

FALL 2022/WINTER 2023

BUILDING CONNECTIONS



The Hidden Homeless



While visiting a major city, you may have seen people sleeping on benches, sitting on the sidewalk with a small collection of essentials, or standing on the side of the street with a sign. It's a common scene that occurs in cities across our country. Chances are, this is what you picture when the topic of homelessness arises. Even though homelessness does not have just one look or situation to describe the true complexities of who experiences it and why, it has been categorized as a largely urban issue.

Living in America's small communities, like Elizabethtown, it is easy to adopt an "out of sight, out of mind" perspective on social issues like homelessness. People experiencing rural homelessness often live in places we do not see, such as campgrounds, abandoned farm buildings, the woods, cars, or other places not meant for human habitation – donning the term "hidden homeless" (National Alliance to End Homelessness [NAEH], 2010). Rural residents are also at higher risk of living doubled up with friends or family or in inadequate housing, two scenarios that the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) does not recognize as homelessness. These scenarios often play

out in small towns across America in the form of people sleeping on couches and in basements that are not appropriate for long-term solutions.

What does this mean for Elizabethtown and the surrounding areas? It means that having localized social services tailored to the barriers people living in rural areas experience, like lack of transportation, shortage of affordable housing, poverty, lack of access to medical care, and alcohol abuse, for example, is crucial (NAEH, 2010). "One of the key differences between rural and urban homelessness is a lower capacity in the homeless service provider infrastructure in rural areas as opposed to urban areas" (NAEH, 2010, para. 6). Therefore, it is vital for organizations like ECHOS to exist.

However, creating ECHOS in 2016 and recognizing that homelessness, housing insecurity, and insufficient income are prevalent issues in this community was just the beginning. Now, our sights need to be set on expanding our services to continue reducing experiences of homelessness for our neighbors. You may ask why ECHOS only operates the Elizabethtown Emergency Shelter four

months out of the year then? The effects of underestimating the prevalence of rural homelessness and poverty do not stop at a lack of public awareness. It also affects funding, which agencies, like ECHOS, rely on to be able to sustainably run programs annually, and in perpetuity. According to HUD's Homeless Assistance Award Report for the 2021 fiscal year, Philadelphia received \$36,381,810 in funding from HUD compared to \$2,837,881 directed to Lancaster County.

The \$2.8 million in funding that is directed towards Lancaster County is then divided amongst numerous agencies all seeking to provide services to those in need. To supplement this gap in funding, ECHOS turns to the local community to supplement the funding that is needed just for the four months the Elizabethtown Emergency Shelter is open each year. The financial – and other operational needs, like volunteers and staffing, would need to increase exponentially to enable ECHOS move towards a year-round shelter. In the absence of funding and resources are still "the hidden homeless," who continue finding themselves having to sleep in our parks, in their cars, and in someone else's home.



The Common Wheel

A lack of reliable and accessible transportation is one of the greatest barriers ECHOS sees when working with community members. Without a way to reliably get to and from work, for example, income becomes unreliable and so can their housing situation. While ECHOS does not directly have the resources to provide transportation to our clients, we have a wonderful working relationship with The Common Wheel out of Lancaster through their Bikes for All program!

The Common Wheel was founded in 2014, and now has two locations in Lancaster city; a community center and shop that offers adult programming, hosts events, sells new and refurbished bicycles, and offers professional bicycle service. Not only have they created a space that provides essential bicycle services, a safe and affirming space for youth to come, and a place to learn some fun STEM skills, but they have developed a program to help low-income individuals receive bikes that enables them to get to work, get groceries, and have a form of transportation that is efficient and affordable.

Just this fall, two ECHOS clients benefited directly from ECHOS' partnership with The Common Wheel. One client was enrolled in our crisis housing program with his family after two years of unstable housing and three different episodes of homelessness. While employment was secured for this client, the transportation to and from was an ongoing issue. Our case advocate reached out to The



"Transportation is the second highest line item in most people's budgets – eliminating that can help folks save to afford better housing, save for school, or spend money out boosting the economy," according to Adriana Atencio, Executive Director at The Common Wheel.

Common Wheel and was able to obtain a free mountain bike so he now has a reliable means to get to work and can move one step closer to their goal of sustainable income and housing.

Another client was working through the ECHOS Enrichment Center program due to being street-level homeless and having very few resources or family support. The client was offered employment in a neighboring area but was faced with possibly having to decline due to not having a vehicle. Through our collaboration with The Common Wheel, the client now has a bike and was able to accept the job as he works towards becoming sheltered. He will continue to be supported through ECHOS by

receiving to-go food bags, hygiene supplies, shower and laundry access, and emergency shelter.

The Common Wheel acknowledges that many in our communities need access to affordable and practical transportation, and that just happens to be the bicycle.

Community members come to ECHOS with a variety of needs, and while we have a lot of resources available internally, we also recognize that there are many needs our clients have that are better served by other agencies. Forming relationships and working together with other local providers is key to our clients' success!

By the Numbers

1st Quarter Numbers (July 2022 through October 2022)

Unduplicated Clients:

435



Rental Assistance:



\$65,362

Volunteer Profile, Bryan Musser

**“We make a living by what we get;
we make a life by what we give.” – Winston Churchill**

While there is extensive work that goes on behind the scenes of the Elizabethtown Emergency Shelter in terms of funding, policies and procedures, and coordination, we recognize that our day-to-day operations would not be possible without the dedication of our volunteers! One of our longest-running volunteers is Bryan Musser, who agreed to share some of his thoughts with us!

Tell me a little about yourself and what made you decide to volunteer.

