



From the CEO

With the fall season upon us, there are several time-sensitive opportunities to support ECHO:

The ECHO Barkery has a fundraising program in place that could help your student's team, band, troop, etc., raise money for their school year. With this program, local supporters that buy the biscuits from the fundraiser would impact two organizations: the band (or team or troop) and ECHO. What a compelling "sales pitch"!

Many businesses give thank-you gifts to their clients and customers at the end of the year. We will be assembling a limited supply of ECHO Holiday Gift Boxes filled with the various products from the Barkery and Blue Elegance. These gift boxes will delight the recipients and at the same time, let them know you supported disability employment by purchasing from ECHO.

Please reach out to learn more about either opportunity.

I'm happy to report that over the summer, ECHO's mission has grown in every way: more participants benefitting from our programs, new ECHO staff members in our ranks, more volunteers on the ECHO Helping Hands team, more parents/guardians in the Family Advisory Council, new buses in our fleet and new members on our Board. This is only possible through the strong support of the community and for that I am grateful to all of you.

Sincerely,

Paul Donohue, Jr.
CEO, ECHO

Do You Know Someone On The Medicaid Waitlist?

IFSP-Funding Applications Open October 1st! The Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Human Services has announced that beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 1, individuals on Virginia's Developmental Disability Waivers Waiting List will be able to access the IFSP-Funding Portal in WaMS to create and submit an application. The application window will remain open through October 30th.

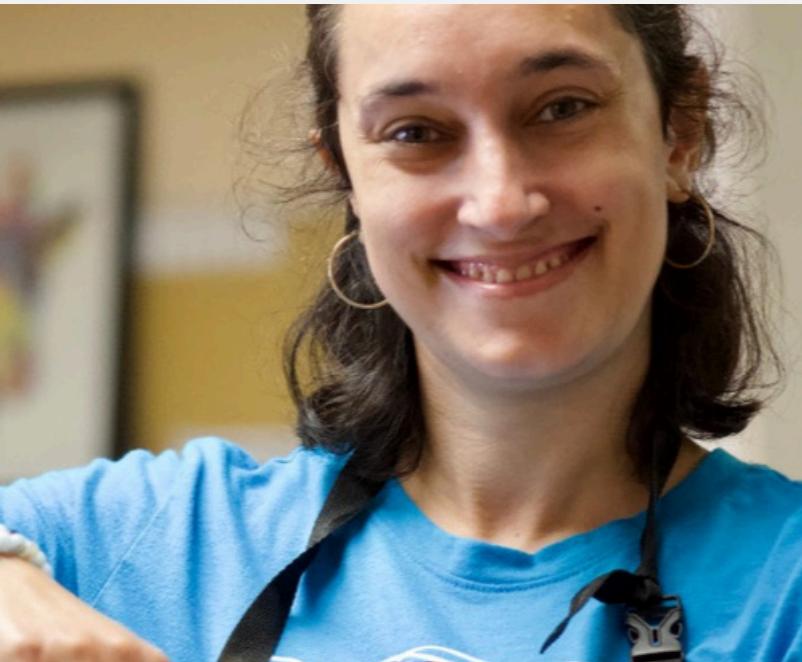
To assist with this process, IFSP staff are offering virtual training sessions for individuals and families. These sessions will help applicants navigate the portal and application process.

Training dates are:

Monday, September 22 at 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, September 23 at 1:00 p.m.

Click [HERE](#) to visit the Waitlist & IFSP Portals



ECHO Barkery: Limited Edition Perfect Pumpkin Treats Available!



Fall means pumpkin everything - and yes,
that includes treats for your pup!

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+!

Your dog's been waiting all year for pumpkin season - don't let them down! These won't stick around long once word gets out.

Click [HERE](#) to purchase Perfect Pumpkin biscuits!

Blue Elegance: Thank You For Shopping Our Labor Day Sale!



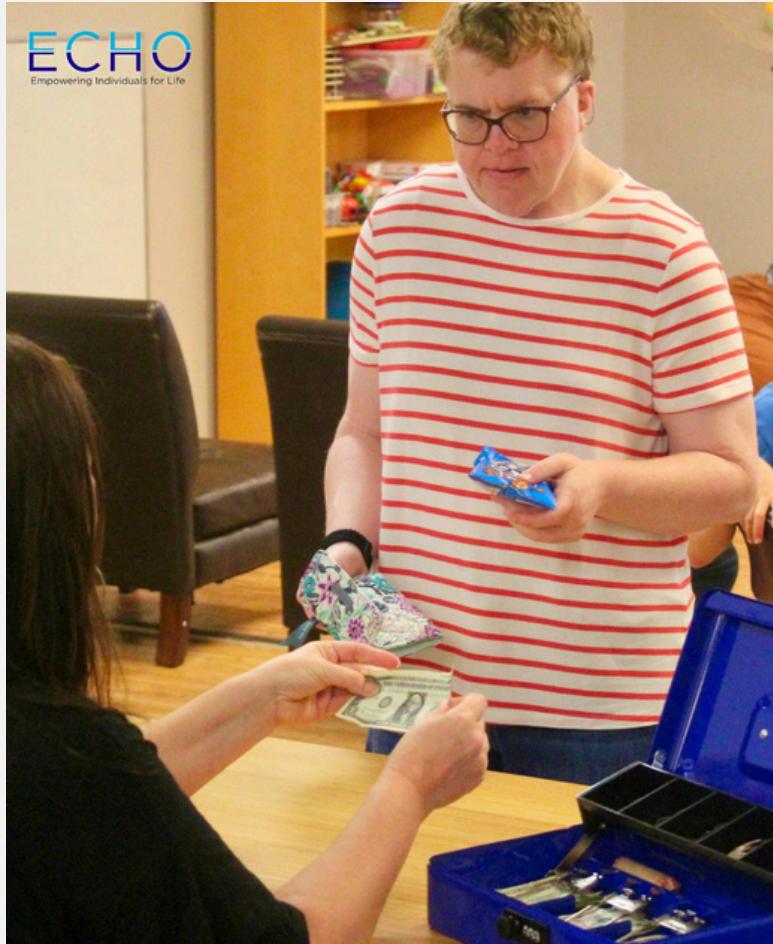
We are so grateful for everyone who shopped our Blue Elegance Labor Day Sale!

