



## ***From the CEO***

With the fall weather here, it's time to prepare for winter storms that might affect our operations in the coming months. Please ensure you are set up on our Omnilert system so that you'll know when ECHO has delays or closures. If you venture out to Great Country Farms in Bluemont, be sure to check out their corn maze. The owners of the farm allowed local nonprofits to set up some displays inside the maze and I think you'll like what ECHO constructed.

We are still building our ECHO Helping Hands (EHH) volunteer team. EHH will assist our LIFE Day Support program on field trips and activities, and it is a wonderful opportunity for people to get closer to our mission. It involves some training and a background check, so it is best suited for people interested in volunteering with ECHO on a regular basis. To learn more, please email [EHH@echoworks.org](mailto:EHH@echoworks.org) .

With our ranks continuing to grow, ECHO is seeking to develop additional worksites in the community for our Group Supported Employment program. If your business, or someone you know, has production or service needs, ECHO might be a solution. We're happy to have exploratory meetings to discover if one of our teams is a good fit for the work opportunity.

Thank you for your support of ECHO,

Sincerely,

***Paul Donohue, Jr.***  
**CEO, ECHO**

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# ECHO Barkery: Get Your Pumpkin Treats While Supplies Last!

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Our limited edition Perfect Pumpkin biscuits are still up for grabs! These seasonal biscuits are packed with real pumpkin goodness that dogs absolutely go wild for. Buy 1, Get 1 Half Off (mix and match any of our products!) and enjoy free shipping when you spend \$30+!

These are a fan favorite each year- make sure you get yours before we sell out!

**Click HERE to purchase Perfect Pumpkin biscuits!**

# Blue Elegance: Pumpkin Pie Candles In Stock!



This October, Blue Elegance is celebrating the season with our brand new Pumpkin Pie candle! Hand poured with care and topped with decorative wax "whipped cream", this candle fills any space with the warm and cozy scent of fall!

Order online or stop by our storefront to pick out your candle!

As always, thank you for supporting our Blue Elegance artisans.

**Shop Blue Elegance Today!**

# LIFE Day Support: Getting in the Fall Spirit!



October is officially here, and our LIFE participants kicked off the month in spooky style by showing off some Halloween masks!

What began in Inclusive Solutions as a paid work opportunity for our GSE crew quickly spread to LIFE for some festive fun. A big thank-you to McCabe's Printing for the partnership – and for donating extra masks for our participants to enjoy. As you can see, we put them to very good use!

**Happy fall from the staff and participants in LIFE!**

# ECHO Hero of the Month



During a recent LIFE field trip to Great Country Farms, Jazmin Green went above and beyond to ensure every participant had a safe, fun, and meaningful experience. Jazmin remained attentive and engaged every step of the way. Her ability to balance kindness, leadership, and supportive care made the day a huge success. Not only did Jazmin shine with our participants—she also made a lasting impression on our community partners. Our guide for the day remarked, “Man, she is on top of things, isn’t she?”

Jazmin’s professionalism and compassion reflect the very best of ECHO.

# ECHO Ambassador of the Month



**This month, we are proud to recognize the Vasquez-Lunt Family as our ECHO Ambassadors!**

For the past six years, they have been unwavering champions of our mission. Peter and Pilar have consistently given their time and resources to help move ECHO forward, and their impact has been felt across our organization. Their daughter, Nanda, has also been an integral part of our community through her participation in our Supported Employment Program. We are deeply grateful for the Vasquez-Lunt Family's dedication and belief in our work. Their continued support has made a significant difference in the lives of those we serve and in the strength of our programs.

# My Interview With Melanie Buchanan

## Rick's Rundown



### October Edition

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Melanie Buchanan, a Group Supported Employment Program Coordinator at ECHO, to learn more about her role and the impact she has had on the individuals she works with. My journey to speak with Melanie started a little differently than expected. I was supposed to visit the ECHOBarkery a couple of weeks ago, but instead chose to attend an activity in the LIFE Day Program that I always enjoy. So, I put off the Barkery Tour until later. Then, on Thursday, September 11th, Charla Muffley, the LIFE Day Support Program Manager (who I'll be featuring in an upcoming interview—stay tuned!), and Melanie asked if I was still interested. I said yes, and we set up the visit for September 15th. That day, I had the chance to sit down with Melanie, armed with a few interview questions, and dive into the "why" and "how" behind what she does.

And speaking of fun, stay tuned for another column where I'll share my own day in the LIFE program, as well as another column where I'll share my visits to the ECHO Barkery!"

Melanie, who has been with ECHO for almost three years, shared her passion for helping people find purpose and confidence through employment. She loves witnessing the creativity and excitement each individual brings and says the joy of her job is watching others thrive. She explained that work is more than just a paycheck—it builds confidence, helps people feel valued, and strengthens community. For Melanie, seeing participants grow in ways they didn't think possible is incredibly rewarding.

She admitted the role comes with challenges, like staying organized while juggling paperwork and deadlines, but her enthusiasm for the work never wavers. She highlighted what makes her department unique: its inclusivity and person-centered approach. "We're not just about finding jobs," Melanie says. "We're about making sure the individual's needs, passions, and goals come first." This perspective is central to the program's success.

It's not all work, though—Melanie also noted that the department's fun parties help build camaraderie and a positive atmosphere. Between meaningful work and joyful celebrations, it's easy to see why Melanie is so passionate about her role.

And speaking of fun, stay tuned for another column where I'll share my own day in the LIFE program!

# 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

"Since 2016, the ECHO team has consistently gone above and beyond to help advance our scientific mission. Their unwavering dedication and commitment embody our core values, and each and every ECHO member fosters a positive work attitude that we all cherish. Thank you, ECHO team, for your incredible efforts and for being such an integral part of our success."

**- Ron Vale, Janelia Research Campus**

