

# Echoing Hills Connection



*Second Edition 2023*

This year – 2023 – has been an amazing one! As the year closes, I reflect on the many occasions showing us that we ALL truly belong to something special here at Echoing Hills.

In August, we celebrated the next step in our Northeast Community Integration Project – the official groundbreaking! This project is a way to continue to create opportunities for people to know they belong where their passions, interests, and curiosities lie.

This past year, those we serve explored those passions, interests, and curiosities in many ways. They traveled around the country on trips. Others were active in their own backyards. Additionally, we were blessed to welcome over 300 campers to Camp Echoing Hills!

This fall, Tanya Stewart, from our Central Region, received a Front Line Supervisor Award, and Lindsey Kloboves, a former employee turned volunteer in our Northern Region, received a Volunteer of the Year Award during OPRA's Annual Conference. They also recognized John Swanson, recently retired Exec. VP and Chief Financial Officer, for his 40 years of dedicated service in the DD field and with their agency. Then, our Corporate Marketing and Development team received the 2023 OHCA Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Excellence Award! To say I am proud of them is an understatement.

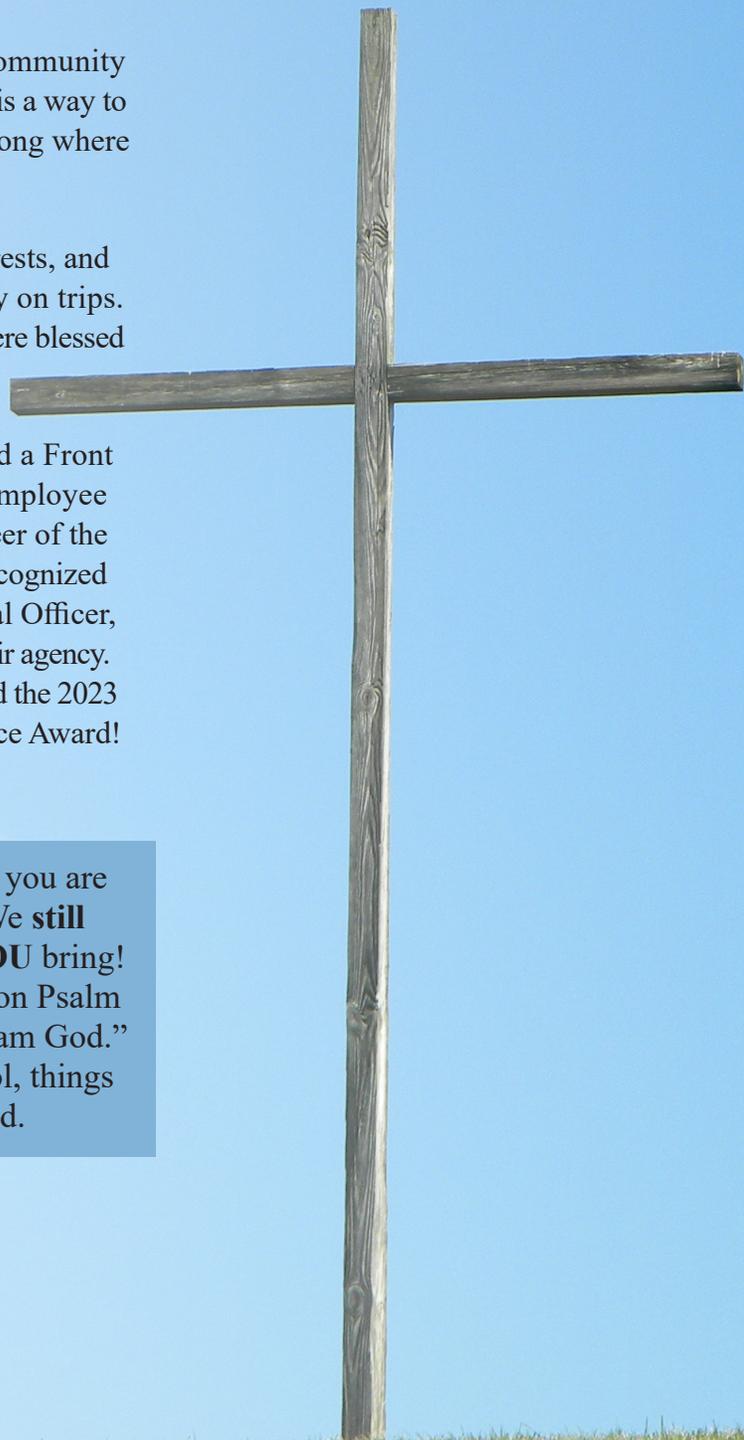


As we look to 2024, remember you are a vital part of this ministry! We **still** need the love, joy, and peace **YOU** bring! And on those hard days, reflect on Psalm 46:10, “Be **still** and know that I am God.” When you know He is in control, things suddenly seem not so hard.

