

Echoing Hills

Connection

Fall/Winter 2020



*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of
power and of love and of a sound mind.*

2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV

For Those We Serve

For Those Who Serve

For Those We've Lost



This year – 2020 – I believe has taught us the true value of life and how it should be treasured and celebrated! God knew each one of us before He formed us in the womb, and we are precious and one-of-a-kind. He also knows the end from the beginning and what 2020 would bring. Even when we don't understand everything that is happening around us, we can all have peace knowing that our God is in control.

Although we 'Stood FIRM Together' as a ministry, we didn't go unscathed through this pandemic. We still grieve today for those we lost. While we said goodbye to friends, we were still reminded of the wonders of God and His miraculous ways. And that there are angels all around us – the front line team who selflessly give each and every day. Some stepped up and said I will serve in the region impacted by the virus, knowing they wouldn't get to see their own families for at least a month. While those we serve and their families mourned the inability to come together for visits, our thoughtful and loving team came up with creative ways to bring them together via virtual experiences. Witnessing the joy that it brought the family and the person was life-changing.

Who would have thought that a simple interaction for them would mean so much. Or, getting a card in the mail would make their week, and sitting outside overlooking a lake would bring such peace. It's the simple things. It's the bud of new life and the bloom of opportunity, as seen through the eyes of individuals with disabilities. It's appreciating and celebrating life. Maybe not life as you and I know it, but life as they experience it every day. Thankful for relationships and experiences – grateful for life! Their life.

It's quite humbling. If I start questioning God through this chaos or feel like my faith is wavering, I remind myself to stand firm on His Word and promises, just like the hundreds do that we serve. We all need to take heart and embrace the courage they have, knowing that God is with us and there to help when we feel afraid, weak, and weary.

As 2020 comes to a close, let's join together and continue to stand firm in our faith! Our God is a good God!

May God bless you! We will continue to pray for good health for you and yours!

Timothy D. Neville
President/CEO

Finding Joy in the Middle of the Storm

What does a meaningful day look like during the turbulent pandemic? It's appreciating the simple things – sitting together and laughing, enjoying the great outdoors and God's amazing creation, and relishing a good home-cooked meal around the dining room table. And, it is celebrating birthdays like never before!

One thing that has brought such joy is the wheelchair-accessible swing. This swing is even more special because it was donated by a past individual's family after she went to be with the Lord. We are blessed to have such a large family that loves and supports us. And, anyone who knows Aric knows that he LOVES tractors. With the help of his family, we got to help make his day! His family brought a tractor to Echoing Hills and they let him drive it around. The delight this brought Aric warmed all our hearts!

Witnessing the caring and compassionate community come together to create safe experiences for those we serve reminded us that there are such giving people all around! Thanks to the Captain of Mystic Belle, we had a fantastic boat ride – all reserved just for us to ensure our safety. And thanks to the Midway Cinemas for a personal rental to be able to enjoy a movie day. There are so many amazing people out there who want to make a difference in this world.

Social distancing outside became the norm while still enjoying the things most loved – lunch in parks, gazing at the lake, and listening to live music. Another outdoor adventure – the much-loved Camp-in-Motion in our Northeast region was modified and went off without a hitch. We couldn't disappoint! Our camp team – located on our Central Ohio Campus – partnered with Community Living of Central Ohio to enjoy typical camp activities including a cookout and daily swimming all summer long. The smiles and laughs were contagious.

On those rainy days, talented and creative team members sprang to action. Some held a scavenger hunt, which had the individuals scurrying around their homes, hoping to be the winner. Others developed fun crafts like making dog biscuits for National Dog Day, handcrafting jewelry, playing games and cards. It's all about what each person enjoys and making it happen!

Using digital resources such as Zoom, FaceTime, and Google Meet became an everyday occurrence. Many who call Echoing Hills home participate in civic groups, choirs, and churches. Therefore, opportunities to participate has been a top priority. Additionally, birthdays became even more significant than ever. Of course, they have always been special, but these celebrations became even more important. Digitally family and friends could join the party! Drive-by celebrations also generated excitement.

Although life as we once knew it has dramatically changed, we will celebrate everything God has gifted us. He continues to be a blessing through what has become known as the storm of 2020. A storm that no person was prepared to experience, but one that brought an appreciation and joy for the simple things in life, including God's goodness, which is all around us.

