



Empowering Individuals for Life

From the CEO

Since the new year, ECHO has been developing our new three-year strategic plan which will go into effect on July 1, 2026. At the same time, our current three-year plan, Vision 2026, is winding down and it is gratifying to see the progress that has been made these past 32 months.

“Blueprint 2029” will encompass FY27, FY28 and FY29 and it will focus on: Participant Experience, Staff Experience, Technology, Organizational Resilience and Financial Resilience.

ECHO is currently standing up two new social enterprises: ECHOCoffee Roasters and ECHO Print. By late spring, we will be roasting, packing and selling coffee. We are developing a delicious ECHO Blend, and this enterprise will eventually create four new jobs for GSE participants. Concurrently we are creating ECHOPrint giving us the ability to make custom T-shirts and laser-engraved products. This too will eventually create four new jobs for participants. We anticipate having a community ECHOEnterprise Expansion event (like a ribbon-cutting) sometime in June to celebrate these new enterprises and the expansion of the Barkery.

In February, our LIFE Day Support program was visited by licensing to perform an annual review. Kudus to Charla and her team, the auditor had zero recommendations for LIFE or Community Engagement...the best possible outcome of these visits!

On March 17, ECHO celebrated its 51st birthday. Speaking of birthdays, later this year, our contract with the FAA will officially celebrate 50 years! The FAA landscaping contract was ECHO's very first employment contract in the community and it's remarkable to be 50 years old.



Empowering Individuals for Life

On March 12 we were happy to host Representative Suhas Subramanyam for a visit. He and his team had a tour, interacted with GSE and LIFE participants and held a mini “town hall” with staff and participants. It’s important for our local politicians to know what we do here and I’m confident he walked away with good feelings about ECHO, and the role we play in the community and the local economy.

Our annual Big Day Out is approaching and participants ask me about it almost every day. The date is April 17. We are in need of sponsors, so any help putting us in touch with individual or corporate donors is appreciated.

Lastly, we are in the final stages of fully developing our Barkery Fundraising program. We’ve had some early success, and the feedback has been great. For one thing, no other program has as generous a revenue sharing model. If you compare us to Girl Scout cookies, Boy Scout popcorn or any other fundraising product we’re aware of, the ECHO model does the most for the selling team’s fundraising goals. Secondly, the sellers and the buyers appreciate the dual mission impact opportunity...the purchase helps not only the sports team or band, etc., but also helps the ECHO mission. If your team, or PTO/PTA, or band, or troop needs to raise funds, please check out what ECHO can provide.

Thank you for all you do for ECHO,

Sincerely,

Paul Donohue, Jr.
CEO, ECHO

Big Day Out is almost here!



Big Day Out is Friday, April 17th, and excitement is building across ECHO! This annual celebration is all about creating a day filled with fun and unforgettable experiences for the individuals we support.

From music and dancing to games, food, and sensory-friendly activities, Big Day Out is designed to ensure every participant can engage in a way that feels meaningful to them. We are incredibly grateful to our sponsors and supporters who help make this day possible!

Heads Up: Our Enterprise Celebration has been Rescheduled



Our Barkery Expansion Celebration, previously announced in our last newsletter, has been rescheduled to August. This exciting event will now not only mark the return of the ECHO Barkery to our headquarters, but also celebrate the official launch of ECHO Coffee Roasters—an exciting new chapter in our growing social enterprises. We look forward to welcoming our community to join us for this special occasion. More details will be shared soon!

ECHO Barkery: Fun Updates & Community Events



Dog Birthday Cookies are here!

Celebrate your dog's special day with us! Log into your Barkery account and update your pet's birthday. We'll send them a cookie on their special day.

Come visit our booth at the 36th Annual Leesburg Flower & Garden Festival!

On Saturday, April 18th from 10 - 6 and Sunday, April 19th from 10 - 5, you can find our booth off of Cornwall Street. We can't wait to see you there.!

Blue Elegance: Mother's Day Gift Boxes Available!



We're excited to announce that Mother's Day Gift Boxes are available for preorder!

**What's inside your Mother's Day Gift Box:
Flower Petal Candle (Love Blossom Scent)**

Handcrafted Soap (Love Blossom Scent)

Expandable Dainty Chain Bracelet

Lavender Scent Sachet

12 oz Mother's Day Tumbler

Every Blue Elegance product is handcrafted by adults with disabilities.

LIFE Day Support: Brew Day at Lost Barrel!



ECHO is honored to be the Loudoun County Brewers Association's benefactor for their annual charity beer event! Our LIFE participants recently visited Lost Barrel Brewing Company to help kick off the brewing of our limited run, Beer with Benefits IPA! Our participants had a great time touring the facility and being a part of the brewing process.

The release party is happening May 1st at Lost Barrel from 5-7PM and will be available afterwards at 12 total breweries throughout the county. All proceeds are donated back to us here at ECHO!

Ambassador of the Month



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This month, we are excited to recognize Clutch Athletics Baseball Club as our ECHO Ambassador! Clutch Athletics was the first organization to participate in ECHO Barkery's fundraising program. Their players sold our Barkery dog biscuits to help raise funds for their programs. In total, they sold 614 bags of biscuits, generating more than \$3,000 for their team! Thank you, Clutch Athletics! Your partnership made a meaningful impact on our organization, just as we hope it did for yours!