God Bless YOU!

*Timothy D. Newell*

President/CEO





## Four Decades of Love, Kindness, and Great Audits

John Swanson faithfully served Echoing Hills for nearly 40 years. In May, the CFO/Executive Vice President and his wife, Denise, embarked on their newest adventure – retirement!

### A Look at John's Career

Before joining Echoing Hills, John worked at the Westin Hotel in Detroit, Michigan serving as their front office manager. After working for five years, John began considering other career opportunities. At the time, missionary work was of interest to him. He thought about moving overseas to work at another Westin, which would also allow him to find missionary opportunities. That is until a thought occurred to him.

“One day, I sat back and thought about everything we did at the hotel to ensure our customers were satisfied,” shares John. “I thought I should put that same energy into serving the Lord fully.”

At that time, John's cousin worked at Echoing Hills. He had told John about opportunities at the ministry and encouraged him to look into it. John drove to Camp Echoing Hills one day, meeting and interviewing with Cordell Brown. Afterward, his cousin took him on a tour of Echoing Hills, the residential center on the same campus. It was a place that spoke to John's heart.

“One of my brothers had a developmental disability. Growing up, he lived in a group home run by the state,” John recalls. “During my tour of Echoing Hills, I saw how vibrant everything was. It felt different. I immediately knew I wanted to be a part of this place.”

After a month of speaking with Cordell, John began his new career on Halloween Day, 1983. Starting as a Business Manager, John served in different financial roles throughout his years with the organization. He appreciates the belief Cordell had in him early on.

“I did not have CPA experience coming in,” John says. “Cordell took a chance on me. He saw that I had worked at the hotel for five years and asked if I could give him the same commitment. Although I wasn't sure what my future looked like, I knew I could give at least five years to this opportunity.”

Almost 40 years later, John kept his word on the five-year commitment. And then some! What made him stay all of those years? John shares it comes down to four things – God, Echoing Hills' mission, his family, and the individuals served and those that serve them.



## Enjoying Retirement

Now fully retired, it didn't take long for John and Denise to begin enjoying the perks of retirement. In June, the two embarked on a two-week trip to Switzerland. A trip they both agree was one of their best yet.

"It felt safe, the people were friendly, and the food was great," shares Denise. "We visited three areas bordering three different countries – Germany, France, and Italy. Each place was so different, and it was great to see the influences each of these bordering countries had on the culture of the cities."

John and Denise have also enjoyed a recent trip to Seattle, visiting their son and his family. When home, they have been busy completing projects at their house and at a cabin they built up the hill from where they live.

"I thought it might be hard to adjust to retirement," John reflects. "But, so far it's been a great experience!"



## Two Giving Hearts

In addition to years of dedicated service, John and Denise have been generous with their treasures. They began making regular monetary gifts soon after starting at Echoing Hills. John and Denise agree on the importance of giving, and it stems from two words in Malachi 3:10, "test me."

"The Lord has tested us several times, and we have responded," shares Denise. "We are always shocked at what He does for us in return. I appreciate what we have and don't compare ourselves to others. This mindset leads us to give more and helps us stay satisfied with what we have. He provides for us, and at the right times, too!"

John and Denise plan on continuing to give throughout the years.

"We continue to give today," says John. "Just because I am retired does not mean our generosity stops. We believe in the ministry and the integrity of the organization. Denise and I look forward to continuing to support Echoing Hills!"

Denise adds, "We will continue to give of our time too, volunteering at Camp Echoing Hills. We had a great time this past summer, and look forward to returning next year."

