



ECHO UPDATE

QUARTERLY NEWS TO KNOW FOR VOLUNTEERS



Mike Baker and Mimi Barrenkott

Notes from the Director's Desk

by Mike Baier, Executive Director

As always, the approaching holiday season gives us the opportunity to collectively reflect on our ECHO mission and how we help our neighbors in need. Our neighbors in need are blessed to have as their neighbors some who help them by volunteering their time and talents at ECHO. In the same vein, we volunteers are fortunate to be able to serve our community. Part of that service involves taking a look at what we do and how we do it. That examination prompted consideration of our ECHO organization.



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Since our September Newsletter, we have continued to reach different audiences with the Reorganization Project 2024 – especially volunteers who might wish to comment on the effort. We've also presented the Reorganization Project to ECHO's Board of Directors (BOD). While continuing to refine the position descriptions, we are drafting changes to the ECHO Bylaws. Any changes require BOD approval. To that end, ECHO's President, Bob Vitter, has formed a Bylaw Review Committee which includes BOD representatives. Goal is to present draft Bylaws' changes for a vote at the February 2025 BOD Meeting.

The Reorganization will prompt changes to Article IV of the Bylaws for the following positions on the Executive Committee:

- a. The **Director of Client Engagement** is responsible for engaging neighbors in need (potential clients) to determine eligibility, and for ensuring clients receive the needed assistance in a timely manner, and with an abundance of compassion and dignity.
- b. The **Director of Communications and Outreach** is responsible for keeping partners in the community of which ECHO is a part (member faith communities, Springfield and Burke populations, Fairfax County government, and other agencies) well informed about ECHO's mission, operations, and needs for volunteer talent and donations.

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Notes from the Director's Desk . . . continued

c. The **Director of Support Operations** is responsible for the day-to-day management of ECHO's infrastructure support functions which ECHO needs to accomplish its mission.

d. The **Director of the Volunteer Program** is responsible for ensuring that ECHO maintains a cadre of volunteer talent sufficient to accomplish the ECHO mission.

e. The **Director of Donation Management** is responsible for ensuring that ECHO maintains sufficient stocks of in-kind donations of food, clothing, and housewares, as well as monetary donations, to meet client needs.

The **Client Engagement Director** is already posted among our volunteer needs. Those for the other new Director positions will follow shortly. Especially critical will be that for the **Director of the Volunteer Program** who would focus on recruiting potential volunteers to pass along to our Volunteer Coordinator, the ECHO "hiring manager" for screening and help in integrating those new volunteers into ECHO.

The Reorganization also will prompt the following change to Article III of the Bylaws to add the following section:

Section 7. The Planning/Development Vice President is responsible for helping ECHO meet its mission to help neighbors in need by anticipating change driven by new requirements and opportunities, and adapting operations and the ECHO volunteer talent base to meet those new requirements efficiently and effectively.

Not requiring Bylaws change will be volunteer positions to expand our cadre providing IT support. An expanded IT Team would help implement and maintain efficient and effective operations through new application rollouts and more on-site IT support for each shift.

As mentioned in September, these are the first steps in a very long journey. I look forward to any thoughts, comments on the draft position descriptions, organization chart, and the rationale for same.

Mike Baier, Executive Director (executivedirector@echo-inc.org)



VOLUNTEER PROFILE: ECHO and George Mason University Programs for Community Engagement

Mike Baier, Executive Director



Mike Baier with GMU Bonner Student Declan Rees...



...and GMU Bonner Student Kaitlyn Sorto

ECHO is now a Community Partner in George Mason University's programs for Community Engagement and Civic Learning (CECiL), which encourage student involvement in community service. The University's Bonner Leadership Program is a service-based work-study program that emphasizes exploring the ideas of citizenship and democracy, the different modes of civic engagement, and applying these ideals across a changing social and political landscape through both local and global community service sites. This program is designed to challenge and support students throughout their four years through an experiential learning model.

Since mid-October we have benefited from the talents and energies of two Bonner Leaders - Kaitlyn Sorto, a pre-med major, and Declan Rees, majoring in Policy, Philosophy and Economics. Both Leaders will serve 8-10 hours a week at ECHO each year as they continue to gain hands-on knowledge, skills, and abilities. Declan and Kaitlyn spent their first weeks in the Food Room and at the Donation Door. They are now helping us develop the new position of Counselor ADMIN. These freshmen university students will be with ECHO for their four undergraduate years during which we will grow our partnership together as we take advantage of their talents, and deepen their experience with community engagement.