BIRTHDAY FUN!



*Joy Connect
Celebrate*



Although extreme precautions were taken throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus touched two of our homes in the Southwest Region. Four lives were lost which was devastating to the team and those who call Echoing Woods and Echoing Valley home. The team and individuals who served stepped up to ensure that no other lives would be taken from them. Long hours, hard work, and the incredible team pulling together contributed to the virus stopping there. This experience was life-changing for many, and the team wanted to share their thoughts with others to get a glimpse and understanding.

As the Southwest Ohio Region felt the veracity of COVID-19 in our homes, I felt a sense of unity with our team. As nervous and scared as we all were as to what was to come for us, we all pulled together and did what we needed to do, each member of our team working together to ensure the individuals were cared for.

Meal time for me was the most difficult, taking someone their lunch and them not understanding why they are isolated in their room when they want to do what they normally do, something as simple as being able to eat in the dining room. Or having to explain why I can't take off my mask so they can hear me better because I am wearing a KN95 Mask, a cloth mask, and a face shield.

Trying to give some sense of normalcy to the individuals we serve throughout this pandemic has been challenging and heartbreaking for everyone. Even more so when we had to have everyone in isolation.

I am honored to be a part of this Echoing Hills family, we demonstrated that we are stronger than the storm even when the stress felt overwhelming. It hasn't been easy with COVID-19 causing the passing of four individuals. Nevertheless, we all have pulled together, grieved together, prayed together, and exhibited what true teamwork really is.

- Heather Woolum, HR Generalist Southwest Ohio

The past several months have been a very trying time. The whole world seemed upside down. We lost several loved ones and things just seemed bleak. However, the biggest realization I had was the amount of resilience the individuals had through it all. One day, out of the blue, the routines they were used to were gone. They were not allowed to leave their homes, they could not have visits from family and friends, their living arrangements were changed when we had to quarantine. Some of the individuals even became ill with COVID and had to go through the long process of recovery. But through it all, they got up every day and continued to enjoy life, participate in activities with staff, adjust to the new norm, and push through the days.

- Amy Royer, HR Coordinator Southwest

As for me, in 2015 I had a total knee replacement done. I was young and my muscles were rejecting it. And then, I got very sick. They believe it was a reaction to the anesthetic. It was the first time in my life that I truly understood what it felt like to be trapped in my body and to have my head racing with questions about what was wrong with me and if it was ever going to get better. During that time my family rose up and were not only my hands and feet but also filled my life with the love of Jesus. That is what sustained me through that time and still stays with me today. Since that time, the staff and individuals of EHVI have become my family, I was excited to have an opportunity to return the favor; to be the hands and feet for my brothers and sisters in Christ, and to share the love of Jesus with them right where they are at as I went to the Southwest region to do my part to help.

Compassion Kindness

However, I have to tell you how blown away I was by Rose Elliot. If you are not familiar with Rose, she is the Stark County QDIP who chose to go as well. She worked the full two weeks with little break and with a true servant's heart. It was awesome to get to know her better. She has a true testimony, she loves the individuals of Echoing Hills and is an excellent worker.

- Jen Gatto, echoingU Program Director



It was hard coping with COVID virus, it was the worst feeling I was able to experience in my life, and I pray to GOD that I don't experience it again. My family members thought I was going to die. But I made it through with the help of GOD and everyone's prayers. I ended up with double pneumonia from the COVID virus. So I'm blessed and glad to be here. Thank you God. It has made me an even better person than before. We should not take life for granted. Life can turn in a second. The COVID-19 virus made us re-examine our lives.

- **Katrina Spencer, DSP**

It was scary to find out that I had the COVID virus, I was afraid that I might end up in the hospital. I had learned to be more careful out in the public or wherever I go and keep my face mask on.

- **Patrica Holzinger, DSP**

I have never been that sick in my life before, it is a blessing that GOD brought me and my daughter through it. I had lost a lot of weight and my taste buds had left me from the COVID virus. My taste buds are slowly coming back. Live every day as if it were going to be your last; life is too short.

- **Brenda Cox, DSP**



COVID changed my life by first, making me respect the fact that life is a gift that should not be taken for granted. Because you can be here and healthy and follow all the rules and still not be an exception to getting sick or even dying. COVID allowed me to reflect and make promises to myself that I would serve to the best of my ability until God calls me home.