## Nyeeda – Creative, Passionate, and Goofy Brings Smiles and Laughs to Echoing Hills

Nyeeda has worked in the field of developmental disabilities for twenty-two years. Although she has longevity in the industry, this wasn't her original plan. "I attended Wright State University with dreams of becoming a nurse," recalls Nyeeda. "I had a hard time passing physiology which was required for the major."

After meeting with her counselor one day, she learned of the Health Services Field. Nyeeda loved the career opportunities within the industry; however, she found herself gravitating to working with individuals with disabilities.

"I have a unique name," Nyeeda says. "When I was young, I had someone tell me my name meant 'to be called.' I feel like this profession is truly God's calling for my life. It is my way of serving Him."

Nyeeda has been the Habilitation Coordinator for Echoing Connections of Northeast Ohio for four years. On any given day, you can find her providing hands-on support, driving, program planning, writing outcomes, meeting with families, providing personal care, and passing medications.

"I am there for those I serve, so no two days are alike. Just like no two individuals are alike. I like to meet people where they are. If I am serving someone who likes to be on the floor, I will get on the floor with them," Nyeeda shares.

When not at work, you can find Nyeeda spending time with her family. She has been married to her husband, Rob, for fourteen years. Together they have three daughters, a dog, and a beta fish. On those rare occasions she is not serving others, Nyeeda enjoys the other things she is called to; creating balloon art, painting and drawing, enjoying music, and cooking (but only when she is in the mood to).



*"I feel like I belong at Echoing Hills. I believe in the mission. It makes a difference when you can read His word, pray, and have God at the heart of everything at work."*



## Clarice – Writer and Illustrator Bedazzles with First Published Book

Clarice started writing and drawing at a young age. In her early years, she would use notebook paper to write stories and draw illustrations, stapling pages together to create books. Last year, she officially published her first paperback.

*Stephanie Witch* tells the tale of a young witch with blue hair living with her grandmother, Agatha, the Old Witch. Set in Wethersfield, Connecticut, you follow along as Stephanie learns about her powers, navigates school and relationships, and attempts to defeat the Black Witch. Although the book is new, Clarice has been drawing the Stephanie Witch character since she was a teenager.

“Depictions of teenage witches, such as Sabrina and Kiki’s Delivery Service, inspired me,” says Clarice. “I set my book in Wethersfield because of the four witch trials held there in the 17th century.”

Clarice shares writing and publishing a book is difficult; however, she is glad she did it.

“I gave away copies freely at EchoingU,” Clarice states. “My dream is to sell my book at Barnes and Noble.”

Cori Kraft, Habilitation Coordinator at EchoingU of Northeast Ohio, is excited about Clarice’s hard work and dedication.

“I am really proud of Clarice,” Cori exclaims. “I saw her hard work every day to achieve this accomplishment, and I can’t think of anyone that deserves this more. She is an amazing example for everyone at EchoingU!”

What’s next for Clarice?

“I’m busy working on a second book now. It has all new characters with a story different from *Stephanie Witch*. I can’t wait to share it when it is ready.”

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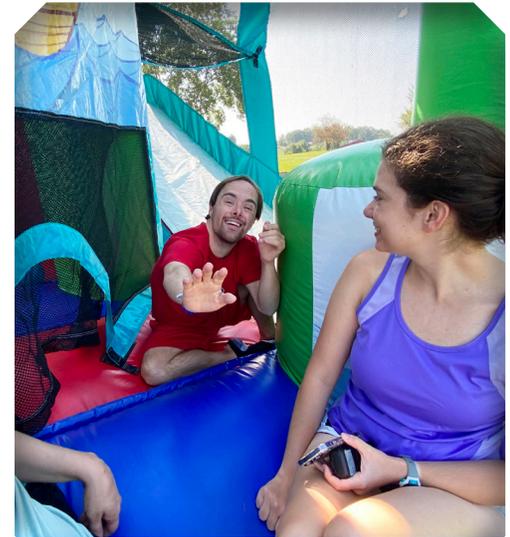


# Camp Echoing Hills Sees MORE of Everything in 2023

If there was one word to describe Camp Echoing Hills in 2023, it would be more. More campers, staff, volunteers, and spiritual growth!



**Staff:** More than 20 team members helped to make camp successful this summer! Operating at near capacity, we utilized all of our cabins! Something we were unable to do the past few summers. During downtime, team members enjoyed activities like going out to eat and watching movies. The team even embarked on an afternoon at Alum Creek in a rented pontoon boat! We now have six year-round employees in both full-time and part-time roles!



