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## Supporting Our Community, Together

ECHO's mission is to empower people in SLO County to make positive change by providing food, shelter, and supportive services.

Since its inception in 2001, ECHO has epitomized the spirit of compassion and community service. What started with a small group of volunteers providing meals quickly grew into utilizing local churches to offer warming shelters across North County San Luis Obispo. In 2008, ECHO opened our first campus, marking the beginning of our consistent services. By 2020, ECHO expanded further with a second location at the former Motel 6 in Paso Robles, with the Paso HomeKey Project. These milestones reflect our dedication to addressing homelessness with innovation, collaboration and compassion.

## Welcome to the 2024-2025 ECHO Newsletter!

Whether you're a long-time supporter or joining us for the first time, we hope these stories inspire you as much as they've inspired us. As we look back on a transformative year, we are filled with gratitude for the support from our community. From expanding our services to launching new initiatives like the Workforce Development Project, this year has been a powerful testament to what we can achieve together. Inside, you'll find stories of resilience, heartwarming successes, and a glimpse of the incredible volunteers who make ECHO's mission possible. Together, we're building hope and creating lasting change!





## Message from the CEO

As we close out another remarkable year at ECHO, I am filled with gratitude for our community of supporters, volunteers, and staff who have helped us achieve so much in 2024. From the growth of our programs to the success stories that continue to inspire us, it is clear that together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

This year, ECHO has seen more individuals and families transition into stable housing than ever before, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our team and the ongoing support of our community and you! Our programs have empowered participants to gain skills, secure employment, and find stable housing, setting them on a path toward long-term success.

But we're not stopping there. As we look ahead to 2025, I'm excited to share that something big is on the horizon—an initiative that will expand our capacity to serve even more families experiencing homelessness. While I can't reveal all the details just yet, I can promise you that it will be a game-changer in how we provide support and create lasting impact in our community, especially for our families with children!

Thank you for being a part of this journey. Together, we're building a future where every family has a place to call home.

With gratitude,

Wendy Lewis  
CEO

## Message from the Board

On behalf of the ECHO Board, I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation for your continued support. As we reflect on 2024, we are proud of the strides ECHO has made in addressing homelessness and providing vital services to our community. Your contributions have enabled us to create pathways to stability for countless individuals and families.

This year, we witnessed the profound impact of our programs', from shelter services to individualized case management and other supportive services. These tailored approaches are helping those in need navigate their unique challenges, providing them with the resources and support necessary

to regain stability. It's inspiring to see how our collective efforts are transforming lives and fostering resilience within our community.

Looking forward, we are excited about the future. We are on the brink of launching a significant initiative in 2025 that will allow us to expand our services even further. This is an exciting time for ECHO, and we are committed to ensuring that no family or individual has to face homelessness alone.

Thank you for being an integral part of our mission. Together, we are building a stronger, more compassionate community.

Warm regards,

Greer Woodruff  
Board Chair



## Celebrating Our Volunteers

At ECHO, our volunteers are the heart of our organization. Our beginning was rooted in volunteers from our community and still plays an incredible role in our organization today. We are proud to spotlight volunteers — from Paso Robles and Atascadero—whose commitments are helping us transform lives every day.



### Chris and John

*How do you see the impact of ECHO's programs on the individuals and families you've assisted? Can you describe a success story that stands out to you?*

**Chris & John:** We see ECHO's impact every time we're here. People know

they have a safe, clean and friendly place to welcome them. Interactions between staff and clients are consistently cordial and patient, we love the sense of community. It is especially inspiring when people we know have been living in the river come up to tell us they're in the 90-Day program now. There is a sense of relief, hope and pride that they have a home and a place to belong while they take the next steps.

*What advice would you give to someone who is considering volunteering with ECHO for the first time? How can they make the most of their experience?*

**Chris:** I think serving meals and serving on a team is really rewarding in a lot of ways. But, I have seen a lot of people that we work with, stay back and plate the food but I would suggest taking turns to actually serve the plate and make eye contact and say "Hi". That way you get to know people if you're seeing them on a regular basis.