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ECHO and George Mason University Programs for Community Engagement ...continued

At this early stage in ECHO as our scholars' experiential learning model, Declan explains, "With the weeks I have spent working alongside many of the volunteers at ECHO, I have had the great opportunity to analyze and understand the structure and objectives that make up the organization. I look forward to the coming semester where I can focus my energy towards working at connecting with other community organizations who can fulfill the needs of our clients where we fall short."

As she looks four years down the road, Kaitlyn observes: "I aim to gain a broader understanding of the work and impact volunteer organizations have on their respective communities by learning and serving alongside my fellow ECHO volunteers. I am so incredibly grateful for the opportunity to learn and can't wait to see how my time at ECHO will shape my future career and expand ECHO's impact."



Resolve to become an ECHO Ambassador

Representing ECHO is an honor and is rewarding. Combine people who want to know more about ECHO and your personal connection with our Mission and you are already an Ambassador for ECHO. We are always looking for volunteers who are willing to represent ECHO at a variety of events in the community. If your New Year's Resolutions include looking for more ways to help at ECHO, become an Ambassador. For more information contact Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair or Joyce Giuliani, communications@echo-inc.org.



GMU Community Service Fair



Venture into Volunteering,
Springfield Town Center



Springfield Bridge Walk,
American Legion

Donation Door - Happy Snap

Happy Holidays
Door volunteers Bob
Fugate (left) and Vern
Hoffman .



Holiday Shop Magic

Eileen Short, Holiday Shop Co-chair

We would like to thank all volunteers involved in our Holiday Shop. Once again, the shop was a tremendous success thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who took part in this season of giving. So much goes into the Holiday Shop including the receiving of the toys, the transformation of the room, the Elves helping the clients shop and the cleanup. Without the support of so many volunteers, the Holiday shop would not be possible. We provided toys, books, games, stuffed animals, pillowcases and candy to approximately 500 children this year. There were a lot of happy children during this festive season due to ECHO and its many volunteers.



We would also like to thank all of the other areas in ECHO that graciously gave up space temporarily so the Holiday Shop could have the room to decorate and greet clients. We are so appreciative. We wish you all a very joyful holiday.

Happy Holidays,

Eileen & Linda
 ECHO Holiday Shop



ECHO Storytelling Project

Calling ALL Volunteers


Kathy Fleming, Storytelling Project Co-Chair

The importance of ECHO's work in the community cannot be fully conveyed by reporting the number of pounds of food distributed, backpacks provided or even families served each year. Rather, each person who comes through the door brings a unique background and need, some heartbreaking, some heartwarming. The backstories can lead to fascinating tales. Storytellers need your help to capture these anecdotes. Your observations will help us share the impact of dedicated volunteers and the generosity of this organization.

Volunteers who interact with clients are encouraged to look for cases that might be interesting to others and ask if we may follow up with them. Please use the referral forms that will be available throughout the building and return them to a clearly marked folder in the Administrative Office. Together we may occasionally discover clients who have received assistance from ECHO and experienced nothing less than changed lives.

Look for the launch of this project in the new year. For more information about the Storytelling Project we are creating, please feel free to contact me, Kathy Fleming, at derylandkathy@gmail.com.





Unique! Interesting! Inspiring!
Stories about ECHO Clients
YOUR SUGGESTIONS ARE KEY!

Client's Name _____	Date of Visit _____
Client Number _____	Counselor _____
Client's phone _____	Client's Email _____
Name, phone and email of another person if available to help communicate: _____	
Additional Information:	

Working with clients brings volunteers close to the heart of ECHO. We hope to share some of your observations with those who want to learn more about our impact. Please note people or experiences you feel illustrate ECHO's mission and ask if we may call to talk about what ECHO means to them. We will not contact clients without a counselor's approval. If time permits, please check in with the counselor team lead or co-chair before dropping off or mailing this form to ADMIN, ECHO, 7205 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22150

YARD SALE WRAP-UP

Kathy Freund, Yard Sale Co-Chair



We would like to thank all the MANY volunteers who helped us with the Fall Yard Sale. It was our most successful one since before the pandemic. We raised \$20,150.25! We could not have done it without each and every one of you.



Please mark your calendars for our spring sale on **April 25th and 26th**. It should be smoother sailing as we are certain St. Bernadette's School is closed for their Easter break.



If anyone would like a side job at ECHO, we are looking for people to help in the following categories: Tupperware, Electronics and CDs and DVDs. It would involve collecting them as they are donated, sorting through them, pricing them and then boxing them up to store for the next sale. If you are interested, please let us know.



Thank you all again!

The Yard Sale Team
Cele, Susan, Mary and Kathy



ECHO BY THE NUMBERS

Your volunteer hours throughout the year helped ECHO serve the community with . . .

