



# From *our* homes to yours

A Newsletter for the Families & Guardians of Individuals Supported by Erie Homes for Children & Adults, Inc.



## Funding Concerns Inspire Teamwork

from the desk of Paul Carpenedo, Executive Director

The current fiscal year's budget has been a most challenging one since the final state budget passed did not include funds for any cost of living adjustment for the existing services provided by EHCA. Despite a significant economic downturn, costs in many areas have increased. Because of this fact, it has been necessary to find ways to contain and reduce costs in many areas. This is always a difficult process with difficult choices having to be made. As staff have looked at numerous ways to cut costs, I have been impressed that maintaining the quality of services and supports to the consumer has always been foremost in their thinking. When faced with cutting costs, virtually everyone is impacted.

However, our staff have tried very hard to minimize any impact to the people we support. In addition, the employees have formed a fundraising committee to try to replace some of the lost revenues to make it possible to still meet special needs and to preserve some of those special recreational and leisure activities that are so important to **"living a rich and fulfilling life."**

## Photos: Partners in Dance Holiday Celebration

December 2009



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# What is Sleep Apnea?

from the desk of Mary Jo Fulton, Director of Nursing and Health Services



Sleep Apnea is a problem that affects over 20 million children, men and women in the United States. Several of our residents are treated for sleep apnea. Most people who have sleep apnea do not realize they suffer from the condition. People who have obstructive sleep apnea stop breathing repeatedly during sleep because the airway collapses. These disruptions impair your ability to reach the desired deep, restful phases of sleep, and you'll probably feel sleepy during your waking hours. People with obstructive sleep apnea may not be aware that their sleep was interrupted. In fact, many people with this type of sleep apnea think they sleep well all night.

This airway collapse may be due to such factors as a large tongue, extra tissue in the airway, or decreased muscle tone holding the airway open. As a result, air is prevented from getting into the lungs, thereby preventing oxygen from getting to vital organs of the body. These pauses in breathing can occur as many as 25 to 30 times or more per hour. Often, it is someone else who witnesses the first signs of obstructive sleep apnea. If you or someone you know snores regularly and has one or more of the other signs of sleep apnea, it may be obstructive sleep apnea. Other signs of sleep apnea may include: excessive daytime sleepiness, choking or gasping during the day, grogginess, morning headaches, waking up with a dry mouth or sore throat, frequent urination at night, depression and irritability, large neck, and obesity.

When healthy sleep is interrupted by sleep apnea, the risk of developing heart disease, heart attack, hypertension and stroke is increased. There may also be an increased risk for fatigue-related motor vehicle and work accidents. Sleep apnea also tends to decrease the overall quality of life.

continued on next page

## From the Editor

Happy new year to each of you! Happy new decade, for that matter! At EHCA we are embracing 2010 and making some exciting changes. One of which is the new Web site which launched recently. Please visit online at [www.ehca.org](http://www.ehca.org) and explore our new home on the web. My favorite part of the new site is Bill's Blog, written by a resident at EHCA. See what he has to say about EHCA and his daily activities!

EHCA is also on Facebook and Twitter. Become our fan or follower today!

While EHCA is celebrating the newness of the decade and exploring ways to use today's technology to reach all of you, we are still nostalgic for the past and have launched a project to uncover our rich history in efforts gearing up for our 100th Anniversary in 2012. If any of you would like to volunteer on our planning committee or would like to help with research and photo archiving, please let me know!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Fritz".

Emily Fritz, Communications Specialist

## Management Team

**Paul Carpenedo**  
*Executive Director*

**Mary Jo Fulton**  
*Director of Nursing and Health Services*

**Polly Momeyer**  
*Director of Human Resources*

**William F. Harriger**  
*Chief Financial Officer*

**Peg Smith-Rich**  
*Director of Residential and Program Services*

**Hope Ruedy**  
*Director of Community Services*

**James A. Steber**  
*Director of Planned Giving and Community Support*

**Patricia Straub**  
*Executive Secretary*

# Save the Date!

Saturday, June 5, 2010

Presque Isle State Park, Erie



We are one of 28 organizations participating in the 2010 Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community.