### Reggie and Shannon

*What inspired you to get involved with El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) and become a volunteer?*

**Reggie:** We didn't find ECHO, it found us. We weren't looking to volunteer but it came through an opportunity through our church of ways to serve. It was a suggestion from the church that community groups needed to find somewhere to serve and somewhere we support. We had no plans of doing that, the plans found us through an opportunity.

When we took the opportunity, we found how amazing it was to be a part of it and that propelled us. That has propelled us now for all these years and it still does. When we see the fruit of all the efforts that ECHO puts into the community it's hard not to get excited and want to be a part of it.

*In your opinion, what is the most important role that volunteers play in supporting ECHO's mission and the people it serves?*

**Shannon & Reggie:** Sometimes we think we can do good by just giving. Actually, representing by being there, the connecting part. We really enjoy it when we do dinners there. We actually stick around there and visit. We stay there until everyone is gone for a lot of the time and I think there's big time value there. When we get to bring dinner, cook dinner there, serve dinner and eat dinner and dine with everyone. It's a personal connection and it carries a lot of weight. And it really goes both ways. For us it really is that personal connection.

*As a volunteer, what do you hope to see in the future for ECHO, and how do you envision its continued impact on the community?*

**Shannon:** More ECHOs! That you guys would be the template for other homeless shelters.

**Reggie:** Support. Continued support. Quality breeds quality. It's so easy to support a movement that is bearing abundant fruit. You start a movement, you need to be grounded and have a solid group of people and you have that. So, can this template be spread around? And I think it can because it spread to Paso successfully.





## Our Clients: The Heart of Our Mission

At ECHO, our clients are at the center of everything we do. Each individual and family we serve has a unique story and journey, and their resilience inspires us daily. This section is dedicated to showcasing the remarkable achievements of those who have utilized our services and transitioned into stable housing. As a celebration of this milestone, clients leave their handprint on our wall, marking their journey toward a brighter future. Their stories remind us that every effort we make is truly about empowering people to reclaim their lives, find hope, and build a new beginning.

Before coming to ECHO, **Barbara** was facing chronic homelessness. She had been surviving by living out of her car, but then she was in a tragic car accident that left her car inoperative. With nowhere else to turn, Barbara found herself sleeping outside, trying to find safety and hope.

Despite the hardships, Barbara never gave up. She had a pension from her retirement, but rising home

prices made finding a rental impossible. That's when Barbara found her way to ECHO, where she finally felt safe and supported. True to her nature, she spent her time here helping others—volunteering for the shower program and lending a hand wherever she could, simply because she wanted to give back.

Barbara's resilience and determination paid off. She found a room to rent with a local family, and in ECHO, she found a community that reminded her of the family she had lost.

When she received the news that she had secured a place to call home, Barbara felt an overwhelming sense of hope and gratitude—her prayers had been answered.

Before facing homelessness, **John** served as a caretaker for his mom, a role that gradually became challenging, straining their relationship. Eventually, he made the heart-wrenching decision to leave. Struggling to afford his own apartment on a limited budget, John soon found himself living in his vehicle. A friend recommended ECHO, and with a glimmer of hope, John decided to explore the possibilities of ECHO's 90 Day Emergency Shelter Program.



Upon arriving at ECHO, John connected with one of our compassionate case managers who started his housing plan and guided him to valuable resources like the Shower and Laundry Programs that he could use right away. Soon after, he entered the 90 Day Program. Throughout this journey, he made a solemn commitment to move forward, not backward. With unwavering determination and the steadfast support of his case manager, John worked tirelessly to secure a place to call his own.

Reflecting on his experience, John emphasizes the profound value of the 90 Day Program for those willing to take the steps for positive change. He highlights the transformative impact of the ECHO community, the nurturing environment, and the stable but compassionate boundaries that played a pivotal role in restructuring his life.

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Meet **Krystal**, the incredible mother of this beautiful family.

Before facing homelessness, this family had a very different life. They were settled, had a home, two vehicles, pets, and Krystal had a good paying job. It wasn't perfect but they were stable. That all changed when Krystal was hit by a car and severely injured. She became disabled and couldn't return to work. On top of that, her family started facing situations in their neighborhood that made them feel unsafe. Through it all, Krystal led her family with strength and resilience.