Food: 268,612 lbs, 1,710 visits,
\$46,880 in Food Coupons (we stopped giving out coupons in September)

Clothing: 3,698 bags, 900 families

Rental Assistance: \$214,986, 279 families

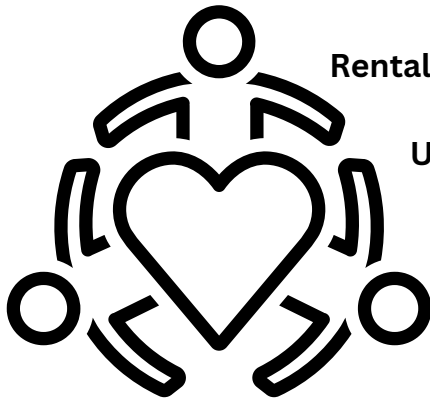
Utilities: \$116,225, 247 families

Transportation: \$3,416

Backpacks: 1,242

Coats/Jackets: 1,221

Boxes of Diapers : 644



NOTES FROM THE FOOD ROOM

Fall Food Drives

Lucinda Marvin, Food Room Co-Chair

A note of thanks to all of the folks in the ECHO building for their patience and understanding in October and November when two large drives occurred and food needed to be stored in other areas of the building. In October the food room received over 11,000 pounds of food from the Church of Latter Day Saints. The November Scouting for Food Drive netted over 17,000 pounds.

ECHO has a new partner, Trader Joe's in West Springfield, who is providing our clients with many tasty treats every Wednesday



**HELP
FILL THE
SHELVES**



We espccially need:
Pancake mix and syrup , can fruit, cereal, can meat
See the complete list at www.echo-inc.org - all donations
from the list are welcome.

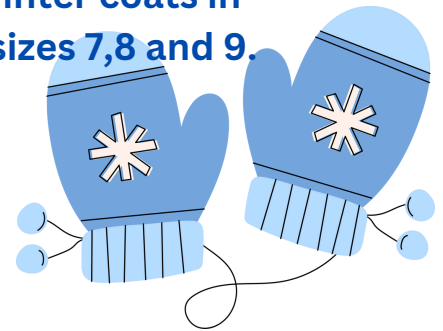
NOTES FROM THE CLOTHING ROOM

by Paula Kvartunas, Clothing Co-Chair

Clothing Donations Needed Winter 2024



Brrrr! ECHO's Clothing Department needs cold weather clothing: boys' winter gloves, girls' and boys' winter coats sizes 14/16 and 18/20, new athletic socks for boys or girls in sizes L or XL, men's winter coats in sizes S, M and L, and men's sneakers in sizes 7,8 and 9.



NOTES FROM HOUSEWARES

By Barbara Ryan, Housewares Co-Chair

A big welcome to the following **new** volunteers as they join ECHO and the Housewares team!

Tim Lank - Saturdays

Stephanie Fontanilla - Saturdays

Sara Senior - Saturdays

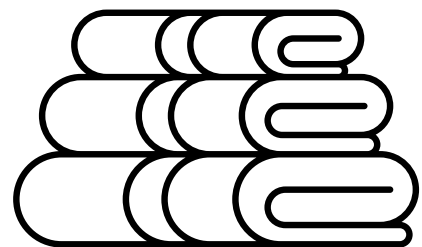
Barb Sherwood - Thursday mornings

Cindy Bevilacqua - Thursday mornings

Sue Crawford - Wednesday mornings

Eileen Dunphy - returning to Thursday nights

We have a current need for **sheet sets in queen and twin sizes as well as comforters in any size**. We are also low on **towel sets** which includes a **bath towel, hand towel and wash cloth**.



**Houswares has updated the
Amazon Wish List**

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

Volunteers Make It Work

ECHO Volunteers - You made these things and much more possible! Organizing, participating, sharing, doing for ECHO.

Thank you!!!

Volunteer Picnic

Our 3rd Annual gathering at Accotink Lake celebrated ECHO's fabulous volunteers.



Crop Walk 2024

Many people stopped by to drop off food and write a "message of love" note on a can or box.



Holiday Gift Store

Many hands of the ECHO volunteer Elves made ECHO into a joyful holiday shop for clients



Holiday Meals

189 families received Thanksgiving meals and upwards to 200 are expected for Christmas meals



Food Drive Sorting

Two large fall food drives netted 28,000 pounds for ECHO's Food Pantry which were sorted and stocked by volunteers.



Yard Sale

"We raised \$20,150.25! We could not have done it without each and every one of you."



WHAT'S COMING UP: BENEFITTING ECHO

DECEMBER

#GIVING TUESDAY



This year ECHO is participating in the nationwide #Giving Tuesday fund raising event for non-profit organizations. Although officially designated for December 3rd, ECHO's outreach will continue on Facebook through December 23rd. Our goal is to raise \$2,000 to assist with filling client needs.