**Campers:** Over eight weeks this summer, we welcomed over 230 individuals to camp. Campers enjoyed activities, making new friendships, and growing closer to God. In addition to summer camp, approximately 85 individuals joined us during eight respite weekends, and another 40 embarked on traveling adventures throughout the year. Our travels included a trip to Cincinnati and several visits to Disney!



**Volunteers:** 2023 saw more volunteers and participation from churches. In all, 165 volunteers came to Camp Echoing Hills! Whether it was a week-long, single-day, or camp prep commitment, these volunteers helped to make camp a success! In addition, churches brought their worship teams out on three occasions to worship with campers and staff.



**Spiritual Growth:** Camp Echoing Hills is the first spiritual experience for many. A daily morning devotion and evening worship service brought many closer to God. Campers engaged with team members by studying the Word, praying together, and asking questions. We witnessed campers singing His praise, raising their hands during worship, and cheering after every song. Once a week, staff gathered to pray for each other's spiritual needs and those of their campers. They would also do a devotion and worship through singing together.





# Community ECHO

## Explore

## AND Engage



Program Director Chris Setser introduced Community ECHO over a year ago at his EchoingU Program in Dayton.

**He explains, “Community ECHO is our approach to regular, meaningful Community Integration.**

It allows small groups of students to explore and engage their community with person-centered, outcome-driven community experiences. Our groups include an Advocacy Group, Financial Groups, Job Exploration Groups, Independent Living Groups, Volunteer Groups, Bridge to Community Integration, and Community and Friendship Groups.”

Traditional EchoingU has similar, hands-on, and community-based learning, but Community ECHO takes this task on in a smaller, more intimate setting that allows staff to focus on learning and connecting throughout the whole day of Community Programming. A student in the financial group realized the actual cost of getting things for his apartment as he prepared to move out. The IKEA trip was an eye-opener for realistically furnishing his new living space. Another student in this group realized, ‘Oh, that’s why my staff always buys the generic food!’ when on a price comparison trip.

Carmen, an EchoingU student, has a heart to serve. Community Echo allowed her to experience several volunteer opportunities. Following her experience, she is overwhelmingly joyful about the prospect of a job at one of the volunteer sites and can confidently say this is something she wants to do! “I love going to St. Vincent’s. It hurts my heart to see people who have so many needs! I love helping them,” said Carmen. “So often we ‘think’ we want to do something, but for Carmen to have real-life experience and afterward to know in her heart this is what she wants to do is an excellent example of the success of purposeful community inclusion,” said Chris.



# Team Members Make Dreams Come True

When Chuck began talking about retiring from his job, team member Camille Adams had an idea. Together, Chuck and the staff at Starbuck Home created a list of things he wanted to do with his free time. And then they quickly got to work!

**2021 – Fishing on a Charter Boat:** Visiting Lake Erie, Chuck chartered a boat. It didn't take long before he had his first bite, continuing to catch fish all day. Catching walleye and perch, Chuck couldn't wait to go home and cook the fresh fish for his friends at home. It was so much fun, he went again in 2022.



**Fall 2022 – Camping:** Team members Camille and Brielle Vancs planned a three-day camping trip to Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp Resort in Akron/Canton. During their time together, they honored Chuck's one request – a campfire lasting all day long with all meals cooked over it.



**May 2023 – Going to Florida:** Chuck always wanted to go to Florida to put his toes in the ocean and try saltwater fishing. Camille and Echoing Hills volunteer Lindsey Kloboves made this dream come true. While fishing, they witnessed a dolphin swimming near them the entire time!



**July 2023 – Flying:** Taking a trip to Put-in-Bay, Chuck, and four friends flew the blue skies! Chuck was surprised when he sat up front, becoming the trusty co-pilot. The day also included golf cart rides around the island and a tasty lunch!



**August 2023 – Getting a Tattoo:** Some fresh ink came in the form of a henna tattoo. Chuck proudly donned a fish hook and fish head on his arm. This inspired his nephew to get the same design permanently tattooed on him.



