

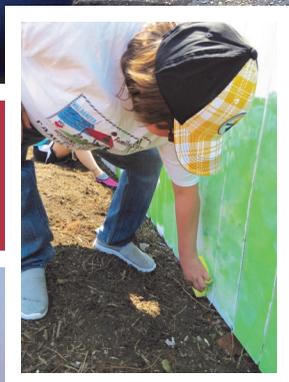


Home

Summer 2016

Happenings

Erie Homes for Children and Adults, Inc.
extraordinary people, extraordinary programs



Garden Mural Springs to Life

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Charles Walczak

Message from the CEO

What is EHCA's greatest asset? Our agency's mission relies, of course, on quality programs, well-maintained facilities, specialized equipment, and responsible fiscal management. But our greatest resource is always our employees. Our mission thrives because it is carried out by dedicated and compassionate hands. To support our employees' efforts, we are focusing on several objectives this year that promote employee education, safety, and job satisfaction.

Direct Support Professionals make up 75 percent of EHCA's workforce. When an individual is hired for a DSP position, we provide all necessary training as well as opportunities for professional development. We are in the process of revamping our training and educational resources to exceed industry standards and further enhance employee success.

Another important issue for us is staff safety. Direct care is a hands-on, physically demanding occupation. Injuries affect not just our employees but their families and the residents and clients who depend upon their care. We are reviewing safety practices and looking beyond basic dos and don'ts to promote a culture of safety. Encouraging habits of awareness, initiative, and communication will help reduce the risk of job-related injury.

Finally, we want every staff member to believe EHCA is the best place to work in town! Our employees find tremendous satisfaction in working with the individuals we serve. Our Best Place to Work initiative takes that a step further by providing monthly events designed to bring staff together to participate in projects or just have fun. Friendships with co-workers and the confidence of feeling valued as employees contribute to workplace satisfaction. We want everyone who says "I work at EHCA" to say it with pride and enthusiasm.

Providing exceptional care requires an exceptional staff. Investing in our employees not only heightens our agency's professional standards but also allows each employee the opportunity for personal growth. To succeed at our mission, our employees must continue to receive top-notch training, safety support, and the knowledge that their contributions are both vital and valued. The individuals we serve deserve nothing less.

Management Team

Charles Walczak, MBA, FACHE

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Donna Huckno

VP of Nursing & Health Services

Shannon Weber

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

Bev Keep

Chief Operational Officer (COO)

James R. McMann

VP of Human Resources

Peg Smith-Rich

VP of Residential & Community Services

Jonathan Rilling

Director of Development

Barbara Renker

Executive Secretary

Lorine Boboshko

Administrative Assistant

Home Happenings

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Erie, PA 16504

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www.ehca.org

The mission of EHCA is to assist people with disabilities to live rich and fulfilling lives.

Admissions, provision of services, and referrals of residents or program participants shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age, gender, or limited English proficiency.

SAFFE helps people with special needs know firefighters aren't scary

EHCA resident Bill Melius is a proud member of the Albion Volunteer Fire Department. The first time he saw his Albion VFD brothers and sisters respond to a fire call in full gear, he got scared—and not because of the fire. His fire family suddenly resembled a gang of invading aliens.

Bill told Erin Miller, an EHCA employee and Albion VFD member, that he wanted other people with disabilities to know not to be afraid of firefighters and firefighting equipment. That idea grew into the **Special Abilities Family Fun Event (SAFFE)**, held in Albion on June 12.

Participants could aim a water hose at wooden flames, sit in a fire truck, see first responders put on fire gear, and watch rescue dogs follow a scent. They even received free gift bags and refreshments.

Many thanks to event sponsor USI Insurance, event coordinator Erin Miller, Albion VFD, Cranesville VFD, A.F. Dobler Hose & Ladder Co. of Girard, NWPAs K-9 Search & Rescue, Belle Valley VFD's Smoke House, DJ Brian Shank, and all the volunteers who helped make SAFFE such a success.



Keeping us
SAFFE



EHCA employee achieves extraordinary milestone



A typical employee stays at one job for less than 5 years, but Charlene (Char) Cyphert has worked at EHCA for more than 50 years.

Char began working as a Child Care Technician in 1966 when EHCA was still called Erie Infants Home and Hospital. She now serves as Adaptive Equipment Technician, a position utilizing her years of experience to enhance lives using the latest technology to create adaptive solutions for improved health, mobility, and communication.

Char has witnessed tremendous growth at the agency, including its transformation from a single hospital-like facility to its current 18 community residences, two adult day programs, and family support programs. Even the agency's name changed four times to reflect its evolving services. Yet despite all of these changes, Char's commitment to EHCA never wavered.

"I love my work because I know I make a difference every day," Char said. "I've watched residents grow up from children to adults. They've become family and friends. They've taught me so many lessons, like faithfulness and forgiveness."

