



# East Suburban Citizen Advocacy

*Do something extraordinary.  
Become a Citizen Advocate.*

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE ADVOCACY & TO BUILD INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

OCTOBER 2017 ISSUE

## Halloween Hustle 5K Fun Run/Walk & Kids' Dash

In conjunction with the East Suburban Trailblazers, ESCA will sponsor an inclusive Halloween Hustle 5k run/walk & kids' dash on Saturday, October 21 at 9 AM–12 PM. The event will occur at the Murrysville Community Park.

Check-in starts at 8 AM. Participants are invited to wear their Halloween costume or favorite Halloween-colored outfit.

After the races, a brief ceremony will award the first place winners in each category as well as top finishers overall. Awards for best costumes will also be handed out.

The cost to participate is \$25 for the 5k run/walk and \$15 for the kids' dash. All proceeds benefit East Suburban Citizen Advocacy and the Murrysville Miracle League in support of inclusive programming for individuals with developmental disabilities.

To register, please visit <https://www.active.com/murrysville-pa/running/distance-running-races/halloween-hustle-5k-2017>.



## Fall Birthday Dance

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, ESCA hosted an inclusive fall dance at the Integral Ballroom in Murrysville. The event celebrated the birthday of Trina, a friend of ESCA.

The party consisted of music, dancing, and refreshments. In addition to being a fun event for all involved, it gave individuals with disabilities an opportunity to integrate into the broader community and socialize with others in a safe and upbeat environment.

A certified dance instructor taught the partygoers various dance styles such as the Twist and Merengue. Music ranged

from traditional folk songs like “Cotton Eye Joe” to contemporary pop hits such as “Shut Up and Dance” by Walk the Moon.

Friends of ESCA will have a chance to show-off their new dance moves at ESCA’s annual Christmas party on December 10<sup>th</sup>.



## Music, Mystery, & Meatballs

With the backing of ESCA, Welcome to Music performed a one-act whodunit titled *Murder Well Rehearsed* on August 20<sup>th</sup> at the Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church – Fellowship Hall.

The cast was comprised of individuals aged six & older and of all abilities.

A spaghetti dinner accompanied the performance. Proceeds for the event funded future opportunities and programming for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Welcome to Music will perform its next show, *The Polar Express*, in December.



*Attendees enjoy a spaghetti dinner before the performance*

## Film Review Blog by Friend of ESCA

Andrew, a young man in his twenties who has Asperger's, recently set up a weblog with the help of an ESCA staff writer.

The blog contains film reviews by Andrew, who is a movie buff with a particular interest in animation studios such as Pixar and DreamWorks.

In fact, his love for these studios led him to graduate from Edinboro University with a degree in animation.

Moreover, he enjoys filling notebooks with choice quotes from his favorite films.

Here is an excerpt from his review of Disney's *Zootopia*:

"During the heist, they encounter all sorts of colorful creatures of various shapes, sizes, and personalities, ranging from a sloth named Flash who steals the show in one hilarious scene, to a small Marlon Brando-like shrew named Mr. Big."



If you would like to check out his blog, please visit [www.ajgardeareviews.weebly.com](http://www.ajgardeareviews.weebly.com).

## Staff Attends Mental Health Symposium

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, ESCA attended a mental health symposium at Penn State Beaver. The purpose of the event was to educate the public on ways to recognize symptoms of mental illness and ensure that at-risk individuals receive the necessary treatment.

Without proper treatment, individuals with mental illnesses are more likely to harm themselves or others.



Parents whose sons committed mass-murder spoke at the conference, discussing how mental illness impacted their families.

The symposium also involved speakers who expounded on misrepresentations of mental illnesses by the media.

Although treating mental illness is not the primary focus at ESCA, many of the people we serve have a dual diagnosis that includes mental health issues. We wish to support them as best we can.



## Staff Trained by Vera Institute

Staff members at ESCA have been attending monthly trainings presented by the Vera Institute of Justice and sponsored by the FISA Foundation.

The purpose of these trainings is to improve services for individuals with disabilities who are victims of abuse.