Sadly, Chuck passed away shortly after fulfilling his dreams. Team members and individuals at Starbuck home will lovingly remember his grin and his love for cooking and corn on the cob, riding in golf carts, carrying keys, listening to polka music, helping the maintenance men, singing karaoke, fishing, gardening, and shopping. And whenever they see a red rose, hear keys jangling, or smell a homemade pizza, they will know their friend Chuck is still there with them.



## **Team Member and Volunteer Recognized For Their Outstanding Work**

Those who work and volunteer at Echoing Hills are amazing. They are the hands and feet of Jesus every day. This year, the Ohio Provider Resource Association (OPRA) recognized two of these individuals during their annual awards. Enjoy what those close to them had to share.

### **Tanya Stewart – Front Line Supervisor Award**

Dependable, Committed, and Reliable – Meet Tanya!

Tanya's calm demeanor allows her to take on any task while staying professional. When applying to Echoing Hills, Tanya did not know what a QIDP was, nor did she apply for the position. Despite this, we knew she was the perfect fit! She has grown and developed into a great leader.

You can see love in everything Tanya does. She approaches things with patience. Tanya provides structure and a positive atmosphere. Going above and beyond for those she serves, Tanya assures they are as independent as possible. She provides support specific to each person's needs and finds ways to overcome challenges.

If something doesn't seem right, Tanya reports her concerns. She connects with individuals to build strong foundations, which enable them to talk to her about anything. She works hard but knows how to have fun too. She has been involved in many ventures with those served and always has the best time.

As a leader, Tanya has earned the respect of those she works with. She calms situations, listens to struggles, and steps up and does so with great poise. Tanya is great at brainstorming new ideas and working with the team to find the best outcomes.

As a single mother to seven children, Tanya is a leader at home and at Echoing Hills. She is an integral part of our team and is a beautiful person inside and out.



# Lindsey Kloboves – Volunteer of the Year Award

Compassionate, Energetic, and Creative – Meet Lindsey!

Lindsey has a daughter with special needs and has worked in this field for several years. She is no stranger to the challenges and demands that this type of work involves. And she chooses to do it again and again.

Lindsey worked for our organization for a little over a year while also working another job. She then went to PRN status until she could no longer keep that schedule due to her responsibilities as a mother, working another job, and working on a farm. When she left, Lindsey requested to be a volunteer whenever needed.

Lindsey has helped provide opportunities for individuals to volunteer and make a little extra money at the farm where she works. She assists individuals that attend church on Sundays. She also helps with events at Echoing Hills and events we participate in within the greater community. Every month, Lindsey provides haircuts for those who would like one. She always invites those served to her family gatherings and other events. Lindsey and her family have opened up their home to us. Those we serve enjoy swimming, spending time in nature, and having fellowship together.



This past May, Lindsey volunteered to go to Florida to help with an individual's needs. She did not receive pay or compensation for this. Lindsey went so someone could live out their dream of seeing the ocean and fishing in saltwater. Lindsey continues exploring new ideas and opportunities for individuals to live their best life.

No matter what she does to help, Lindsey ultimately wants to make opportunities for those served to connect with others. She wants to see them develop meaningful relationships. She has developed impactful relationships through listening, showing empathy, and providing a calm environment.

Lindsey is not afraid of work. She always jumps right in and can handle challenges, messes, and moments of behavioral aggression. This world would be better with more Lindseys in it!



# Founder Cordell Brown Celebrates 80th Birthday With A Birthday Fundraiser!

Echoing Hills Founder Cordell Brown celebrates his 80th Birthday on December 5th, and wants us to join his celebration by supporting his Birthday Fundraiser! Cordell has devoted nearly six decades to revolutionizing the lives of people with disabilities.

Over 55 years ago, what started as a small camping ministry in rural Ohio has prospered into a statewide organization serving nearly 500 people with disabilities through recreational, residential, adult, and educational services, and employs over 500. Through hard work and perseverance, his dream of serving people like himself became a reality with his late wife Jane by his side.



Today, Cordell remains involved in the ministry he founded. He is an active board member and meets monthly with the Echoing Hills President and CEO. He is a staple during the Summer Camping Season and shares the Cross Hill message weekly with campers and staff. You may see him zipping around the Central Office Region on his golf cart, enjoying the sacred land where his dream began!

