

Merica House Moments



Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.

Spring 2022

Madam PRESIDENT



Hello Merica House Friends,



A new year and it's already March! Cold one day and warm the next, Spring is trying to desperately begin. So many flowers and trees have already started to bud and bloom. The fresh smell of new grass wafts through the air as mulch is delivered and the first of the grass cutting begins. There's a newness and excitement in the air as we yearn for a fresh new start. Like everything, Merica House and the residents feel rejuvenated with desires and excitement for the same newness!

Before we can start anew, we must reflect on the old.... What worked? What didn't work? What needs to be altered or changed?

One of the biggest and most puzzling areas of need continues with Merica House having an opening for either a male or female with physical disabilities between the ages of 19-49. We can take anyone who lives in the state of Virginia. A phone call, an application, an interview, it's not that hard. Anyone with an interest should call Roxane, our Resident Coordinator at (703)671-7991.

While Merica House is a small but vital living arrangement in Fairfax County, it needs people from outside, like you and me, to "run the show"! The Alliance for the Physically Disabled (APD) is the non-profit group that does just this. We are small in numbers, we have an Executive Board of officers, and we take care of the finances that fund the expenses for Merica House. Our numbers have dwindled though, and we need more volunteers to help out. In particular, we have a great need for someone who knows QuickBooks that would be willing to take over as Treasurer. Mitch has been the Treasurer for almost 20 years and just wants a break. Please consider this position and becoming a member of the board at the same time!

There were many positives in the year 2021. Merica House made it through another year of the pandemic. We

started to see community venues, like SPARC, reopen, allowing for our residents' participation. We successfully treated a stubborn invasion of bedbugs! We participated in another year of a Fairfax County funded grant and spent a great deal of time rewriting and submitting for another two-year grant. (We expect to hear about whether we succeeded in April). A successful fundraiser, Derby Days, was coordinated by Jennifer Mercer, the sister of two of our residents, Dee and Maureen Shields.

First, and foremost though, Merica House is grateful for the support that you continue to provide! In the last year, your donations helped us make the vital and necessary renovations to the Merica House home. Circuit breaker boxes were upgraded and funding to pay the exterminator was very costly. We replaced all of our computer hardware and systems. Our Service Coordinator, Roxane, started a successful monthly team building program between the great aides from Apex and Hands of Mercy and our residents. These are just a few ways that your contributions have helped.

I know that you and I share the same commitment for helping young adults with significant physical disabilities escape from the challenges of finding a place to live in the community. This is what Merica House is all about! I want to remind you of another chance to give a tax-deductible gift for 2021! Up until April 18, 2022, you can donate to Merica House, offset your capital gains of last year, and also have a tax deduction for your taxes. Your gift of \$500, \$1000, or even more, will make a profound difference in the lives of these young men and women here at Merica House.

Thank you in advance for your generosity and kindness benefiting Dee, Maureen, Cathy, Joe, and Matt.

Annette Porter
President, Board of Directors



Merica House
Moments
SPRING 2022



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united way

#8245

combined federal campaign (cfc)

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amazon smile (smile.amazon.com)

Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc.

MISSION

The Alliance for the Physically Disabled, Inc. (APD), is a non-profit organization committed to creating accessible and affordable housing opportunities with full-time personal assistance services for adults with severe physical disabilities.

executive board - board of directors

Annette Porter *president*
Frederick J. Day *vice president*
Vacant *treasurer*
Sonja Jarvis *co-secretary*
Christine Metz *co-secretary*

Why Not Scruffy?



Frederick J. Day, Esq.
Vice President, Board of Directors

We literally have the pick of the litter. I have had my doubts about Daisy from the get-go. The name suggests a dog with a pleasing personality, a dog who probably goes out of her way not to offend any living creature. There are other options. We could hire Nemo, described as "a hunter by nature," or Scruffy, who is said to be "extremely hard-working."



Ultimately, Roxane went with Daisy. And I think I know why. Daisy's bio describes her as "a rising star." Clearly, Roxane opted for star power. When I think of star power, I think of Mick Jagger. But give me Charlie Watts or Keith Richards.

I am not going to advocate for hiring Nemo. That would be overkill. Nemo's résumé suggests that he is capable of hunting bed bugs for hours – at least that is what his bio states. Merica House doesn't need a dog who would be on the job for hours. Thirty minutes, once a year or so, is clearly adequate.

