time of year weather-wise, your choosing to park offsite and walking some distance has allowed ECHO to continue operating and given our volunteers that can't walk that far parking spots in the limited space available.

Just a reminder – we set aside two parking spaces for carpool cars and two for “Mobility Limited” volunteers in addition to the handicapped parking spaces.

We are looking at a target completion date of mid-April but keep in mind, wet weather and county review and approvals can delay work. We will need to close the Volunteer parking lot for one or two days when the crew paves the new lot and makes repairs to the existing lot where the pavement has worn down.

I will keep you informed about plans for when the Volunteer Parking lot will be closed and depending on the timing we may have to close ECHO for a day or two. Stay tuned for updates as we get closer to the completion date and the Ribbon-Cutting.

The 3 tree stumps in the picture (and orange paint on the pavement) mark where the lane from the existing parking lot to the new lot will be constructed.



VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

Wednesday Morning Food Room Volunteers

by Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair



Jeanne Mackin, Tommi Hoffman,
John Heine, Bo Zagurski



Jeanne Mackin, Bob Vitter,
Dan Shearer



Tommi Hoffman, Dan Shearer,
Jeanne Mackin, Evan Roby

John Heine, Bo Zagurski, Jeanne Mackin, Tommi Hoffman, and Bob Vitter are the Wednesday Morning Food Crew. Sometimes, Dan Shearer joins them as a floater. Floaters are volunteers who substitute as needed. As with most ECHO teams of volunteers, they represent a mix of different vocational backgrounds. Bo worked in finance and accounting as a private contractor, as well as in the finance offices of Fairfax County and the school system; though Tommi lived in five different states as a Navy wife, she was with Fairfax County Public Schools for 25 years; Dan retired after 44 years in Information Management and Logistics for the US Army; Jeanne, also from a military family who moved around, worked in health care administration; John retired from the Security and Exchange Commission's Office of Public Affairs. But, as volunteers, they were drawn to work that feeds people in need. John remarked that, "after work in the SEC press room, stacking cans and loading boxes...in the ECHO Food Room looked like just what the doctor would order" for retirement.

Also, as with many other ECHO volunteers, some have connections in other areas of ECHO service as well. Bo, who has been volunteering at ECHO for 13 years, worked on the skeleton staff that kept things going during pandemic closing. John began his ECHO service as a representative of his church to ECHO's Board of Directors and is currently one of the trustees of the organization. Jeanne followed in her son's footsteps: he volunteered in the teen program when he was in high school. She also volunteers in Housewares. Among Bob's many ECHO jobs is being president of the ECHO Board of Directors.

continued...

continued... Wednesday Food Room Volunteers



Food Room Lead John Heine

John and Bo serve as Food Room Leads, so they train new volunteers and make sure that expired or spoiled foods are disposed of properly. They have the responsibility to ensure that the Food Room is kept neat and sufficiently stocked. The new Food Room Choice Program allows clients to choose specified amounts of the foods they prefer rather than receiving foods that were chosen and bagged by the volunteers. Every person on this team said that, while the choice program creates more work for volunteers as they accompany each client through the process, it is satisfying to offer options. They feel that allowing clients to choose from among the foods we have to offer minimizes food waste.



Food Room Lead Bo Zagursky

They all expressed empathy toward those struggling with so basic a need as food for their families. Their happiest moments in the Food Room involve seeing the difference their work makes in people's lives. Tommi, who worked with a Ukrainian refugee who had been in the US for only a week was gratified to receive the hugs and thanks from her for ECHO's help. John shared a story about a man who came to the Food Room's exterior door with a big box of food. Instead of sending him to the Donation Door, John talked to him as he brought in several more boxes of food. The man told John that his extended family "had scraped by through some hard times with the help of ECHO. Now that they had all settled into stable situations," they wanted to pay back.



Jeanne Mackin



Tommi Hoffman



Dan Shearer

SPRING YARD SALE - APRIL 6th



The ECHO Spring Yard Sale will be at St. Bernadette's School gym on April 6, from 8am to 12pm, with the setup on Friday, April 5.