- **Janora Stroud, Nurse**

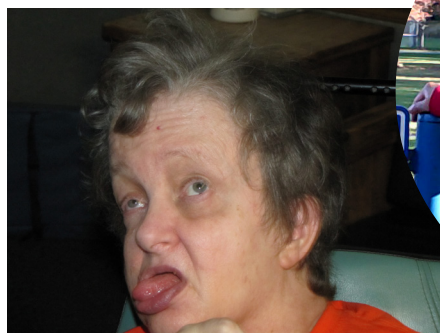
In Loving Memory of
those we lost to COVID-19

Joseph Red Tomahawk

Cecelia Gradijan

Deborah Marcum

Randy Pascual



Love Everlasting
The Extra Mile



Every year OPRA encourages all member agencies to submit nominations to recognize those who have worked hard to help support the people they serve. The awards come in ten categories. Echoing Hills is excited to announce three team members have received the awards this year! Enjoy excerpts from their nominations.



Behind the Scenes Award – Heather Woolum, HR Generalist

Heather is a wonderful ambassador for Echoing Hills, in assisting staff, management, and the individuals we serve. She is the kind of person who gives to give. She has, on countless occasions, taken time out of her busy schedule to meet with people one-on-one to help, mentor, and just listen. Heather makes people feel seen, heard, and valued. She shows servant leadership and inspires others to give back and pay it forward.

The goal is for the team to be heard and supported. What's working and what isn't. It's simple but so valuable. A happy and fulfilled team delivers an optimal program for those we serve! This has aided in the realization that she has become a valuable resource to the Regional Director as well as a support system for the leadership team.

She is known as the "go-to" person for her region and receives calls that draw upon her experience for information and advice. Heather is helpful, caring, resourceful, and happy to offer service no matter the task. Additionally, under unfortunate circumstances, when COVID-19 impacted our Southwest Region, without a thought, Heather put on PPE and joined the front line team right on the floor. Given we were experiencing a labor shortage due to the virus, her first inclination was how I could help. She is a great teammate. Her team spirit, quick wit, and loyalty to Echoing Hills have endeared her quickly to her colleagues. Heather saw the team grow weary with fatigue and fear as the virus struck two of the homes. She took it upon herself to work with the Region's Leadership, Corporate Leadership, and our Chaplain to arrange a time via Zoom to come together to support one another and to pray together.

She carries out the mission and has positively impacted our staff and individuals. She has made a significant contribution to Echoing Hills and projects a warm, cheerful attitude to our team and individuals. I have seen her resolve conflicts and handle difficult situations with patience and tact. She loves people, works hard, and always tries to lift the spirits of those around her. It isn't uncommon for her to make cookies and surprise the team – because she knows it is a warm and fuzzy that brings them joy! Her skills, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication make her a great nominee for The Behind the Scenes Award.

Direct Support Professional Award – Madison Jackson, DSP

Madison Jackson is a ROCK STAR – she is our Direct Support Professional of the Year – each and every day! When we asked other team members (QIDP's and peers), along with the individuals-served and their families, what they have to say about Maddi, there is a common theme. She is admired, cherished, and loved! This isn't just a job to Maddi – receiving a paycheck every two weeks – it is her life.

When Maddi was made aware of the labor shortage in our Southwest Region due to COVID-19 hitting two of our homes, she stepped up to the plate and volunteered to go work there to serve. She didn't give it a second thought. "She is selfless," explains a supervisor. As we heard news stories and even encountered some of these experiences of our own, front line teams not showing up because of their fears, Maddi was saying, 'I will go!' She did this knowing she wouldn't see her own family and friends for at least a month.

The blessing and affirmation from a family – trusting us – thanks to Maddi is yet another of the greatest testaments.

Making the decision to move Aric to a residential facility was the single most agonizing decision I had to ever make in my life. He had already lost so much in the year prior to his move, his caregiver and beloved mother, his home, hobbies, and any sense of normalcy he had been afforded by living with us while we searched for a permanent placement. My worst fear, as I left him alone in his room at Echoing Hills for the first time, was that he would feel alone and afraid. He was a stranger to his caregivers, and they were strangers to him. He is deaf, and his speech is poor; all attempts to teach him sign language or alternate communication methods had failed. I was concerned that he would never truly feel at home in this new environment and that ultimately, he would withdraw into himself and slowly wither away.

