“An honor and a privilege...”

EHCA Executive Director Paul Carpenedo will retire from EHCA in June after leading the agency with skill, foresight, and compassion for more than 25 years.

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Photo by Laura Bell
Message from the Executive Director

When I moved to Erie in 1988 and began my tenure as Executive Director of what was then called Erie Infants and Youth Home, I never imagined I’d be a part of the agency’s mission and story over a quarter of a century later. This is my last column for this newsletter. I want to take this opportunity to inform you of my plans to retire from EHCA at the end of June, 2014.

It has been an honor and a privilege to lead this agency for nearly 26 years. It has been both rewarding and challenging. Many things have changed over the course of those 26 years, and I am pleased that we have been able to both improve and expand the existing services and offer many new services during that time. Allow me to list a few highlights that have made it all worthwhile:

- Conversion of a 52 bed community residential facility to five eight-person group homes and two six-person apartments. This project received the “Everyday Lives Vision to Reality Award” from the PA Department of Public Welfare. The project also received national recognition from the National Safety Council who awarded it the Improvement in the Quality of Life for People with Disabilities Award.
- The implementation of the Options program in 1994, which has now grown to serving over 180 people in Erie, Crawford, and Venango Counties.
- Development of the MOVE program in Erie County in 1997, which is an alternative day program that supports 63 persons per day. This unique program received multi-state recognition in 1999, receiving the Region IX Award for Full Community Inclusion from the American Association on Mental Retardation.
- Development of the Life Sharing through Family Living program in 1998, which now serves 23 individuals in Erie, Crawford, Venango, and Potter Counties.
- Development of the very unique and effective Project First Step/Enhanced Doula Services in 2000. This program, which is a program to prevent disabilities, is so unique that we have not found another program exactly like it and believe that it should be duplicated across the country.
- Development of several services for the Office of Children and Youth Services (OCY) in Erie and Venango Counties in addition to the Enhanced Doula Services. They include Family Stabilization, which works to prevent…

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OPTIONS client travels the world through his passion for amateur radio

Richard Quinn was bullied in school and had a hard time keeping jobs, but he wasn’t diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome until he was already in his 50’s. One of his sisters read an article in a Denver newspaper about Asperger’s and suggested that Richard get tested. She researched Erie doctors and found Dr. Mary McNamara, a psychiatrist and neurologist who specializes in treating adults with Asperger’s. Richard was “miffed” by the suggestion at first, but he finally agreed to go. That appointment changed his life.

“It was kind of an awakening,” Richard said. “It answered a lot of questions. Filled in a lot of holes.” The bullying, the loss of jobs, the awkwardness in conversations and struggles with relationships—all those years of feeling like he never fit in suddenly had a name.

Asperger’s syndrome is a developmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication. It is grouped with other conditions called autism spectrum disorders (ASD), but it differs from other ASDs in that it does not affect language or cognitive development. Asperger’s is considered to be the most highly functioning level of ASD.

Richard became an EHCA client under Autism Waiver and has been working with EHCA staff member Tammy Weinheimer for 3 years. Tammy spends 12 hours each week with Richard, assisting him to achieve personal goals and participate in community activities. The activity Richard is most passionate about is the one that lets him travel the world via radio.

In 2012, Richard saw an ad for amateur radio classes that rekindled an interest in short wave radio he had in high school. He took the classes—and found his niche. He passed the radio technician test in January 2013 and successfully completed the more advanced general license exam test last October. There is a third licensing level he hopes to complete someday, but for now he’s having too much fun buzzing along the ionosphere as call sign KB3ZVH or, as he says on the air, “This is Kilo Bravo Three Zulu Victor Hotel.” Tammy has enjoyed learning along with Richard, helping him study for his exams and even getting on the air herself.

Richard talks to people all over the world. He collects QSL cards, which are like postcards used as verification of reception to document communication between the two radio operators. His own QSL card includes his call sign and a PA map showing the location of Erie. He has also participated in field day competitions where radio operators simulate radio operations under emergency conditions.

Richard is a member of the Radio Association of Erie as well as the Wattsburg Wireless Association and the Conneaut Ohio Radio Club.

Richard has collected QSL cards from around the world.

I first started getting interested in amateur radio in my teen years. During that time I had a shortwave radio hobby.

I kept that interest on the back burner for many years because of the Morse Code requirement.

In the summer of 2012, I saw an article in the newspaper about amateur radio technician instruction classes offered by the Radio Association of Erie. I started that class and found out that the code requirement had been eliminated. The class lasted for eight weeks.

I took my technician exam on the 20th of January, 2013, and successfully passed the test. I was given the call sign “KB3ZVH.” I was able to use an FM handheld radio using a repeater on top of St. Vincent Hospital.

