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EHCA
Crawford County

 ehca.org
  
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FROM THE CEO

Chuck Walczak



Hello all ---

It is with both sadness and excitement that I leave you as CEO of EHCA.

As I reflect on my 10+ years of service, I am excited about all that we accomplished in moving the agency forward on many levels: demonstrated levels of high-quality service to our clients; an empowered workforce that exemplifies a Best Place to Work culture; a strong financial position with no long-term debt; a management and leadership team that, in my opinion, is second to none in our industry; and, of course, a reputation as a top-notch agency that others use us as a benchmark to success. There are many other examples I could share, but suffice to say -- EHCA is in an excellent position to face the old and new challenges in excelling in our mission of providing a rich and fulfilling life to those entrusted to us by family, friends and the community at large.

Not a day passed when we as a team didn't provide the highest level of care, and that collectively leaves us in a better place than when I joined the team. This, of course, follows the magnificent work of all my predecessors and I am confident it provides a great path for my successor, Jonathan Rilling and the superb group of folks I leave behind.

I could blab on about this forever, but I shall depart with a huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who touches our orbit in any way. From the outset, I have underscored the crucial role of teamwork in achieving success, and this principle has been consistently upheld by all team members. As for sadness, it is tough to leave a job and team you love but we all know transition points are the reality of many aspects of our lives and this is no exception. Nevertheless, I am extremely optimistic about transitioning responsibilities and confident that significant accomplishments will persist daily and well into the future.

Only the best to all of you ----- **This is CW signing off** 😊😊

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Allen Bonace



As we embark on a new year, it is customary to both anticipate the future and reflect on the past year's events. At EHCA, we follow this tradition as well. We witnessed the retirement of Chuck Walczak from the position of CEO and reviewed the milestones achieved under his leadership. The process of searching for a new CEO culminated in the selection of Jonathan Rilling from within our ranks, and we eagerly anticipate the developments that will unfold under his guidance.

Our agency remains privileged to have a committed staff who diligently work with our clients across all programs and community activities. They embody the mission of EHCA, which is to support individuals with disabilities in leading rich and fulfilling lives. **The collective efforts of the EHCA staff, volunteers, and individuals are evident daily in the positive impact on our residents, clients, and their families.** This dedication is showcased in our Residential homes providing 24-hour care, the Options and Project First Step services, the MOVE Adult Day program, and the life-enriching Life Sharing program.

Reflecting on my second year as the EHCA Board Chair, I am proud of our accomplishments in serving our clients and supporting the employees who make this possible. **We extend our gratitude to all our donors, the EHCA staff, the Board, family members, and volunteers who contribute to enhancing the lives of so many.**

Sincerely,
Allen Bonace

EHCA

Residential Services

EHCA's community residences provide each individual with a true home where he/she is surrounded by trained and compassionate employees to ensure the utmost quality of care. EHCA believes that each resident is, first and foremost, a person with their own rights, feelings, needs, capabilities, and dignity.

By the numbers...

104 residents
20 homes

New Residents...

Donna,
Mark,
Torsten,
Josh

Team Updates...

Sherry Eckstrom - promoted from Residential Manager to Program Specialist

Corrine Heeter - new program specialist for our Crawford County Homes



Summer Camp



Night to Shine



Trunk-or-Treat



Knoll Rd Home

In Memoriam...

Our residential program said goodbye to Larry, Peter, and Jason. Our hearts are with their loved ones.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 15 individuals and accompanying employees attended the **Tim Tebow Foundation's "Night to Shine"** on February 10, 2024.
- 3rd annual **Easter Egg Hunt**, which included a visit from the Easter Bunny and his sidekick Carrot along with **Easter Egg Putt-Putt**.
- **Camp** at Whitford Park included 3 weeks of crafts, games, and fun.
- **Direct Support Professional Week** - a nationwide celebration of the employees who work with those with intellectual and physical disabilities. Our DSPs received a gift and a card from their supervisor!
- **Knoll Rd group home opens**, which allowed medically complex individuals at one of our aging homes to have a new, modern, advanced home to meet all of their needs.
- 2nd Annual **Trunk-or-Treat** hosted 35 decorated trunks that distributed candy to all EHCA program participants.
- Broke ground on the **Cascade group home** to open in the summer of 2025- This will be a 6-person home for medically-complex individuals.
- **Holiday Zoom activities**: Valentine's Day bingo, St. Patrick's Day scavenger hunt, Christmas bingo, and holiday story time.

EHCA

MOVE - Adult Day Program

MOVE (Making Opportunities for Volunteerism and Exploration) is a day program located in a fully accessible building with state-of-the-art technology, nursing staff, medication administration, and therapeutic services.