This is only possible with the help of MANY, MANY VOLUNTEERS! We encourage volunteers to sign up to help either Friday or Saturday or both. The sign-up sheet will be located on the desk just inside the admin area.

To sign up you may send an email to admin@echo-inc.org, call admin (703-569-7972), or sign up in person at ECHO.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP:

Friday, April 5th:

- Table Set Up
- Table Decorators
- Vehicle Unloaders
- Unpackers
- Box collectors
- Paper/bubble wrap collectors
- Paper Flatteners

Saturday during the sale:

- 6-7 Cashiers plus wrappers for first shift 7:45am-10:00am
- 4-5 cashiers plus wrappers second shift 10am - 12pm
- 1-2 people to monitor the door for two shifts 7:45am-10:00am & 10am- 12pm
- 1 person to be at the head of the checkout line two shifts 7:45am-10:00am & 10am - 12pm
- 5+ Floaters/general help two shifts 7:45am-10:00am & 10am - 12pm

Saturday cleanup at St. B's - no earlier than 11:30 am

- Packers - wrap leftover items and move to designated holding area for loading
- Loaders (As many as possible)- help load vehicles
- Table movers (start ~11:45 if tables are emptied as inventory is consolidated)
- Sweepers/trash haulers

Saturday ECHO "Recombobulation" - at ECHO 12:15 pm

- Help out at ECHO after all display items and boxes are returned to ECHO

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

ECHO PANTRY

THANKS FOR ADDING ECHO TO YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Spring 2024

- 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 generosity of our community, ECHO has an ample supply of canned vegetables (especially green beans), can pumpkin, applesauce, and stuffing. However, we are short on many other items such as personal care products and the items listed below.

ECHO's policy is to not give expired, open or repackaged food to clients. Please do not bring these items to ECHO.

• 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.

Food List:

- Bag Beans (black, red or garbanzo preferred)
- Lentils
- Protein Items (e.g. can chicken, Spam, sardines, chili, Tin Fish (tuna, sardines, salmon etc.)
- Spaghetti (pasta)
- Spaghetti Sauce
- INSTANT Coffee (many clients do not have coffee makers)
- Can Tomatoes
- Baked Beans
- Can Fruit
- Bag Rice (Clients prefer white, jasmine or basmati)
- Instant (Box) Potatoes
- Crackers
- Pancake Mix
- Pancake Syrup
- Ramen
- Hot Chocolate, can milk, shelf stable milk
- Box pasta
- Juice (Bottles or box)
- Tea (green, herbal or black)
- Healthy Snacks

- Spices (garlic, onion, cinnamon, salt, pepper
- Masa (Corn) Flour
- Box cereal
- Lemon or Lime Juice
- Jelly and Honey
- Tortillas
- Cooking Oil
- Brown Paper Bags
- Reusable Grocery Bags

Hygiene Products:

- Children's Toothbrushes
- Laundry Detergent
- Toilet Paper
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Facial Tissues
- Dish Soap
- Paper Towels
- Body/Hand Lotion
- Band Aids
- Shaving Cream/Razors



www.echo-inc.org
for more details

DON'T FORGET YOUR NAME BADGE

by Joyce Giuliani, Dir of Communications and Outreach

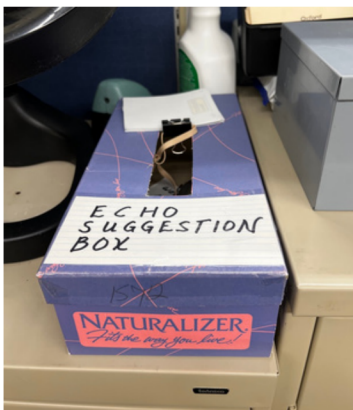
ECHO Volunteers are definitely ready to get down to business with tasks at hand once they come through the door. One task that many of us (myself included) may be forgetting is to put on our name badges. For convenience, these are located in work areas that volunteers report to. It is understood that some jobs at ECHO need to be done without ID, however choosing to wear your badge is helpful.