After several grueling incidents, Krystal decided to pack up all she had in her car and take her family to a place where they felt safe. A friend had offered them a place to stay, so they set their eyes on that location with a car full of their most crucial belongings. Once they arrived, they realized that although the environment was safer, the home was quite broken down with many essential amenities not working, and it was far from any resources and even clean water. Krystal was running out of her savings while waiting for her disability to come through. She knew that this place wouldn't be a long-term home,

so she started looking for other options, sending out applications to low-income housing. She was met with waitlists that were several years long.

During her search, Krystal came across ECHO and applied for the 90-Day Emergency Shelter Program. Soon, she got the call that they had come up on the waitlist. They were overjoyed and settled in quickly, feeling comfortable and welcomed by the staff. While at ECHO, there were many monumental and celebratory moments! Krystal's disability was approved, she secured housing, and she completed all the parenting classes offered at ECHO through Parent Connections. She gushes that her daughter even got scholarships to attend programs and field trips through their schools. The entire family has nothing but kind words for the staff.

Krystal talks about how she couldn't have done it without ECHO. She remembers needing to get to a vital appointment for her housing while her car was in the shop. As she discussed it with staff, they said, "this is a we jump, not a you jump, and that's the essence of ECHO. I never heard that before, I always did everything on my own."

We feel privileged to have been able to support Krystal and her family back into stable housing. We're grateful to have witnessed their strength, resilience, and shining positivity through everything.



*Housewarming baskets from the Womens Legacy Fund*



## 2024 by the Numbers

In 2024, your support helped us make an incredible impact in the lives of individuals and families across North County. Here's a look at how we've worked together to create change.

From January 2024 to October 2024 ECHO helped **264** individuals and families secure stable housing in our community.

- 192 individuals and families have been directly assisted through ECHO's Shelter and Outreach Services
- 72 households have been supported through ECHO's Homeless Prevention Services