MOVE provides opportunities to get involved in the community, enjoy art in various forms, learn skills, and so much more. MOVE works to foster independence and inclusion by focusing on everyone's unique abilities and personal interests.

By the numbers...

55 served

21-82 years of age



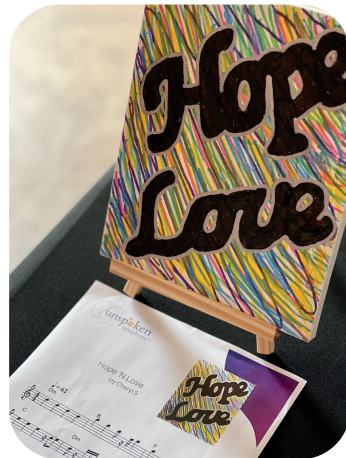
Becky and Josh

Looking Forward to...

Adult Prom in April

Inclusivity celebrations like our Juneteenth Party

Dance program and performance with Partners in Dance in June



Unspoken Symphony art piece

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Creative Enrichment

- **Dance program** to promote positive movement in a safe environment, followed by a celebratory dance party
- Weekly **art classes** and **yoga sessions**
- Weekly **pet therapy** with Gizmo the dog and Patty
- **Unspoken Symphony** art show: a web program reads art pieces and assigns sheet music to it based on medium used, brushstrokes, colors, intensity, and other factors. Pieces are displayed and sold with the proceeds going to the individual who created it
- Monthly music visits with MOVE friend **Bob and his ukulele**
- Monthly **adapted art classes** at the Erie Art Museum
- **Craft sessions** with volunteers from Seneca High School

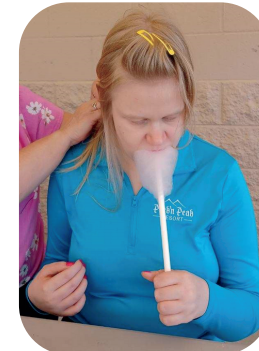
Community Outings and Engagement:

- So many fun outings! We went to the **Desi and Lucille Ball Comedy Museum**, **Kraynaks** for holiday displays, **Wooden Nickel Buffalo Farm**, **fishing charters** with Life Ministries, **Scallywags Pirate Adventures**, **baseball and hockey games**, weekly **pontoon rides**, **Greater Cleveland Aquarium**, **Erie Zoo**, and **picnics** in Gibson Park
- **2nd annual Walk with Emma**: Dan and his daughter Emma, an EHCA participant, walk to raise dollars for our programs

Continued Volunteering:

- Asbury Woods, Salvation Army, Good Will, Orphan Angels, Thrifty Shopper, The VA Hospital, Chosen, EARS
- **Bake and deliver cookies** to local fire halls
- Make **dog biscuits and cat treats** for Erie Humane Society

Olivia Hall and her friend Stephan helped MOVE make crafts



Summer picnic: Ashley enjoying cotton candy, Nick and Kearraya

EHCA

Project First Step

Project First Step (PFS) fosters family safety and stability to help reduce preventable intellectual and physical disabilities.

PFS focuses on three targeted outcomes:

- **Healthy Babies** — to maximize the number of babies born healthy and full-term
- **Safe and Healthy Homes** — to ensure that children live in a safe and healthy home environment
- **Preservation and Permanency** — to increase the likelihood that children will reside in their biological home

By the numbers...

12 healthy, full-term births

338 families

approx. 845 children



Erie Insurance employees collected Christmas gifts for PFS families



Our Project First Step Team



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The prenatal team continued their Doula certification by going to the DONA summit. The **DONA International Summit** is an annual conference featuring experts on a variety of topics relevant to the doula profession. PFS was proud to have three employees attend: Katelyn Lloyd, Lisa Kobusinski, and Jolene Ottaviani



- During our 23-24 contract year, the Office of Children and Youth (OCY) completed an audit of the Nurturing Parenting program and PFS received no correction action plan needed. **This means that our program met or exceeded every measurement!**
- Broadened our referral capability and **now accepts self-referrals for all programs** with a minimum requirement of “lack of social supports.” This opens the programs to make sure they are accessible for all who need them!
- PFS was **fully staffed**, which ensured there were no gaps in the services we provided. PFS’s performance **met all contract expectations**, which allows us to keep serving families.
- Employees completed training beyond our requirements including the ever-changing needs of Erie: **Xylazine and Narcan training and Safe Sleep training.**
- **Approved by Safe Journey as a Safe Place for Domestic Violence victims.** Safe Places have one or more individuals who have successfully completed the PurpleOne Training to recognize, respond to, and refer victims of domestic violence. These organizations have been trained to and have agreed to refer victims who enter their locations to the nearest state-recognized, comprehensive domestic violence services agency in their area. The PurpleOne National office receives the applications for Safe Places and, with input from the local domestic violence agency in their area, screens the organization to ensure victim safety.