In June of 2013, I was able to participate in the first field day competition. That competition requires you to work under emergency conditions using portable generators for electricity and temporary antennas. I was able to make contact with other amateurs across the United States.

On October 28, 2013, I passed my test for my general license. This will now give me more frequency privileges on the radio. Since getting my general license, I have worked the following countries: France, Ireland, Brazil, Italy, Cape Verde Islands, Santa Maria Axores, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

— by Richard Quinn
New group home opens in Fairview

In January, EHCA opened its 17th group home for individuals with disabilities. Located in Fairview Township, Erie County, the renovated house currently has two residents and will eventually be home to four individuals.

“"A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities.”

- William Arthur Ward

MOVE is on the move

A building that once featured aisles of garden supplies, clothing, housewares, and electronic merchandise will soon house an EHCA licensed adult day program.

The agency’s MOVE (Making Opportunities for Volunteerism and Exploration) program will eventually move to the expanded facility located inside a former Wal-Mart store in Millcreek Township near the Erie International Airport. EHCA purchased 11,000 square feet of the space and will begin renovations this summer for the licensed adult training facility day program. The space will allow for significant expansion of the MOVE program.

The new MOVE facility will offer additional choices and opportunities to community residents who would benefit from the services of an adult licensed day program. These opportunities include community engagement, therapies, nursing care, technology and adaptive equipment, visual and performing arts, and social activities. The initial phase of renovation will allow EHCA to double the number of individuals currently attending its day program, and Phase II renovations will enable the program to grow to serve approximately 100 individuals.

MOVE is a community-based adult day support program for adults with intellectual disabilities. The goal is to help people gain successful experiences through volunteering at other local nonprofit agencies. Participants can be seen caring for animals at the Humane Society, helping out at the Erie City Mission, or sorting canned goods at the Second Harvest Food Bank. With the support of MOVE staff, individuals complete more than 6,000 hours of community service annually and make significant contributions to the lives of others.

Providing opportunities for creative expression is another important MOVE goal. Individuals complete artwork and crafts in their EHCA homes or at the MOVE studio. Participants operate their own micro-business, MOVEing Creations, where they specialize in creating dried floral artwork and hand-made paper. They go horseback riding, enjoy swimming at EHCA’s swimming pool, attend events with local school students, and plan parties. An exciting and popular MOVE offering is Partners in Dance, a collaborative dance program with Dafmark Dance Theater that culminates with a joint dance performance each spring. This year’s performance is scheduled for June 10 at the St. Benedict Community Center. See the article on page 5 for more details.
Discover the power of dance to encourage and inspire

Partners in Dance will move you! Our MOVE program dancers and members of Dafmark Dance Theater are preparing an exciting spring show featuring choreographed movement, colorful costumes, engaging music, and shining smiles. The 13th annual Partners in Dance performance will be held at St. Benedict Community Center, 320 East 10th Street, Erie, on Tuesday, June 10, at 1:30 p.m.

EHCA is happy to welcome Jennifer Dennehy as the new Partners in Dance instructor. A graduate of Mercyhurst University, Jennifer began dancing when she was three. She is trained in a variety of dance forms, including ballet, modern, and hip-hop. She discovered hoop dancing in 2010 and has been studying, performing, and teaching the unique dance form ever since. In 2011 she started Hoops by Dennehy and began performing with Dafmark Dance Company. She started Lake Éffects Hoop Troop in 2012 and currently teaches hoop dancing throughout the Erie area. Jennifer is thrilled to be working with our dancers and is pleased with the progress our MOVE participants and staff are making as they practice dance moves and choreography for the show.

Through Partners in Dance, MOVE participants learn dance movements, develop their gross motor skills, and benefit from the multisensory blend of sight, sound, and physical movement. The culminating public performance enables dancers to celebrate their achievements with family and friends.

Admission to the June 10 performance is free, although donations for the program are gladly accepted. EHCA is grateful to this year’s Partners in Dance sponsors: Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Dafmark Dance Theater, and the Kern Family Foundation.

Where every step makes a difference...

Join us for the Highmark Walk at Presque Isle on June 7

Who can resist an invigorating morning walk along the beach that supports a great cause at the same time!

Register now and support EHCA for the annual Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community, slated for June 7 at Presque Isle State Park. Arrive at the Beach 1 parking area before 9 a.m. and find the EHCA booth to sign in. Then get ready to head out on a beautiful 5K hike with scenic lake views.

Donations raised will help the EHCA Foundation provide equipment, activities, technology, and other vital supplies for our program participants.

To register online, go to www.walkforahealthycommunity.org

1. Choose Erie from the location list on the left.
2. Click on Register Now.
3. Select Erie Homes for Children and Adults.
4. Follow the instructions to register as a walker, sponsor a walker, or make a donation to EHCA. You can also create or join a team!
Adaptive equipment and technology help residents experience movement, maintain muscle tone, enjoy sensory interaction, and communicate verbally.

