



Empowering Individuals for Life

From the CEO

We've made good progress at ECHO over the summer with several new participants joining our programs, the arrival of new vehicles for our fleet, the launch of LIFE's morning "Breakfast Bar", some solid discussions with potential new worksites in the community, continued enhancements to the ECHO building, and the kick-off of our FY25 audit.

Many ECHO participants utilize Medicaid waivers and there is some anxiety about potential funding cuts as the federal government wrestles with getting the budget under control. We've been keeping our eyes and ears open over the past few months, and we are part of a network of private providers that stays close to legislative activity in both Washington and Richmond. Regarding HR1:

- 1) There does not seem to be any negative impact on services for developmentally disabled adults.
- 2) The primary focus is on the expansion population:
 - a. increased validation of their residency and eligibility.
 - b. decreased federal payments to states for emergency medical care
 - c. rules pertaining to work requirements.
 - d. cost sharing requirements to be implemented.
- 3) There is a delay in the implementation of the nursing home final rule until October 1, 2034.
- 4) Most of the provisions, such as creating a new option for a 1915c waiver, will require further guidance from CMS which will be forthcoming in the future.

We will continue to monitor and stay close to our network as more information is revealed. In the meantime, this does not seem to be a cause for concern for ECHO at this time.

Thank you for your support of ECHO.

Sincerely,

Paul Donohue, Jr.
CEO, ECHO

Introducing “Rick’s Rundown”

Rick’s Rundown



August Edition

We’re excited to officially launch Rick’s Rundown—a new participant-led interview series shining a light on the people and departments that make ECHO thrive. Hosted by Rick, one of our talented LIFE participants with a passion for journalism and storytelling, this series offers a behind-the-scenes look at daily life at ECHO through his unique perspective. Keep reading for Rick’s very first edition, where he shares his candid thoughts and kicks off this exciting new journey!

I started in the ECHO’s LIFE program under protest in April of this year. The reason I say “under protest” is because I had a comfortable routine at home that included streaming on Twitch several nights a week, working as a service missionary for my church, and doing research in my spare time. However, my family thought that I needed to, in their words, “do something a little better” with my time. Three months later, I have to say that I rather like being in the LIFE program.

While not every group activity fits my interests, I’ve found many activities engaging. Some of the program curriculum is designed to support participants who are working on foundational life skills, and I respect how ECHO meets everyone where they are. Activities like painting, karaoke, dancing, instruments, and cooking groups have been more my speed, and I’ve enjoyed participating in those from time to time. I also like spending time independently on the Xbox, computer, or studying scripture and writing.

One thing I enjoy doing is writing articles and blog posts, so in the middle of May, I asked one of the LIFE staff members if there is any possibility of me contributing to the newsletter or social media here at ECHO. A few conversations later, Rick’s Rundown was born.

This column will feature interviews of those on the ECHO staff as well as some insights on the various departments from the eyes of a participant who has a physical disability. I hope to provide a perspective that showcases the diversity of talents and experiences within our community here at ECHO. One thing about this column is that I am an open book, so if there is anything you, dear reader, wants to know about me, feel free to ask. I look forward to sharing another edition with you in September!

-Rick

Limited Edition Autism Speaks Biscuits Available!



Delight your furry friend with our special Autism Awareness Biscuits, crafted just for dogs to celebrate and support the autism community. We're thrilled to partner with Autism Speaks, donating a portion of every purchase to their vital work in advocacy, research, and support for individuals with autism and their families. Grab these tail-wagging treats today and join us in making a pawsitive impact!

Purchase Your Blueberry & Honey Biscuits [HERE!](#)

Wired For Elegance



At Blue Elegance, one of the standout jewelry-making methods our participants have mastered is wire wrapping and shaping. With patience and precision, they transform raw materials into elegant, handcrafted pieces, each one as unique as its maker.

This technique not only allows for endless artistic expression but also builds fine motor skills and confidence. The result? Stunning wire-wrapped earrings, pendants, and bracelets that showcase both talent and heart.

Shop Blue Elegance Today!

LIFE Community Friends of Homeless Animals



The team at Friends of Homeless Animals
hold a special place in our hearts!

The LIFE program is proud to partner with FOHA for meaningful community outings. Our participants always look forward to making treats and spending time with animals looking for their forever families. It's a wonderful way to support fellow mission-driven organizations!

Learn more about FOHA's mission [HERE!](#)

ECHO Hero of the Month



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We are pleased to announce that our Hero of the Month
is Allison Carr!

Allison is an Employment Support Specialist in our Group Supported Employment program whose flexibility, initiative, and commitment to ECHO's mission have not gone unnoticed. Over the past month alone, she completed training to drive both vans and buses, earned her medication administration certification, and willingly stepped up to train at multiple worksites. Her ability to adapt quickly and support wherever needed has made her an invaluable member of the GSE team.

Thank you, Allison, for going above and beyond- and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!

ECHO Ambassador of the Month



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This month, we are proud to recognize TJ DeLitta as our ECHO Ambassador of the Month!

TJ wears many hats within the ECHO community; serving as a Board Member, a member of the Family Advisory Council, a dedicated parent of an ECHO participant, and an all-star volunteer.

Recently retired as a Captain from the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, TJ brought his invaluable expertise to the planning of our 50th Anniversary Celebration, playing a key role in ensuring the event's safety and success.

Thank you for your support TJ!

Behind the Mission



At ECHO, every success story starts with support from people like you.

Whether it's building job skills, exploring the community, or gaining independence, our participants thrive because our mission is backed by the generosity, compassion, and care of our local community.

Your gift, no matter the size, helps fuel meaningful opportunities for adults with disabilities across Loudoun and Fairfax Counties.

Want to be part of the impact?

Help Fuel Our Mission [HERE](#)

Testimonial

"Our beautiful Nanda has always been a very hard-working young lady; however, it wasn't until she was accepted to ECHO that she knew she could choose a job she liked or learn a new one. It is a matter of pride for her and for us that she feels so happy, and productive. We are so grateful for the respect and attention she receives at ECHO; she never experienced this at the places she worked before. Thank You!"

– Pilar Vasquez-Lunt