His Birthday Fundraiser is to raise money for Camp Echoing Hills, the Flagship Ministry of Echoing Hills. “Camp is the heart of this ministry and embodies the purpose of Echoing Hills – creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to know and experience Jesus Christ,” explains Cordell. “Camp is where our campers can come and experience love and acceptance – like that of Jesus.”



## Founder Cordell Brown's Birthday Fundraiser How to Donate:

[ehvi.org/contact-us/donate/](http://ehvi.org/contact-us/donate/)  
or scan the QR code

### Mail a check:

Echoing Hills  
Attn: Development  
Cordell's Birthday Fundraiser  
36272 CR79  
Warsaw, Ohio 43844



**Birthday Cards are welcomed and encouraged  
at the above address!**

# Northeast Ohio Community Integration Project

## Five New Homes to Provide Greater Opportunities

Echoing Ridge was built in 1983 and is a place that has provided exceptional care and support over the years. It is also a place that has allowed us to learn new lessons.

Over the last 40 years, we have learned that several people living together can sometimes not feel as much like home as you'd like. Planning an activity, preparing a favorite meal, or scheduling an outing in the community can sometimes feel impossible.

In 2014, steps began to move those we serve into smaller homes. At that time, 22 individuals moved from Echoing Ridge into a combination of both Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) and waiver homes. Immediately, and since that time, we have seen the benefits. It all comes down to one thing. Individuals are engaged like never before. Those we serve are taking an active role in their lives — setting goals, achieving dreams, and engaging in their homes and larger communities.

Over the last several years, we have diligently been planning to step into the final phase of our community integration project in Northeast Ohio.



On August 21st, 75 individuals served, team members, community members, and partners in the project joined together to celebrate the groundbreaking ceremony. Looking to be complete by late 2024, six ICF homes will fulfill the community integration project in Northeast Ohio. Three new six-bedroom homes and two newly renovated six-bedroom homes will provide a place to call home for 30 individuals.

This fall, we have witnessed the project come to life! Old walls were removed, and new ones erected. Grounds were excavated and frames erected, all the while those who currently call Ridge are having discussions about the possibility of having a pet in their new home!



Ray Schmidt, Executive Vice President/Chief Program Officer, is excited about what this project does for those we serve and the greater community. “Our goal is to create homes where people can take their chosen place in the community and be valued for who they are and what they know. We’ve learned that the community grows stronger when people of all abilities can live and grow together. It’s hard for those relationships to happen in groups. We know that the best things happen when all people are valued for who they are and the talents they can share. I often define ‘community’ as ‘the art of sharing who we are.’ These homes take us one step closer to that dream. Our experience has enabled us to build similar homes all over Ohio, and we know these homes here in Canal Fulton will be a success, too.”



**This project is made possible through the generosity of many, including Sisters of Charity Foundation, Stark Community Foundation, Timken Foundation, Paul and Carol David Foundation, and the Deuble Foundation.**

**Please follow along in our journey!**



<https://ehvi.org/locations/north-east-ohio-community-integration/>



*A gift  
with meaning!*



*A tribute in  
Honor of those  
you love!*

## ***Searching for a Meaningful Christmas Gift for that Special Someone?***

### **A Tribute Gift Makes a Lasting Impact**

A tribute gift is a way to donate to an organization in someone's memory or honor. Worldwide, 33% of donors give tribute gifts as a way to remember or honor family and friends, with 10% being gifted on religious holidays (Giving USA). A gift made in someone's honor allows you to support your (or a loved one's) favorite cause while answering the age-old question 'what do you get for the person who already has everything?'

At Echoing Hills, we consider these gifts extremely meaningful. They make an impact and touch multiple people: the person making the gift, the person honored by the gift, and to those who benefit from the gift. It is truly a win-win-win.

A tribute gift is a great way to spread peace, joy, and love, while honoring your loved one. Making a tribute gift to Echoing Hills is simple! When making a donation (either mailed-in to Echoing Hills, Development, 36272 CR 79, Warsaw, Ohio 43844 or online [ehvi.org/contact-us/donate/](http://ehvi.org/contact-us/donate/)), be sure to include your name and contact information so that we can thank you for your gift, as well as the name and contact information of the person you are honoring (in the comments section) – we want to send them a card to let them know of your meaningful tribute. Your support makes a difference - revolutionizing lives where people live, learn, connect, play, and worship!

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