Why bother if you already know the team you're working with? Here are a few good reasons:

1. It gives all volunteers a chance to put names to the faces they see around ECHO.
2. It allows us to address one another with a more personal use of a name.
3. It gives new volunteers a way to feel welcome as they learn about ECHO.
4. It provides a measure of security to know that a person is a part of the ECHO team.
5. It lets visitors to the building recognize that it takes a team of volunteers to keep things moving at ECHO.

Need a name badge? You can put in a request for a badge in the Admin office on the clipboard on the cabinet next to the printer. We even have a volunteer position for badge making! Thank you Gerda Kilday.

ECHO SUGGESTION BOX



Make your volunteer voice heard. A suggestion box located on the cabinet next to the printer in the Admin area is waiting for your thoughts and ideas about the work we're doing at ECHO. Think outside the box then write your idea and put it in the box. No name is required as you share your suggestion.



Caught wearing a name badge!
Good work Sam A.

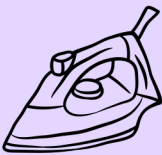
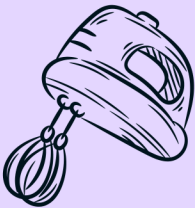
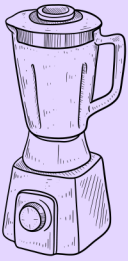


Badges can be found in work spaces.

HOUSEWARES UPDATE

by Barbara Ryan, Housewares Co-Chair

We recently added Mia Russell to the Housewares team. She will be working Thursday evenings and Saturdays. Welcome Mia, we are glad you are on our team!



We are grateful for the Wednesday night teen program! For multiple weeks, the teens diligently put hundreds of silverware sets together from items donated from Clyde's of Chevy Chase. It is great to have a stockpile of prepared items that we can draw from when our mornings are hectic. Thanks so much for the teen support!

Items which we are in need of include: hand mixers, blenders, irons, instapots and rice cookers. We are always looking for comforters, hand towels, wash cloths, and bath towels in good condition.

ECHO TEEN VOLUNTEERS By Teens for Teens Project

ECHO's Teen volunteer program is alive and well. A fifth adult volunteer has joined the team to work Wednesday evenings with teens.

A new project for teens is in the works. When other essential tasks are completed, teens will be working on no-sew blankets that will be offered to clients' teens especially from ECHO's teens. Because they are making the blankets for teenagers, this is a tangible connection between the teen volunteers and teens in the community served by ECHO. The first blanket has been completed and the teens liked making the blanket. It is thought that one blanket a month would be completed.

Donations are welcome for this project. No-pill fleece is available at Joann's Fabrics. The blankets need 4 yards total, 2 yards in a solid, and 2 yards in a pattern. For more information contact Andrea Hellier andrea.hellier@verizon.net.



ECHO DONATIONS – Help Spread the Word

ECHO relies primarily on donations of items from our neighbors and volunteers to support our mission. The help of ECHO volunteers is also needed to get the word out about donations to ECHO – what we accept and what we cannot use. Here are a few things to have folks keep in mind when considering donating items to ECHO.



Q: Will ECHO take donations of anything I don't need?

A: Please donate only those items we can pass on to our clients, who are our neighbors. Please do not bring items that are dirty, torn, worn, incomplete, need repair, or out of date. ECHO is proud to be able to offer quality second-hand items for our neighbors to use. There is a listing of items that ECHO currently can and cannot accept on the ECHO website ([What ECHO Can and Cannot Accept](#)). Please review this list BEFORE bringing items to ECHO as this list changes from time to time and ECHO may no longer accept an item as we had in the past. In some cases, we may not be able to accept some of the larger items due to space limitations.

Q: What about things that would be great for a Yard Sale?

A: Our first priority is to find a way to provide donated items to our clients. ECHO does conduct Yard Sales to sell those items that we receive that are not useful to clients. These events help us raise funds to assist with financial aid and we are all grateful for the revenue generated. The same message about quality of donations as mentioned above would matter here as well.

Q: I've heard that if ECHO can't use my donations, they will pass things along to other organizations.