During the most recent training, staff members learned about the

benefits and challenges of mandatory reporting in cases involving abuse of individuals with disabilities.

The session included a discussion on navigating possible tensions that can arise during the reporting of domestic and sexual violence against people with disabilities

Through these trainings, ESCA is coordinating opportunities with

the Blackburn Center, which specializes in advocacy for victims of abuse and violence.

The Vera Institute emphasizes that all successful efforts to address abuse against people with disabilities begin with a very intentional, long-term partnership between a disability service and a victim service agency.

## Person Centered Plan Training

Due to the push for community inclusion in the workplace, ESCA has been asked to provide person centered plan training for large organizations.

For over a decade, ESCA has been putting together teams for person centered plans. During these meetings, staff and team members work with individuals to brainstorm ways to tackle personal issues and achieve goals.

The team sits around a big table, and through the process, the individual's strengths, shortcomings, backgrounds, and aspirations are revealed.

By focusing on the possibilities rather than the disabilities, many people have gone on to get suitable jobs, obtain college degrees, and start up their own businesses.

Countless crises involving housing, financial, and medical issues have been solved in unique and creative ways.

These meetings have also shed light on the shortage of opportunities in the community for individuals with disabilities. In response, ESCA developed multiple programs such as support groups, art and exercise classes, and many social events.

## Social Entrepreneurship

Franklin Regional High School offers a course titled Social Entrepreneurship, which focuses on helping community non-profits with specialized projects.

Students taking the course are currently helping ESCA with our social media accounts and our updated brochure. With this support, ESCA hopes to expand its online presence and connect better with the community.



*Staff members Spencer Bonfiglio and Simone D'Souza with student intern and Social Entrepreneurship class liaison, Michael Campbell [centered]*



Since 1988, East Suburban Citizen Advocacy (ESCA) has been dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with all disabilities. ESCA, a nonprofit organization, networks to identify and support advocates who give a voice to the most vulnerable people with disabilities. It takes the assistance of like-minded members of the community, who care deeply for children and adults, to maximize our positive impact.

*Our mission is to provide advocacy and to build inclusive opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. We envision a community in which all people are appreciated and accepted without question and where dignity and equality are unconditionally enjoyed.*

Our organization relies on the generosity of individuals and businesses in the community. In light of that, we are presenting several opportunities in the upcoming year to either donate or volunteer your time. Your donation is also tax deductible (EIN# 25-1569734). Please consider supporting our efforts to enrich the lives of children and adults in our community.

To provide your support, please return this form along with your check payable to ESCA, write "Donation with category designation" in the memo, and mail to: 4407 Old William Penn Highway Suite 300 Murrysville, PA 15668. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call the office at 724-325-3344.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT LEVELS FOR OUR INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING AND CONTINUED ADVOCACY EFFORTS:**

- \$25 COPPER STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Support Groups:* Inclusive play group (birth-age five), Moms to Moms, and for parents of children with severe disabilities
- \$35 SILVER STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Exercise Classes:* Drumstix, Bootcamp, and ESCA Trailblazers Running/Walking Club
- \$50 BRONZE STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Arts:* Art from the Heart, Painting, and Jewelry classes
- \$75 GOLD STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Performing Arts:* Welcome to Music and ACTING UP
- \$100 TITANIUM STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Social Events-* Large social events, Dances, Christmas Party and special events
- \$200 PLATINUM STAR SPONSORSHIP-** *Advocacy-* Abuse/Neglect, Educational, and Employment Support
- or Volunteer at East Suburban Citizen Advocacy-** *We are seeking professionals such as attorneys, physicians, teachers, and accountants as well as general office support and gifted individuals who would like to share their special skills or provide friendship to an individual with a developmental disability.*

For more information about ESCA, please call us at 724-325-3344 or visit our website at [www.eastsuburbancitizenadvocacy.org](http://www.eastsuburbancitizenadvocacy.org). Our office is located at 4407 Old William Penn Hwy, Murrysville, PA 15668.