Mark your calendar, find those walking shoes, and register your team online today at [www.walkforahealthycommunity.org](http://www.walkforahealthycommunity.org).

## What is Sleep Apnea?, continued from previous page

If you think you may suffer from sleep apnea, see your doctor. Evaluation by a doctor specializing in sleep disorders is recommended. Have a sleep study done. A sleep study can provide the doctor with information about how you sleep and breathe. This information will help the doctor to determine your diagnosis and treatment options.

The most common treatment is use of a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine. CPAP therapy will relieve the airway obstruction that occurs during sleep. The CPAP machine stops this phenomenon by delivering a stream of compressed air via a hose to a nasal pillow, nose mask or full-face mask, splinting the airway and keeping it open under air pressure so that unobstructed breathing becomes possible, reducing and/or preventing sleep apnea. The system must be worn every night during sleep to achieve optimum therapy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jo Fulton, R.N., M.S.".

## Residential Program Kicks Off 2010

from the desk of Peg Smith-Rich, Director of Residential and Program Services

It was very nice seeing everyone at the holiday parties at the homes in December. Residents and staff worked very hard on the decorations, refreshments and gifts. Everyone appeared to be having a great time, and I gained 5 pounds after grazing at 16 parties!

In January, we welcomed two Edinboro University social work interns, Sarah Smith and Sarah Whitman. They will be with us for 10 weeks. One project they will be working on is updating our social – family histories. At admission time, we try to obtain current social histories and update from time to time, but we would like to do a more thorough history for our records. Sarah and Sarah may be calling you to ask current information.

Our electronic records system, called CareTracker, is up and running, and we have most records on the system. It has been busy learning the system, but it is a great tool as far as pulling reports and reviewing compliance with documentation. The kiosks are mounted in each home and in the MOVE studio. We can also use laptops to access the system, and we can run the system from our office computers.

I will be starting to contact families regarding becoming your family member's legal guardian. At the age of 18, your son/daughter becomes an adult. Some may be able to make their own decisions for themselves, but some may not. This is mostly centered around medical decisions. We can work with our attorney, or you can use your own. A lot of parents, siblings or friends are already legal guardians or power of attorney, so this will only affect some newer clients or those whose child is just turning 18 this year.

I also want you to be aware that the amount of Social Security Income (SSI) your family member receives is being decreased by \$5.30 a month by the federal government. This should not greatly affect the amount of items he/she can purchase.

As always, if you have any questions, please contact me at any time. Have a peaceful 2010!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peg Smith-Rich".



# Community Programs' Updates

from the desk of Hope Ruedy, Director of Community Services



I'd like to take the time to update you on some of our various community programs.

We have begun serving people under our newest program, **Autism Waiver**. This program has taken some time to get started. There are numerous services available under this waiver, very similar to other waivers. The favorite services are community inclusion and job finding. We expect this program to continue to grow.

After graduating our first class in August 2009, the second class of students in the **OASIS Program** for people with intellectual disabilities to study culinary arts at Mercyhurst College, are now in their second semester at Mercyhurst North East. The students are doing well and enjoying college life!

**Project First Step**, our program that serves women (both pre- and post- natal), and their children, appreciated the staff and friends who contributed Christmas gifts, through our 'Be-A-Friend' program, for the moms and their families.

Additionally, 17 families served through EHCA community programs each received a turkey and two bags of groceries for Thanksgiving dinner, thanks to fundraising by Grace Church and First Assemblies.