I currently live in Elizabethtown, graduated from EAHS, and raised my daughters here. I enjoy the outdoors, especially when riding a bike. As a follower of Jesus, I believe we are his hands and feet, and volunteering is a way to make a difference.

Have you volunteered in other places before? Why did you choose ECHOS?

I attend Elizabethtown Brethren in Christ Church. I’ve volunteered with some of the children’s programs previously and currently volunteer with the Welcome Team. I also volunteered during the construction of the new building where

ECHOS is located. I initially learned about ECHOS through my church. I believe in ECHOS’ mission and the impact of volunteering in my community.

How do you view the work ECHOS is doing and what a volunteer’s role is in this work?

I believe ECHOS provides valuable resources to those in our community. Some of the programs can only exist with volunteers so it’s critical our community gets involved to support those in need.

Can you speak a little about your experience as a volunteer?

I was initially apprehensive about volunteering with the Elizabethtown Emergency Shelter because I tend to be introverted, but I felt led to do this and now it will be my fourth year volunteering. I volunteer in the evenings, which allows me to welcome the guests in for the night. We check guests in, secure any personal belongings if needed, and serve them a hot meal (which is already prepared, no cooking required!). The tasks are low impact and just require you to provide a

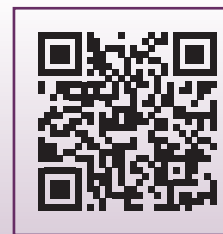


warm smile and show the guests respect. Some guests also appreciate a friendly conversation.

What has been an unexpected blessing or surprise as a result of volunteering?

I’ve been blessed by volunteering because it’s helped me step out of my comfort zones. I try to engage in a conversation and ask how someone is doing instead of avoiding it.

Interested in volunteering?



Please visit <https://echoslancaster.org/get-involved/> or scan the code.

Case Management:

\$96,279

Transportation Assistance:
\$217


Other Financial Assistance:

\$2,169

Apartment Application Fees:
\$548.77

You can make a difference in alleviating poverty.



Leading the Fight against homelessness in the Northwest Region of Lancaster County.

Together we are transforming lives and helping break the cycles of poverty.

Thank you for being a vital part of our mission.



YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Families are able to stay together in the Elizabethtown Emergency Shelter.

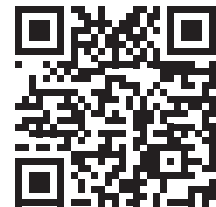
Veterans and senior citizens have access to transitional housing.

Clients have free access to job training, case advocates, crisis housing, and more.



Elizabethtown Community
Housing & Outreach Services

Save a stamp and consider donating online by scanning the QR code or by visiting:
<https://echoslancaster.org/give/>



Thank you for your gift. You will receive a receipt for income tax purposes.



This year has been one of financial trials and worries even in the best of circumstances. For those in our community who are already dependent on the next paycheck to arrive, one missed bill or unexpected expense can quickly lead down a path of housing instability.

There are many people in our community who are living in unstable or unsafe housing conditions. People who are not

able to adjust to the rising cost of food, gas, and other expenses. People who lack the resources or skills to navigate the social services system. It is because of donors and supporters like you that ECHOS is able to say "yes" to those in our community who are in need!

With your support, lives are positively changing! Families are able to have a dry, safe, and warm roof over their heads. The elderly population, veterans, and people with disabilities are able to have transitional housing. Elizabethtown middle and high school students have access to a Crisis Response Counselor. And more families experiencing poverty will receive the information and referrals they need to reach stability.



While we celebrate the burdens we have been able to lift for some of our neighbors, we are all too aware of the ones who are still struggling and the work still ahead. Together with your support, we can continue to see lives transformed and hope restored.



YES! I WANT TO PROVIDE HOPE AND STABILITY

Yes! I WILL MAKE A GIFT to invest in preventing and alleviating poverty in Lancaster County.

BY CREDIT CARD: Please charge my credit/debit card \$ _____

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I would like to make this donation:

A one-time gift A recurring, monthly gift. Charge my credit card \$ _____ per month until notified.

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Signature (required): _____

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My company has matching gifts. Company Name: _____

Mail this form with payment to: ECHOS • 105 E. Washington St • Elizabethtown, PA 17022

Please indicate any change of name, address or email address .

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Elizabethtown Community
Housing & Outreach Services

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FALL 2022/WINTER 2023

BUILDING CONNECTIONS

2ND ANNUAL
ECHOS 

of Hope Gala

A Night of Inspiring Hope
& Celebrating Change

2022 ECHOS OF HOPE GALA

Thank you. We use those two words often, but they rarely receive the pause and reflection that they deserve. As we reflect on the 2nd Annual ECHOS of Hope Gala, we are filled with so much gratitude for the number of people who showed up to support us.

This year, we are humbled to announce that we were able to raise more than \$95,000 for the programs and services that ECHOS provides! Whether you sponsored the Gala, purchased an auction item, participated in Champagne & Diamonds, or just graced us with your attendance, YOU helped us reach this goal! You provided us with funds for our mission of helping those in the Greater

Elizabethtown Area who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. **Thank you.**

While we celebrate the success of the evening, we must also give thanks to those behind the scenes. The months and days leading up to an event of this scale are filled with hours upon hours of hard work. The event would not have been possible without the dedication and heart of the ECHOS Fund Development Committee who were our feet on the ground securing sponsorships, silent auction items, and helping to spread the word about the work we are doing here at ECHOS. **Thank you.**



Without the incredible support of our ECHOS of Hope Gala sponsors, the amount raised would have been considerably less, which equals fewer clients we are able to serve. We are grateful for the support of all our sponsors and for their continued belief in our mission. **Thank you.**



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