EHCA

Options

The Options program offers meaningful activities and support for those living with family, in a group home or Life Sharing setting, or to those who live independently with appropriate support.

Options supports those with intellectual and developmental disabilities who live throughout Erie, Crawford, and Venango.

By the numbers...

204 participants

3 counties

Notable Moment...

20+ individuals received larger state waivers to give them access to more needed services - all thanks to our Options team's hard work!



80s Day at Camp



Helen volunteering at a local animal shelter



Trip to Buffalo

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Individual Goals

- **Chris gained employment at a major grocery store.** He worked in different departments and found great success as a cashier. He is praised frequently by his supervisors and customers alike.
- **Jeremy and Jon found employment at a social club.** They were aware of the opportunity because of the club's kindness opening their doors to our Options program participants. Jon and Jeremy were familiar with the establishment and felt welcomed and comfortable working there.
- **Cathy has been exploring recipes with her Options DSP.** She is attending recipe get-togethers to share hers and to learn new ones. She is exploring the nutrition behind the recipes and learning to make healthier choices. She regularly utilizes EHCA's YMCA membership (through Options) to exercise using the treadmills or to attend classes like yoga. Cathy can be very independent and, with her DSP's help, is exploring new housing opportunities to live on her own in the near future. She has taken CPR/First Aid with her DSP's assistance to make sure she is not only safe on her own, but also able to help her aging mother.
- **Carla** was living on her own and struggling with her physical and mental health. She was missing several pieces of important documentation including her birth certificate and social security card. With the help of her Options DSP's and Program Specialist, Carla received the help she needed for her physical and emotional wellbeing. **She now resides at a group home and is thriving.** She reports she is doing well and is happy every day. She is exploring more opportunities in the community such as going on tours and visiting local museums and meeting new people.
- **Options supervisors worked with Robbie's family so he could attend a family wedding and leave town for the first time in several years.** Several DSP's were trained on Robbie's care to ensure his health and safety as he is more fragile. The family was able to enjoy the wedding knowing that Robbie was being cared for by familiar and well-trained staff.
- **Carl** was paying for his Options program services himself because he didn't have the state waiver that allows him to receive them for free. After years of working with the county and with input from the family, DSPs, and Options supervisors, **Carl received a waiver for the first time!** He was beyond excited and immediately added 2 more days of service now that he was able to afford them through waiver.

Options Team News

The team obtained their new required training that allows them to work with children under the age of 18, predominately in Crawford and Venango counties. **This aligns with EHCA's Life Sharing program's introduction of Medically-Complex Children cases.** MCC encompasses children who require a higher level of medical care.

EHCA

Life Sharing

Life Sharing offers a wonderful opportunity for individuals with disabilities to live in a home – as part of a family and engaged with their community. EHCA assists with all guidance and resources to support, encourage, and build this relationship.

Matched Life Sharing (licensed) perfectly matches someone who needs supervised living with a provider family. Family Life Sharing (unlicensed) assists families who are already taking care of a loved one in the home. EHCA provides supports to both types of families.

By the numbers...

34 total:
13 Family (unlicensed)
21 Matched (licensed)



Briana has been in Life Sharing for 25 years with Ann and Diane - former EHCA employees. Briana became disabled due to an accident and wasn't supposed to see her teen years - and she just celebrated her 30th birthday!



LC has been with Mary for 23 years after coming to EHCA from foster care.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **Life Sharing can now assist the underserved population of Medically Complex Children (MCC)!**
 - MCC are children either living in pediatric facilities or at risk to do so.
 - They have diagnoses that effect 3 or more body systems and have technology in place that require skilled nursing services (including feeding tubes, ostomies, tracheotomies, etc.).
 - MCC was added as an eligible population for the Intellectual Disabilities waiver provided by the state to assist in receiving care, **but many providers are not qualified to support them.**
 - Our Life Sharing team researched and determined that, with minimal modifications to our program, **we could serve MCC!**
- Children under the age of 21 can receive Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) nursing services through their health insurance. **Therefore, children who need in-home nursing care can receive that service in addition to all that we offer!**
 - **We brought on one nurse** to assist with this through medical oversight, assistance with appointments, and monthly face-to-face assessments of the medically complex individuals.
 - This position allowed us to qualify for the MCC service and has **added a level of oversight for all Life Sharing individuals**, which has significantly improved our quality and compliance! This has led to improved understanding of needs and follow up.



Kevin with mom, Brenda. The support from Life Sharing allowed Brenda to retire so she could care for Kevin!



Dickie coloring eggs

EHCA's Life Sharing program sets itself apart not only by the additional population we can serve, but with how we support our families.