A: ECHO also has partners like B-Thrifty that are willing to take some of our overflow donations, but it is not ECHO's primary mission to be a pass through to these organizations. We also should not be sending broken items, ripped clothing, etc, to B-Thrifty, who wouldn't want them either. Someone must take Medical Missionaries items to Manassas, non-children's books must be taken to Manassas, and on Tuesday & Thursday mornings our Donation Door team loads all those bags/boxes/odd items on the B-Thrifty truck. Fortunately, we have dedicated volunteers that take on these responsibilities. We do get some items that nobody wants and then we have to trash them, but we need to minimize that happening. One of our larger monthly operational expenses is trash!

Final Word:

Please review the acceptable item list before bringing any items to ECHO. And if a volunteer is dropping off a box from a "neighbor", make sure the donations fit ECHO's needs.

Thanks to all of our volunteers for helping to fine-tune the donation process.

HELP WANTED: SPECIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Submitted 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@echoinc.org.

- **Clothing**
1 volunteer Tuesday mornings, 1 volunteer Thursday mornings
1 volunteer Thursday evenings
- **Clothing Support**
1 volunteer Monday mornings, 1 volunteer Wednesday mornings
- **Counselors**
1 counselor Friday mornings, 1 counselor Tuesday evenings
1 Assistant Counselor Tuesday evenings and Thursday evenings
- **Client Engagement Chair**
Weekday and Saturday mornings, weekday evenings
- **Counselor ADMIN Support**
Weekdays and Saturday mornings, weekday evenings
- **Grant Writers**
2-3 volunteers; hours are flexible
- **Housewares**
1 volunteer Monday mornings, 1 volunteer Thursday evenings
1 volunteer Saturday mornings
- **Donation Door**
1 volunteer Thursday evenings

NEW

Client Engagement Chair, Counselor Admin Support
See the next page for more details

NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

These are two great opportunities to be part of ECHO's Client Engagement Team.

Contact Mike Baier (ExecutiveDirector@echo-inc.org) to learn more.

Client Engagement Chair

ECHO is seeking a volunteer to assume a new position, Client Engagement Chair. The Client Engagement Chair leads the Counselor team that is responsible for helping ECHO meet the first step of assisting neighbors in need - determining individual eligibility for ECHO support and the nature of that support.

To ensure ECHO is effectively determining eligibility and the nature of support for neighbors in need, the Client Engagement Chair has the following responsibilities:

- Recruit and train new counselors.
- Update current Counselors and Assistant Counselors on changes in guidance and ECHO procedures.
- Coordinate with other ECHO teams that provide assistance to clients – Food, Clothing, Housewares, etc. – to ensure sufficient stocks of in-kind donations to meet client needs/demand.
- Coordinate with other ECHO teams – IT, ADMIN – to ensure the efficiency of Counselor processes/procedures for determining client eligibility and need.
- Ensure that assistance is provided to clients in accordance with ECHO Mission, Vision and Values statements.

The Chair of the Counselor Team should have at least five years experience in a similar environment, preferably as a Counselor, Case Worker or comparable role, strong leadership skills, and an appreciation of the dynamics of an all-volunteer organization.

...continued

NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

...continued



NEW

Counselor Admin Support

ECHO is seeking a number of volunteers to assume new positions for Counselor Admin Support. The Counselor Admin volunteers support Counselors and Assistant Counselors in meeting their mission to engage clients to determine individual eligibility for ECHO support and the nature of that support. To effectively help Counselors and Assistant Counselors engage with clients, Counselor Admin volunteers have the responsibilities to:

- Work with Counselors and Assistant Counselors to maintain paper and automated records related to engaging clients to determine individual eligibility and need.
- Update information on programs for clients and keep current the program information in Client Waiting Room.
- Maintain ECHO information in the County's Human Services Resource Guide (HSRG) and work with Counselors to extract information relevant to our clients for services/support that exceeds ECHO's capacity/capability.
- Assist Counselors with locating and filing Client folders.
- Help maintain the accuracy of automated Client information.
- Help with the diaper distribution program: prepare diaper bundles for clients with appointments and give diapers to clients when they come to ECHO.
- Experience and comfort using and helping troubleshoot IT applications very helpful. Volunteers will work one or more shifts/week.