Then along came Maddi.

Slowly but surely, she began to build a rapport with Aric. Despite major communication barriers, she won his trust. She took the time to get to know him, his interests, his history, what made him frustrated, and what truly mattered to him. She even came on her days off to take him on outings to his favorite restaurant or ball games with her family.

Maddi stepped up in the most touching way when quarantine prevented us from celebrating Aric's birthday with him for the first time in 44 years. On the day of his birthday, she went to work early and completely decorated his room with streamers and balloons and Happy Birthday signs. She made sure he had presents to open, candles for his cake, and did her best to include us in the celebration by Facetimeing us while the residents and staff sang Happy Birthday to him. I will never forget the smile on his face. I couldn't stop the tears that night. I was overwhelmed with gratitude.

I could share so many more examples of Maddi's selfless love, but suffice it to say that she is nothing less than an angel in the eyes of our family. An answer to prayers. Aric is thriving at Echoing Hills due in no small part of her purposeful effort to make him feel safe, loved, and accepted.

And that, my friends, says it all.



Volunteer of the Year Award – Lacey Richcreek

Lacey Richcreek is a young woman who is wise beyond her 18 years. She thinks of others and how she can make a difference in this world. Lacey has a soft spot for the people who live at Echoing Hills. She attended Camp Echoing Hills when she was younger and hoped to return as a camp volunteer this summer. You see, Lacey is no stranger to disabilities. She has walked that journey in her life, having been born with Cerebral Palsy.



For the 2019 holiday season, Lacey chose to start a fundraiser on Facebook. She used Facebook as her only avenue to sell Cerebral Palsy awareness t-shirts. Lacey raised \$1,000! She did all the work herself. This girl is ambitious, adventurous, and does not shy away from a challenge. A quick example is a fact that she has been skiing and parasailing – have you been parasailing? Lacey's goal for the fundraiser was to be successful in raising enough funds to buy a gift for each person living at Echoing Hills of Central Ohio. \$1,000 was far more than she anticipated, but she quickly moved to the idea of buying more than one gift per person and donating the leftover funds. The people living at Echoing Hills of Central Ohio are grateful for her thoughtful act of kindness. Lacey was concerned that adults might be forgotten at Christmas where presents are concerned, and she did not want that. She wanted everyone to have a gift to open.

Lacey is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ. She has a steadfast faith that does not waiver. She started going to church with her grandparents and attended Sacred Heart School, the only school that would take her, and that turned out to be an amazing blessing. She told us how others around her showed her God's love and that it grew inside her. One particular Nun stood out to Lacey. She took Lacey under her wing and taught her to climb stairs, speak in class, and in public...in other words, teaching her independence and challenging her to be the very best she could be. At six years old, Lacey did not see the value in what this Nun was teaching her, but when Lacey grew older, and this amazing woman had passed away, the value became real. Lacey said, and I quote, "I learned more about myself after her death than when she was alive. Because at six years old, you don't really care like you do when you get older." Profound words from a very grown-up heart. She remarked that she does not have many friends in mainstream high school because her values and principles are different...but she quickly says that it is okay because her heart belongs to God.

One of our Partners of Hope, Lacey, embodies the real Heart of Volunteer – giving selflessly of her time and talent. If you were to meet Lacey, just by looking into her eyes, you would see the love of Jesus because her heart belongs to God.

Who wants to serve and make a difference?
We are gearing up for Summer Camp 2021!

FUN FRIENDS



In our busy and unpredictable world, the opportunity to serve is never far away. Most of us feel we have little impact on the world around us, though. And yet, changing a life is one of the easier things we can do here at Camp Echoing Hills. Whether you are a camper, a family, a volunteer or camp staff, every life is changed for the better. So, in the midst of our busy lives, why should you make time for volunteering or joining the summer camp staff? Because YOU can have an impact! You don't have to go out of the country for mission work – it's right here in your own backyard!

God has given each of us the opportunity to change the lives of others, and at Echoing Hills, we can't wait to see what you can offer the individuals we serve (AND what you get back in return). If you would like more information on volunteering for a week at Camp Echoing Hills 2021, or joining us for the summer season as paid staff, we want to hear from YOU!

Lauren Unger, Camp Administrator 740.327.0300 Option 2



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Residential



Adult



Education



Recreation