We host fun events quarterly; the largest being Friendsgiving. These events allow for families to talk to and get to know one another, have fun, and create a support system. This has fostered great suggestions for what individuals and provider families would like, which has resulted in a subcommittee of families that have offered to participate in event planning, collaboration, and networking **to offer the best support they can for the individuals in their care!**

FINANCIALS

Erie Homes for Children and Adults

Revenue and Support

- Program
- Investments
- Contributions from EHCA Foundation

**TOTAL:
\$33,279,891**

Expenses

- | | |
|--|--|
| <i>Functional</i> | <i>Non-Operating</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program • General and Admin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to EHCA Foundation, Inc. |
| \$29,725,395 | \$750,000 |

**TOTAL:
\$30,475,395**

EHCA Foundation

Revenue, Gains, and Support

- Contributions and Grants
- Contributions from EHCA
- Net Investment Return
- Fundraising Events (Net)

**TOTAL:
\$2,193,031**

Expenses

- Program
- General and Admin
- Fundraising

**TOTAL:
\$2,026,455**



EVENTS



Saturday, May 10th, 6-10PM

Ambassador Banquet & Conference Center

Our beloved glitzy and golden gala is back! The Golden Gatsby Gala transports us to the Roaring 20s as we enjoy exciting games, traveling magicians, fantastic food and beverages, and much more.

This year's event is presented by VNET in partnership with Kate & Co. This year also marks the 100th anniversary of The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel to which our event hearkens. Be on the lookout for lots of extra Gatsby inspiration!



Tuesday, August 12th, 24 hours!
eriegives.org

Erie Gives is a city-wide online fundraising event and is back for the 15th year! For 24 hours (12AM-11:59PM), all gifts of \$25 or more receive a partial match from The Erie Community Foundation's pool of sponsorship dollars.

Stay tuned as we share the ways you can give and how to get involved that day!



**Walk For A
Healthy Community**

HIGHMARK | Bright Blue Futures

Saturday, June 7th, 9AM

Penn State Behrend Erie Parking Lot

Sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, this walk benefits several local nonprofits - including EHCA! Sign up, raise money, and enjoy a nice day out.

The Walk offers 1 and 5 mile course options that will accommodate varying needs and preferences. Can't attend? Choose the "virtual" option at registration and join the fun from afar!

More details to be announced!

VICTORY "ALL WHEELS" RIDE

Saturday, August 23rd
MOVE Building
4950 W 23rd Erie, PA 16506

The Victory Ride is a motorcycle ride honoring the victories EHCA individuals have each day. Motorcycles and sidecars take our program participants out for a fun pre-planned route.

The Victory Ride celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2025 and is now the "All Wheels" ride! We're excited to welcome classic cars to join our motorcycle friends.

We'll have food, a DJ, raffle, and more. Get ready to help us celebrate our individuals' every day victories through the Victory Ride!

**Watch ehca.org and Facebook for more details as each event draws near.
Questions about involvement, sponsorships, etc: jessica.krugger@ehca.org**

WAYS TO GIVE

Automatic Giving

Give automatically from an account or card of your choice! You choose the amount and the frequency and know that your dollars are supporting those with intellectual and physical disabilities each day.

Go to <https://ehca.org/donate.html> to get started. Once you choose an amount, a box will pop up at the bottom of the screen asking if you'd like to make this a regular monthly donation. Rather have weekly or quarterly? Reach out to Jessica at jessica.krugger@ehca.org or 814-315-1824.

Henrietta Hitchcock Legacy Fund

On September 26, 1912, thirteen women gathered for an emergency meeting in the home of Henrietta Hitchcock. Henrietta and her team of dedicated women needed to find a home for a baby abandoned at Erie's Union Station. Their quick action in helping this one infant formed what would become EHCA.

Our Legacy Fund protects a vital need in the communities that EHCA serves. We're honored to have such committed supporters, including those who've already made the choice to enhance our future through planned giving and estate planning.

These gifts offer many potential tax advantages including federal estate tax savings, the elimination or reduction of capital gains taxes, and the opportunity to increase spendable income.

If you'd like to discuss our Legacy Fund, please contact Jessica at jessica.krugger@ehca.org or 814-315-1824.

One Time Gift

Use the enclosed envelope to give today! Prefer to give online? Go to <https://ehca.org/donate.html>.

Questions about giving? Looking for other options? Please contact Jessica Krugger at jessica.krugger@ehca.org or 814-315-1824.

YOUR SUPPORT IN ACTION



Melissa at the Barbie movie



Jordan, painting a figurine



Sheley at the Crawford County Fair



Jerry and Zach enjoy a game

Cindy attends Night to Shine



Chris, on his way to a baseball game



Josh enjoys popcorn and a movie