FAITH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

ECHO Congregations Provide Shelter from the Cold

by Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair

Freezing temperatures in winter are unpleasant for most of us but could be deadly for those who do not have housing. Fairfax County's Health and Human Services System has a Hypothermia Program to prevent unnecessary risk to people who don't have adequate, warm shelter. In addition to using existing overnight shelters, the county contracts with the non-profit organization FACETS which works with local religious congregations for use of their buildings to expand shelter capacity in winter.



On a rotating basis, these congregations provide a week of space for overnight lodging as well as food for the people who need shelter. Many ECHO member congregations participate, often partnering with one another to fulfill the challenging requirements.

Jewell Gould of St. Andrew's Episcopal, said that after trying to participate in 2005-06 and finding the challenges overwhelming, their congregation regrouped, made a comprehensive plan, and has now served continuously since January 2011. They offer sleeping spaces, meals, and transportation. Congregations provide volunteers to supplement paid FACETS staff to host and make the week run smoothly. Many of the hosts take time to sit and listen to the stories of their guests. Steve Koss who organizes Hypothermia for St. Andrew's says they have had assistance from Metropolitan Community Church and The Peace Islamic Center. ECHO members Adat Reyim and both the Rolling Valley Ward and the Burke Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints have assisted St. Andrew's by providing volunteers, meals and drivers for the transport vans.

Shawn Cooper of the Burke Ward of LDS notes that the participating congregations collect snacks, socks, and clothing for the overnight guests. They pack bag lunches for them to take as they leave. Shawn also pointed out that, when LDS volunteers noticed the uncertain condition of FACETS's old vans, they worked with the Annandale Stake of LDS to purchase and donate a new van.

continued . . .

continued...ECHO Congregations Provide Shelter from the Cold

ECHO member congregations Grace Presbyterian, First Baptist of Springfield, and Springfield United Methodist (SUMC) assisted their neighbor, St. Christopher's Episcopal, by providing help with staffing and meals for the 40 guests per night expected during their week. The Fairfax County Fire Marshall determines the number of persons each congregation may host. Jesse Lee, a member of SUMC who helped organize SUMC's first winter of participation this year, says that their membership contributed about 60 hours of volunteer service and will assist St. Christopher's again on their next week of hosting.

Marcy Stennes, chair of the Burke Presbyterian Church (BPC) Hypothermia program, said that Burke United Methodist, another ECHO congregation, provided food and hospitality staff for BPC's first year of hosting after renovation of their building. St. Mary of Sorrows Catholic and Living Savior Lutheran also contributed to the effort. BPC hosted about 40 to 50 guests a night during their week of service.

Sandy Milam of Westwood Baptist said that ECHO congregations, Adat Reyim and Grace Presbyterian assisted Westwood's program, along with Parkwood Baptist and Iglesia Bautista Remanente de Dios, by providing meals. Meals are a large component of the commitment since dinners and breakfasts each day for a week are required for 50 or more people. Sandy says that Westwood had a total of 110 volunteers from their church and partnering congregations.

ECHO members Prince of Peace Lutheran and St. Mark's Lutheran also opened their buildings to provide for those who needed to come in from the cold. St. Mark's was assisted by ECHO members St. John's United Methodist and St. Bernadette's Catholic. Volunteers tackle such jobs as setting up the spaces where guests will sleep, serving beverages and meals, making the guests feel welcome and secure, cleaning the sleeping mats that are provided by FACETS, handing out clean blankets, plus cleaning and returning the space to its original function when the week is over.

Hypothermia season is from December 1 to March 31. Some congregations participate more than once per season. Deacon Elvira Beracochea of St. Christopher's Episcopal said that, when FACETS didn't have a congregation to cover the final week of this season, St. Christopher's volunteered for a second week of hosting. While the warm space, the food and the clothing are possibly lifesaving, Deacon Beracochea says that the best part of this wonderful program might be the fellowship among the mix of volunteers from different faith backgrounds, the guests who have varied reasons to find themselves in need of shelter, and the FACETS staff who encounter so many life stories.