### Volunteerism

**Atascadero Volunteers:** 1,405

**Paso Volunteers:** 1,481

**Total Volunteers:** 2,886

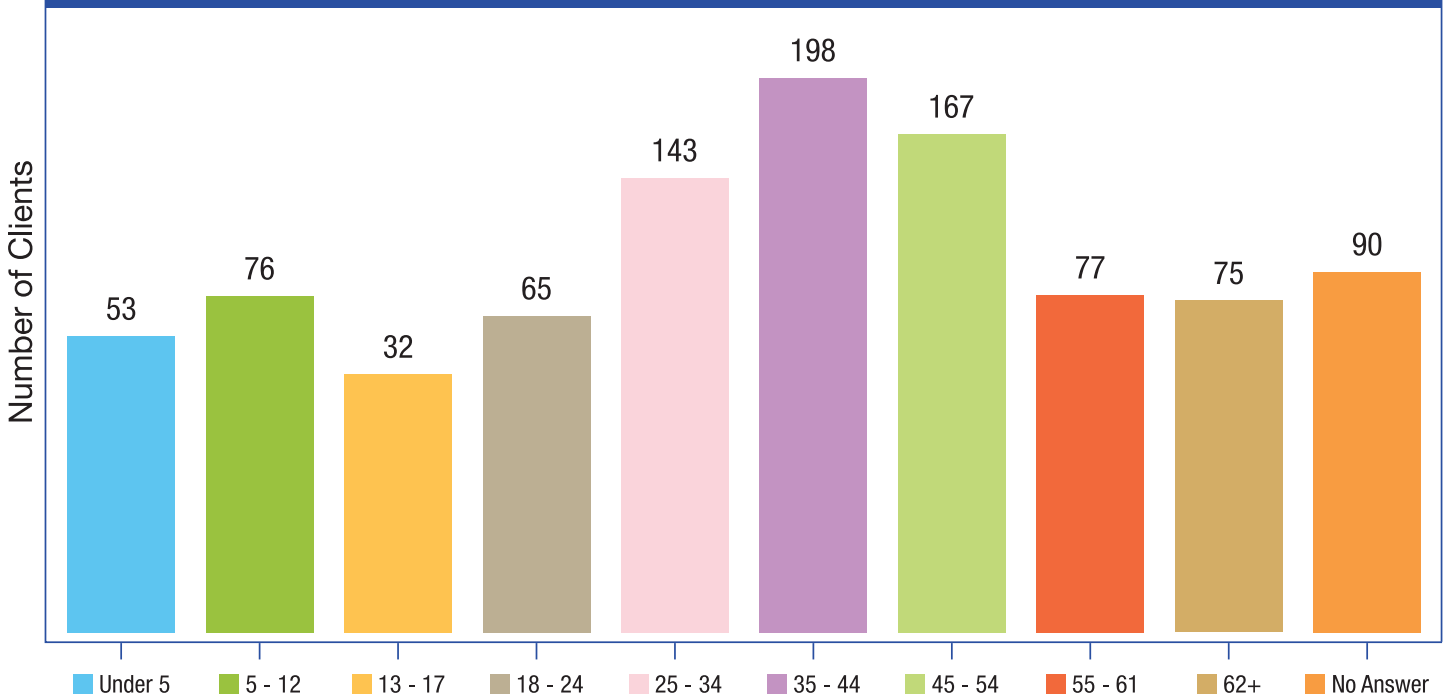
### All ECHO Shelter Data

From January- September, ECHO Collected the following information from 976 Individuals served through its services

- 416 Women
- 502 Men
- 58 Other/Did Not Disclose

Total Clients Served	# of Clients
90 Day Atascadero	204
Atascadero Outreach	278
Paso 90 Day	128
Paso Night by Night	486
Paso Outreach	261
Veterans	24
Total Unique Clients Served	1,061
Total Households Served	1,182

## Age Range Chart





## Building a Better Tomorrow

### New Programs and Initiatives

We are thrilled to announce a new partnership with Must! Charities, which will help us launch an innovative Workforce Development and Kitchen Program. Utilizing the commercial kitchen that Must! helped build in Atascadero, this program will provide hands-on job training for the hospitality industry on the Central Coast. It will offer our clients valuable skills and career pathways that will empower them to secure long-term employment, and benefit employers in our community looking to fill gaps in their industries. Through this initiative, we'll not only enhance job prospects for those we serve but also bolster ECHO's existing services.



The Program will integrate seamlessly with our Meal Programs, providing training opportunities while continuing to deliver thousands of nourishing meals to our individuals and families each year. Together with Must! Charities, we're building a brighter future for our clients and our community.

### Building Stronger Community Ties

At ECHO, we know that lasting change requires the support of an entire community. As we look ahead, we are committed to strengthening our connections with local businesses, nonprofits, and, most importantly, our incredible volunteers and donors. In 2025, we will focus on expanding these partnerships, working together to build a stronger, more unified response to homelessness. Our local volunteers and community supporters continue to be the backbone of our organization, providing invaluable time, resources, and expertise. Whether through new collaborations with businesses or deeper partnerships with local governments and service providers, we're dedicated to fostering a network that enables us to serve more individuals and families effectively. With your help, we can continue creating opportunities and opening doors for those in need.

### A Future Full of Hope

With expanded services, new partnerships, and a continued focus on empowering individuals and families, ECHO is poised to make an even greater impact against homelessness. But we can't do it alone. Your support—whether through volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word—has been the driving force behind our success, and it will continue to shape our future. Together, we can make a difference.



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### Donate:

Your financial contributions directly support our programs and services that empower individuals and families on their journey out of homelessness. Every dollar counts and helps us provide essential resources.

### Volunteer:

Join our team of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of those we serve. Whether you have a few hours to spare or want to make a regular commitment, your time and skills will make a life-changing difference.

### Spread Awareness:

Help us raise awareness about those experiencing homelessness in our community and the work we do at ECHO. Share our stories, updates, and successes with your friends, family, and colleagues to inspire positive change.

Scan the QR code  
or Visit  
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El Camino  
Homeless Organization

# 6TH ANNUAL TURKEY TROT



THANKSGIVING DAY  
NOVEMBER 28TH  
ATASCADERO LAKE PAVILLION

### EVENT DETAILS

Registration – 8:30AM

Fun Run / Walk – 9AM

Prizes for best turkey costumes



**\$20**

For more information Contact Austin Solheim 805-538-9877 | Buy tickets today at [www.echoshelter.org](http://www.echoshelter.org)