Every purchase makes a difference; not only do you enjoy something special for yourself, but you also help provide meaningful employment for adults with disabilities. Your choice to shop with us creates lasting impact, and we couldn't do it without you.

So, thank you to our community for supporting the hard work and delicate craftsmanship of our artisans!

Shop Blue Elegance Today!

LIFE Opens Breakfast Bar!



We're excited to share that the LIFE program has officially launched their brand-new breakfast bar!

More than just a tasty way to start the day, this hands-on initiative is an educational tool designed to teach participants about money management, food safety, customer service, and healthy choices. The breakfast bar has already become a highlight of the morning, combining fun, learning, and community building all in one.

Huge shoutout to our LIFE staff and participants who have worked hard to make the launch of this new tool a success!

Join ECHO Helping Hands!



ECHO Helping Hands (EHH) is looking for compassionate, motivated volunteers to enhance the lives of adults with disabilities by helping them engage in the community, try new activities, and have fun!

EHH volunteers are dedicated, responsible adults willing to undergo basic training, complete a background check, and commit to one shift a month.

Interested? Visit our volunteer page below.

Our participants hope to see you soon!

Join Our Volunteer Team HERE!

ECHO Hero of the Month



Please join us in congratulating Andrew Fearing, our August HERO!

Andrew is celebrating two years with the GSE team this month, and his impact has been extraordinary. Known for his steady competence and communication, Andrew has become a trusted and invaluable part of our community. One parent recently shared a heartfelt message about the difference Andrew has made in their daughter's transition to ECHO.

You can read their full testimonial in the Testimonials section of this newsletter below!

ECHO Ambassador of the Month



We're excited to recognize Roman Blazauskas, owner of SpeedPro Northern Virginia, as our Ambassador of the Month!

Roman and his team brought their expertise to our organization in a big way—literally! They helped us completely transform our lobby and entrance area. Additionally, in one of our more unique requests, we asked SpeedPro to help us create a 9-foot-wide aluminum bus—and they delivered! This eye-catching piece will be displayed in the Great Country Farms corn maze for the next two months. Our participants had a blast painting and decorating it, and we're confident it'll be a crowd favorite.

Thank you for your support!

My Interview With The ECHO Development Team

Rick's Rundown



September Edition

For the initial interview portion of Rick's Rundown, I decided to begin by highlighting the two people I'll be working most closely with on the newsletter: Todd Goldian and Mariah Baker.

Todd and Mariah are the Development team at ECHO. They manage the newsletter, coordinate events, and lead community outreach efforts. I had asked if I could shadow them for a day to learn more about their work- exciting updates to come on this in the future! To learn more about their work and see how they engage with the community, I prepared some interview questions and got to dig into the "why" behind their work. Here's what I learned:

If you've ever wondered who's behind the magic at ECHO—the events, the outreach, the creative campaigns—look no further than the Development Department, led by the ever-innovative Todd Goldian. After years of leading large-scale culinary events as a chef, Todd made a bold career shift during the pandemic and landed at ECHO, where his creativity and strong community ties quickly made an impact. Since then, he's poured that same energy into building meaningful experiences for ECHO's participants—most notably Big Day Out, a fun-filled celebration that's become a staple for participants at ECHO. For Todd, it's all about crafting moments that resonate, uplift, and bring people together.

Todd isn't doing it alone. Mariah Baker, now ECHO's Business Development Coordinator, started out as a receptionist and quickly found her place on the Development team. With a background in grant writing and nonprofit management, Mariah brings both heart and strategy to everything she does. She's passionate about storytelling—whether through grants, social media, or marketing—and she thrives on bold, imaginative ideas (even the slightly wild ones). One of her proudest achievements was helping to organize ECHO's 50th Anniversary event, a day filled with music, dancing, and connection that blended her professional and personal passions.

Together, Todd and Mariah form a powerhouse team in a department that wears many hats: fundraising, social media, grant writing, event planning, and more. Think of the Development Department as ECHO's Swiss Army knife—versatile, creative, and always ready to take on a challenge. Despite the many moving parts and tight deadlines, they stay focused on creating opportunities and experiences that make a lasting difference in the lives of ECHO's participants. While some of their upcoming projects are still under wraps, one thing's certain—if Todd and Mariah are behind it, it's going to be impactful and a whole lot of fun. I got to see their work firsthand in June during the 50th Anniversary Celebration, and the event was nothing short of amazing.

We as a community benefit from their passion and dedication—and for that, they deserve our thanks.

-Rick

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

"My daughter has been with ECHO since February 2025 and has been working with Andrew. I can't say enough about Andrew. He has been an exceptional support for my daughter. The transition to ECHO has been a little challenging for her at times. Andrew has developed a strong, positive rapport with my daughter, which has made a noticeable difference in her comfort and engagement. It's clear that he truly cares about her well-being and takes the time to understand her individual needs. He is consistently responsive to all of my communication, whether it's a question, concern, or update. I never have to follow up—he's on top of things right away. Any time I bring up a concern or request, Andrew looks into it thoroughly and follows up with thoughtful updates or solutions. His reliability, professionalism, and genuine care have made him an invaluable part of my daughter's support team. We are truly grateful for all he does."

– M.C.