Please visit ECHO's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/EcumenicalCommunityHelpingOthers/> and view, donate and **SHARE** the post to help us spread the word. Thank you for helping

Karen Ashbrook: Celtic Benefit Concert

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
6509 Sydenstricker Rd, Burke, VA 22015
December 22nd @ 4:00 p.m.

Join us for our annual seasonal celebration and benefit concert with Karen Ashbrook and multi-instrumentalist Paul Oorts. These internationally known performers have crafted a delightful program of Celtic songs and tunes to celebrate Christmas, winter, and the New Year. The program has a wide selection of traditional and contemporary airs, jigs, and reels from Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, and Brittany. All donations from this concert will be given to local charities FACETS and ECHO.



JANUARY



Giant
Community Bag Program

ECHO, Inc. has been selected again as a nonprofit partner in the Giant Food Community Bag Program. This time, ECHO will receive \$1 for each \$2.75 reusable Community Bag sold during the month of January 2025 at:
Kings Park Giant
8970 Burke Lake Road, Springfield VA

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@echo-inc.org.

Volunteer Needs – December 2024

Clothing – 1 volunteer Tuesday evenings, 1 volunteer Thursday evenings

Counselors – 1 counselor Tuesday evenings

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. – 1 volunteer

Counselor Admin Support 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. 2 volunteers needed – Tuesday and Thursday evenings

Grant Writing Team ECHO is searching for Grant Writers to support our efforts in securing funding to help our neighbors in need. A Grant Writer's responsibilities include researching grant opportunities, writing compelling grant proposals to acquire funding, and working with the finance team to identify ECHO programs that could benefit from grant funding. 2 volunteers needed

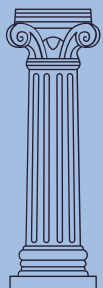
Housewares – 2 volunteers Tuesday and Thursday evenings

Teen Program –1 to 2 volunteers to cover one or two Wednesdays each month

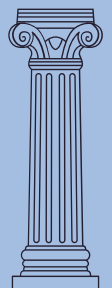


Donation Roundup

A shout-out to generous business and foundation donors to ECHO



Bob's Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation, Inc.	\$1,000
Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America	\$1,000
Malek's Pizza Palace	\$1,121
Simple Generosity - Target	\$4,844
Trideum Foundation	\$5,000





FAITH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Springfield

Living Nativity

by Jane Curtis, Outreach Chair

A Camel in Springfield?

Since 2017, St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Springfield has celebrated the Christmas season with a lively Living Nativity event in early December. The congregation welcomes the community to enjoy songs, refreshments, and an enactment of the first Christmas in Bethlehem. As a part of this joyful celebration, members and friends of their parish take on the roles of the Holy Family, shepherds, and other figures from scripture. Joining the human actors are live animals, including a camel.

John Quinn, St. Christopher's representative to the ECHO Board of Directors, says the Living Nativity is "almost an 'all hands' event" for the church since it requires many people to do the planning, set up, clean up, and act as general helpers for visitors. There are musicians, readers, actors in costume, as well as cooks and servers for the hearty foods and warm drinks like chili and hot chocolate that are served during the mid-day event. And, of course, there is the animal menagerie that normally includes a goat, a donkey and sheep in addition to the very popular camel, Delilah.

The Living Nativity is St. Christopher's Christmas gift to the community. People of all faiths and backgrounds are welcome to attend. No admission fees are charged, and no tickets are required. John estimates that about 300 people normally attend on a drop-in basis. Visitors may meet and touch the animals. Delilah the camel is very gentle and has been trained to give kisses on the cheek and pose patiently with all those who'd like to have a photo with her.



continued . . .

continued...St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Springfield, Living Nativity

The animals are provided by the Bar C Ranch in Berryville, VA, a facility licensed to manage exotic animals. One year, Bar C also brought a baby kangaroo, a creature whose presence in Bethlehem was not recorded in scripture, but whose presence in Springfield brought great delight.

While there is no charge for attending, visitors may bring gifts of toys that are shared with ECHO and with the Fairfax County Resource Center on Commerce Street.

When asked why St. Christopher's undertakes this challenging effort each year, their rector, The Rev. Carey Connors, wrote this, "The story of Jesus' birth has been told for two thousand years. It is a story that shapes us as a people - that God sent Jesus to be born among us, without power or influence, surrounded by love to share God's love. We hope that everyone who comes gets a sense of the beauty of God's creation and the wonder of the gift that is Jesus, God with Us."



**Correction from September issue of ECHO Update, *Faith Community Activities*:
First Baptist Church of Springfield Senior Pastor is Jason Mitchell.**