We are grateful for Char's outstanding commitment to helping people with disabilities. The past 50 years certainly wouldn't have been the same without her loyalty and leadership, and our future is brighter thanks to her shining example of what it means to enrich the lives of others.



Spotlight on Life Sharing: Tales of Two Homes

Sharing life through Life Sharing benefits two lives: the participant's and the provider's.

Life Sharing is a licensed program that carefully matches families with a person in need of supervised living. The families are then compensated for the care that they provide within their own home. Program participants receive a place to live, but more importantly, they find a home. With this more individualized approach, participants build life-long relationships with their providers and essentially become part of a second family.

Lonnie & Carol's Story



Lonnie and Carol

Lonnie looked directly at Carol Snyder one day during an afternoon walk. His bright eyes and big smile said it all. "I love you, too," Carol responded.

Carol met Lonnie Gillespie while working as a Direct Support Professional (DSP) at his EHCA community home. He had come to EHCA from a state institution, covered with scars and unwilling to make eye contact. He trusted no one. Slowly he began to feel safe again. Lonnie loved the outdoors, so Carol began taking him on walks. The two bonded over time, but then Carol was transferred to another home. Lonnie became depressed, and the only way to cheer him up was to call Carol and hold the phone to his ear. That's when someone suggested that she take him home as a Life Sharing provider.

Now nearly 54 years old, Lonnie has lived in Carol's home for eight years. Lonnie doesn't like crowded public places, but he is truly happy in his home. When he first moved in, he wouldn't even sit down in a chair without knowing what was behind him, but now he doesn't bother to check.

Because of his disabilities, Lonnie can't form words, but he has definitely learned how to communicate. For instance, Carol knows that when he shakes his head back and forth, he is really happy. Lonnie can't walk as well as he once could, so they can't always take walks anymore. Carol bought a golf cart so Lonnie can enjoy rides around the yard. She also drives him to watch trains roll by or to get ice cream — two things Lonnie loves.

"I have never been sorry, not for one second," Carol said. "I wish I had got him years ago."

Gretchen & Rhonda's Story

Life Sharing always looks for a "good fit," but when Gretchen Denial, now 56, moved in with EHCA employee Rhonda Sharie through this program three years ago, it wasn't just a good fit. It was a great fit.

Gretchen grew up as the youngest in a family with six children. Eventually she moved out on her own and began working as a hostess at KFC. But her siblings grew concerned about Gretchen's safety and long-term security. They knew the Sharie family. Rhonda was already involved in Life Sharing when she met Gretchen. Tommy, who is unable to hear, lived with her at the time. However, since two individuals are allowed per provider, she happily opened her arms again, this time for Gretchen. Now Gretchen is happier than she ever was on her own.

Because of Life Sharing, Gretchen enjoys endless opportunities to be involved in the community. She participates in an action club, a reading program, EHCA's Options program, and more. She also loves volunteering with Rhonda at community events like Lenten fish fries.

Every night, Gretchen and Tommy eat dinner with Rhonda, her husband, and the couple's three children — as a family. The Sharies even include Gretchen and Tommy in their vacation plans. This summer, Gretchen will go on her second cruise!



Gretchen (center) with Options DSP Sandy Smith and Life Sharing Program Manager Melissa Love.

Life Sharing providers find their own lives enriched by caring for individuals with disabilities in their homes. Participants thrive as part of a caring family. To learn more, contact Melissa Love, Life Sharing Program Manager, at 814-315-1747 or melissa.love@ehca.org.

Board of Directors Notes

Let me begin by saying how honored and grateful I am to be chosen to lead the Board of Directors for EHCA for the next two years. I was first introduced to this agency in the mid-1990s when I was serving as a licensing representative for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. One of the great pleasures of my position was the opportunity to visit our folks in their own homes, spending time with them and getting to know them. The pride that they took in their lives and their accomplishments was true then and remains true to this day. Equally gratifying was being introduced to staff who shared that sense of pride and who celebrated those accomplishments right alongside our folks.



Jerry Cannon,
Board President

Flash forward to present day. The accomplishments continue to grow and the pride never waivers. This is an agency on the move, with a future that is as bright and as exciting as its past. Thanks to a committed management team and those same dedicated staff, EHCA is poised to achieve great things, all in the name of providing top quality services for the people they serve.

“This is an agency on the move, with a future that is as bright and as exciting as its past.”

The EHCA Board of Directors stands ready to assist and support that mission in any way we can. We're grateful for the opportunity to share the journey, and we have our own pride in being associated with this agency.

With exciting plans ahead to yet again improve the services we offer, there is an opportunity for all of us to share in the legacy that began well over 100 years ago. It is a truly exciting prospect to be a part of that tradition.

In the next several weeks and months, I and members of the Board hope to visit folks again in their homes and programs, share their stories and celebrate their achievements. It's still one of the best parts of my job!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry Cannon".