If you have a player interested in developing their baseball skills or athletic training, Clutch Athletics Baseball Club is definitely worth checking out.

ECHO Heroes of the Month



February: Paula Valliere!

Paula has been an excellent resource for staff to raise concerns, share ideas and provide support. She devotes significant time to staff to provide honest feedback and sage guidance.

Paula has been instrumental in supporting our recruiting efforts to include the onboarding process. She also stood up and manages ECHO Helping Hands, our volunteer program here at ECHO. She does all of this with high integrity and strong ethics and always with an outstanding can-do attitude.

Paula, thank you for all you do for ECHO!



March: Melanie Buchanan!

Melanie is always one of the first people to volunteer for any duty that arises during her shift. She has grown significantly since her return to GSE as a supervisor.

Melanie has also secured multiple potential job site meetings over the last few months that has resulted in meeting with individuals in Loudoun County government and other companies that work with disabled veterans. Melanie shows passion for the participants and is always willing to go the extra mile to assist and help resolve issues and advocate for their best interests. Thank you,

Melanie, for all you do!

Rick's Rundown

Rick's Rundown



March - April Edition

Spotlighting Jessica Gibson-Gochenour, LIFE Program Administrator

Jessica Gibson-Gochenour serves as the LIFE Program Administrator at ECHO, a role she has held for nearly four years. With a longstanding passion for education, Jessica's journey into her current position reflects both dedication and adaptability. Her academic background in Special Education from Longwood University laid the foundation for a 20-year career in preschool education, where she focused on supporting children who needed additional guidance to succeed.

After the global pandemic prompted her to reconsider her professional path, Jessica explored new opportunities, even earning her CDL and spending a year as a school bus driver. While she found value in that experience, it ultimately reaffirmed her passion for teaching. When she discovered ECHO, she was drawn to multiple departments but felt a strong connection to the LIFE program. Realizing that the change she needed was not away from teaching but toward a different age group, she chose to continue her educational journey within LIFE. Though she occasionally supports other departments, her commitment remains rooted in helping others learn and grow.

What Jessica values most about her work is the challenge of tailoring information so that it resonates with each individual. She finds joy in breaking down complex ideas into manageable steps and witnessing the "aha" moments when participants and staff grasp new concepts. As a participant in the LIFE department, I have been able to see firsthand how effective she is in this role. Her patience, creativity, and dedication make a clear difference in how individuals learn and build confidence. A lifelong learner herself, Jessica embraces the idea that everyone has something to teach and something to learn, making each interaction an opportunity for mutual growth.

Jessica also brings personal resilience to her role, having overcome significant challenges throughout her life. Born stillborn and later diagnosed as deaf at the age of three, she underwent multiple surgeries, years of speech therapy, and special education support. Today, she navigates the workplace by relying on lip reading and body language, though occasional communication barriers still arise. Despite these challenges, she remains proactive in fostering understanding with her colleagues. Within the LIFE department, Jessica emphasizes that every moment is an opportunity to learn. Whether through conversations, group activities, or daily interactions, both staff and participants are constantly gaining new insights as their individual paths intersect and evolve.

Behind The Mission

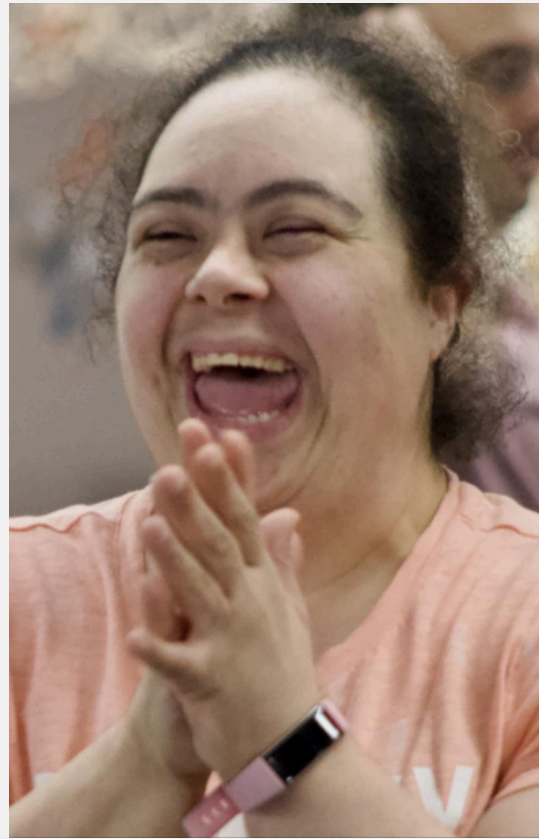


At ECHO, every success story starts with support from people like you. Whether it's building job skills, exploring the community, or gaining independence, our participants thrive because our mission is backed by the generosity, compassion, and care of our local community.

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?

Testimonial



"ECHO is a class act organization that does wonders for people with special needs. Our sister loves her job and we are lucky to have her associated with such a wonderful company."

- Dwight W., Brother of January W.