Members of the Crawford County Options program traveled to the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh.

EHCA was this year’s designated charity for the Guns & Hoses charity hockey game between police officers, firefighters, and EMS workers. The event was held February 8.

Message from the Executive Director (continued from page 2)

...families from needing to be involved with OCY; Family Engagement Services, which helps to reunify families already involved with OCY; Visitation Services aimed at reunifying families; and Homemaker Services, which is teaching families to provide a safe and healthy environment for their children.

- Over the years, eight additional group homes that support 31 persons were developed in Erie and Crawford Counties. The most recent house was opened in January of this year.
- It has always been our goal to not only maintain but improve the quality of our services and supports. It was one of my goals early on to improve the quality of the relationships among parents and guardians, supports coordinators, other involved professionals, program participants and EHCA staff.
- I believe that we have been successful in achieving the goal of customizing services and supports to meet the needs and preferences of program participants and their families.

The agency is poised for many additional accomplishments in the future. We have just purchased a house in Millcreek Township, which will be the agency’s eighteenth group home. We recently purchased a portion of the former west-side Walmart store and will expand the MOVE program to include a licensed adult training facility day program. The agency will be exploring additional services that will serve populations other than those with intellectual disabilities.

Of course, none of these achievements would have been possible without dedicated employees, committed and capable Board of Directors, and the wonderful support we’ve received from individuals and organizations in the communities we serve. I believe the agency is in a strong position to continue to grow and improve.

The many friendships and acquaintances I have made with the residents and program participants, their families, elected officials, area business leaders, staff, and nonprofit colleagues have enriched my life and provided many fond and lasting memories.

Thank you for your support. I wish you all nothing but the best for the future.

Paul Coppens
**Upcoming Events**

**THE Spring Event**
Friday, May 30
The Ambassador Center
Peach & I-90, Erie
Join us for an evening of dinner, music, auctions, games, and prizes. We’re shaking things up with more fun and surprises. Music by Mambo. Proceeds benefit EHCA’s Endowment Fund. Make reservations by mailing in your invitation reply card or by going to www.ehca.org/upcoming-events to reserve on-line.

**Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community**
Saturday, June 7
Presque Isle State Park
This event brings residents, families, friends, and staff together for a 5-kilometer walk. Contact EHCA for a registration form or register on-line at www.walkforahealthycommunity.org.

**Partners in Dance**
Tuesday, June 10
1:30 p.m.
St. Benedict Community Center
220 East 10th Street, Erie, PA
Our EHCA and Dafmark Dance Theater dancers can’t wait to perform in their annual spring show!

**Kegs & Corks**
Saturday, October 18
The Blue Canoe Brewery, Titusville
Enjoy beer and wine tasting, great food, prizes, music, and good company. Benefits Crawford County homes and programs.

**The Victory Ride to benefit EHCA’s special needs fund**
Saturday, September 13
Support EHCA’s special needs fund by heading out for this motorcycle ride and party. If you aren’t a rider, you can still come out for the party! Learn more by finding “Victory Ride to benefit EHCA special needs fund” on Facebook or by going to www.ehca.org/upcoming-events. Registration forms are now available online or at EHCA.

**VIEW US • LIKE US • FOLLOW US**

In 1912, EHCA’s founders posted notices in the newspaper, mailed letters to friends, and sold roses on street corners to get the organization’s message out to the community. Today, our media options have multiplied, and friends can communicate electronically through e-mail and Facebook. Even fundraising has kept up with the times, thanks to on-line giving and phone-enabled credit card readers. Here are a few of the ways we at EHCA can now communicate with our friends and supporters.

**WEBSITE**
Browse our redesigned website, [www.ehca.org](http://www.ehca.org), and learn more about our extraordinary people and programs. Visitors can check out news, events, employment opportunities, and staff contacts.

**FACEBOOK**
Are you on Facebook? We invite you to find us and “like” us on Facebook by searching for Erie Homes for Children and Adults, Inc. (EHCA). We love to share news, pictures, quotes, and special events with our friends.

**TWITTER**
Do you tweet? Find us and follow us at [ehcainc](http://ehcainc).
extraordinary people, extraordinary programs

Join us!
The Spring Event
Friday, May 30, 2014
Ambassador Center
Hemingway Lounge and Crystal Ballroom
6 - 10 p.m.

Music by Mambo
Our Hosts: Tom and Ann Chido

Our spring event has a fresh new format! Join us for a festive evening featuring great food, exciting prizes, live music, and of course, superb company! Call EHCA or go to www.ehca.org for information and reservations.