Erie Gives Day
Tuesday, August 9, 2016
Online only, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
www.eriegives.org



Erie Gives Day provides a 12-hour online blitz for donating to Erie area nonprofit organizations. Your gift will receive a pro-rated match from The Erie Community Foundation and its Erie Gives partners. All donations must be made online using Visa, MasterCard, or Discover. Minimum donation: \$25.

Donations to EHCA on Erie Gives Day benefit residents with complex medical conditions.

(If you intend to donate to EHCA's Annual Appeal, consider making your gift on Erie Gives Day.)

Seeing Possibilities, Not Disabilities

THE Spring Event May 13



Partners in Dance June 7



Volunteer honored
Venango Co. Options client Megan Hilton was recognized for her volunteer efforts by UPMC at a volunteer banquet in Seneca on June 1.



Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community June 4



A Page from our Scrapbook

Agency fence is transformed into colorful community canvas



The fence along the western parking area at EHCA's main facility looks much more colorful than it once did. The once ordinary white fence now displays a vibrant garden scene featuring trees, leaves, birds, and birdhouses surrounded by multicolored flowers.

This mural is a public art project led by Julia Horan, director of the Young Artists' Conservatory. Horan began the conservatory six years ago and started working with EHCA clients in 2014 at the request of MOVE Director Debra Niland.

Earlier this year, Niland and EHCA CEO Charles Walczak approached Horan with an idea. They wanted to have a mural painted on the fence outside the residential apartments. Coincidentally, Horan was working on a spring project with the MOVE participants, a project that would work perfectly for a mural. The class was using sponging techniques to create outdoor scenes on large sheets of paper.

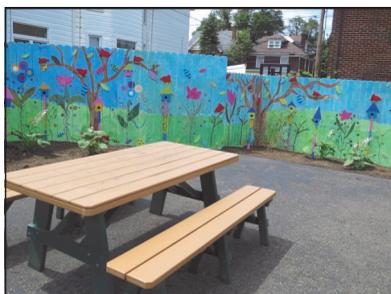
When Horan proposed that they use their newly acquired skills for the fence, both Niland and Walczak were supportive.



Some MOVE artists took part in the painting process, while others held paint containers and helped clean up after the others. They took their responsibilities seriously and enjoyed spending time together outdoors.

"They've all been happy with their different jobs," Horan said. "[But] as much as the clients gain in happiness, I gain double-fold from helping them."

She said the most complicated part of the mural was transferring the idea to such a large canvas. But Horan's careful planning has allowed her and EHCA clients to create a beautiful scene with accurate proportions.



Wooden cardinals, leaves, and birdhouses attached to the fence create a 3D effect. As if to bring the painting to life, staff volunteers and maintenance employees planted a garden in front of the fence. Outdoor seating and flowering planters make this mural garden a great summer getaway for our apartment residents.



Project First Step

Diapers, baby wipes
Personal hygiene products
Gas cards
Car seats (infant and larger)
Cribs, pack-n-plays

MOVE Program

Art/craft supplies
Fabric and sewing supplies
Scrapbooking/stamping supplies
Gift cards for supplies
Gift cards for restaurants, activities
Guest passes to the YMCA
Crayons, markers, colored pencils
Coloring books for adults
Large bean bag chair (new)
Cassette tapes
Spirograph, Connect Four
Baking items
Seasonal/holiday paper products (napkins, plates, cups, decorations)
Guest passes to Splash Lagoon
Movie passes

If you can help, contact Karen at 814-315-1857 or karen.tuminello@ehca.org.



When you're a biker at heart, disabilities won't stop you.

At EHCA, we celebrate victories every day.



Erie Homes for Children & Adults
814-454-1534 www.ehca.org

Start/end point: Belle Valley VFD, Erie, PA
Registration 10 a.m. Party 3 p.m.

Visit us on Facebook: Victory Ride 2016





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www.ehca.org

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extraordinary people, extraordinary programs

Mark your calendar

Erie Gives Day

Tuesday, August 9

8 a.m. to 8 p.m. *Online only*

www.eriegives.org



Help support the needs of our residents with complex medical conditions. Your donation will grow thanks to a prorated match from the Erie Community Foundation and eight additional Erie Gives 2016 sponsors.



3rd Annual Victory Ride

Saturday, September 10
 Belle Valley Fire Department

Registration opens at 10 a.m.

Ride & Party: \$20/rider, \$30/couple

Party only: \$10/person

Resident Ride - 10 a.m.

First bikes out - 11 a.m.

Party begins - 3 p.m.



The mission of EHCA is to assist people with disabilities to live rich and fulfilling lives.

Each person with a disability should have the opportunity to make choices, to contribute to his or her own daily lifestyle, to obtain the best education and training available, and to enjoy a home-like atmosphere with quality caregivers.