The SNAP groups in the **Options Program** participated in several activities during the last quarter of 2009, including volunteering and special activities. The following is a portion of pursuits of some of the SNAP groups:

## OCTOBER:

- ◆ Port Farms hay ride
- ◆ Pumpkin carving/decorating contest
- ◆ ESO dances
- ◆ Trip to Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
- ◆ Halloween party
- ◆ October birthday luncheons
- ◆ Trip to the Pittsburgh Science Museums

## NOVEMBER:

- ◆ WICU TV 12 annual food drive
- ◆ Thanksgiving dinner prepared by the individuals
- ◆ Had a food drive (internally among the groups) to help a family in which the father was laid off and the mother had open heart surgery
- ◆ Baked cookies for shut-ins

## DECEMBER:

- ◆ Christmas caroling at local nursing homes
- ◆ Made cards for the patients at nursing homes
- ◆ Christmas party
- ◆ Made Christmas gifts for family members

The first quarter of 2010 is shaping up nicely, and I look forward to sharing more exciting news with you all soon!



*Hope Ruedy*

## Now Servicing Potter County

EHCA has recently expanded services into Potter County. Currently, EHCA serves 17 people through the Options Program, which includes SNAP, respite, and companion services. Many of the people being served volunteer at sites, such as: Coudersport Senior Center, area food banks, and the Charles Cole Memorial Hospital.

EHCA would like to thank the community for welcoming them and helping get services started in Potter County. Businesses who have already donated to EHCA include:

- ◆ Charles Cole Memorial Hospital Wellness Center
- ◆ Dickinson Mental Health
- ◆ Dollar General, Coudersport
- ◆ Erways Market
- ◆ Potter Leader Enterprise
- ◆ Potter County Human Services
- ◆ Tennessee Gas Pipeline, Coudersport

Additionally, the Potter County staff would like to thank Todd Brown for his over-and-above generosity.

EHCA is looking forward to growing in Potter County and meeting many new people along the way!

## Did you know...?

**EHCA runs  
9 programs,  
16 group homes,  
and serves 275  
people every day.**

# Residents Enjoy a Disney Vacation

October 2009

Residents Janet Brasington and Susan Franz of 216 East 27th Street, along with Ashley Sheridan and Amber Leasure of Walbridge Group Home, were able to enjoy a Disney Cruise this past October. Accompanied by staff and a few family members, the four women enjoyed nightly entertainment during delicious dinners, meeting famous characters, and stealing time on a beach.



**“It was very clear the goal of the EHCA staff was to provide an experience of a lifetime to Amber and the others.**

**Through their dedication and determination to provide Amber, Ashley, Janet, and Susan the best vacation possible, they also provided the rest of us with the time of our lives!”**

**-Debbie Leasure, Amber’s mom**

## Get Your Family’s Story Featured

Please look for a publicity permission form to arrive in your mailbox—and please complete and return as soon as possible! Your loved ones tell the story of EHCA, and being allowed to share their photos and inspirational journeys helps EHCA spread the good news of what is happening in our agency to our supporters.

Additionally, EHCA is looking for in-depth family stories to tell! If one of our interns or our communications specialist hasn’t yet interviewed you, and you are interested in sharing your personal story with us and our audiences, please contact Emily Fritz, communications specialist, at 814-454-1534, ext. 157, or via e-mail at [fritz@ehca.org](mailto:fritz@ehca.org).

Thank you!

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extraordinary **people**, extraordinary **programs**



*From Our Homes to Yours* is published bi-annually.  
EHCA is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization.  
Gifts of cash or securities are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law and are deeply appreciated.



## What's Happening

### Ongoing:

The Residential Program's group homes are taking turns hosting small agency fundraisers, such as taking orders for pepperoni balls or selling calendars. Be on the lookout for these items!

### April 30:

9th Annual Spring Swing

### May:

Tickets for a special lottery raffle will be on sale—don't miss the opportunity to purchase yours! Every day in June is a winner!

### June 5:

Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community

For more information, please contact Emily Fritz at 454-1534 or [fritz@ehca.org](mailto:fritz@ehca.org).



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/training available, and to enjoy a home-like atmosphere with quality caregivers.