I wonder, however, whether Roxane sticks with Daisy simply due to familiarity. I understand that



Roxane knows Daisy well and has complete faith in her. But is it possible that Roxane's decision comes from the

heart and not necessarily the head? Perhaps Roxane simply favors Labradors. Is there a possible bias against Terriers?

Why not give a Terrier a chance, especially one like Scruffy, who is described as "hard-working"? Bottom line, wouldn't you want a hard worker? Maybe Daisy really is a rising star. But that's a rather subjective attribute. I mean, Benedict Arnold was once a rising star too, and how did that work out?

You be the judge. Look at the photos. Doesn't Scruffy just have the look of a canine who would be dogged in pursuing bed bugs, a dog who will not be denied? And, as for this "rising star" stuff, Scruffy's credentials are pretty impressive too. He graduated near the top of his class from FSI Canine Academy in Vincent, Alabama. You'll have to pardon the expression, but Scruffy is the classic underdog. Abandoned as a child, Scruffy could have become a life-long vagabond. Instead, he went to school and has forged an admirable career fighting bed bugs and helping people.



Yes, Daisy does the job, but that's what "rising stars" are supposed to do. We'll never know how Scruffy would perform unless we give him a shot. I vote for the Terrier. I vote for Scruffy.

* * *

Editor's Note: One of the many responsibilities of our resident services coordinator, Roxane, is to arrange for inspections of the Merica House facilities. Toward that end, Roxane possesses a bulging Rolodex of the names of contractors – some human, some not – who can perform inspections. There are electrical inspectors, inspectors for the clothes dryers, mouse inspectors, bed bug inspectors; you name it, Roxane has an inspector at the ready. Roxane's go-to inspector for bed bugs is a female Labrador mix named Daisy. Why hire a dog to inspect for bed bugs? We'll let Roxane explain: "The average dog has between 200 and 250 million scent receptors in its nose. Humans lag in comparison; the average human has only 5 million or so scent receptors. It's a 'no-brainer'." Roxane knows things like that – that's why she's in charge. One of our board members recently made a case – whimsically, we think – for hiring one of Daisy's competitors, a male terrier named Scruffy, instead of Daisy. It is a distinctly minority opinion. Roxane insists that Daisy is the best in the business. All of the board members, save for one, emphatically agree. However, in the interest of fairness, we are providing a forum for the dissenting board member to explain his position.

* * *

For more information on Scruffy, Daisy, Nemo and their talented crew of colleagues, go to www.TheBedBugHunter.com and scroll down to "Meet The Dogs."



Recipe presented by: **Matthew Renfro**
Merica House Resident

Recipe reviewed by: **Christine Metz**
Co-Secretary, Board of Directors

Cheesburger Pot Pie

ACTIVE: 20 min | TOTAL: 45 min | SERVES: 4

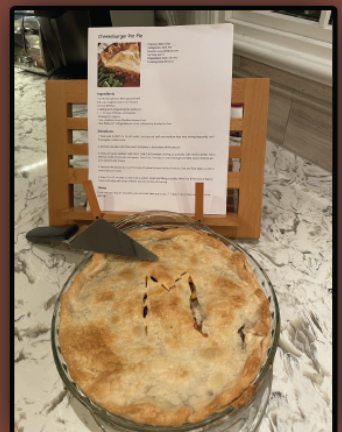
1-1½ pounds lean ground beef
¼ cup chopped onion [equivalent to half of a medium-sized onion]
¾ cup ketchup
1-1½ cups cooked corn
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 cup (8 ounces) shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1 box Pillsbury refrigerated pie crusts

1. Heat oven to 450 degrees.
2. In 10-inch skillet, cook ground beef over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until thoroughly cooked.
3. Place one pie crust in the bottom of a 9-inch pie pan.
4. Reduce heat of ground beef to medium. Add onion. Cook 5 - 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onion is tender. Stir in ketchup and pepper. Cook two to three minutes more or until thoroughly heated. Add corn to the mixture and spoon the mixture onto the bottom crust. Sprinkle cheddar cheese on top.
5. Place the second pie crust flat over the hot beef mixture. Seal and flute edge; cut several slits in the top crust.
6. Bake 13 to 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbly.

WOW!

MERICA HOUSE
GOURMET

Cheesburger Pot Pie is easy to prepare and a real delight for hamburger aficionados who may be looking for a bit of variety. The recipe easily feeds a group of four with some left over for lunch the following day. I used frozen corn and cooked it in the microwave before adding it to the meat mixture. However, peas and/or sliced carrots can be substituted for the corn with wonderfully tasty results. Another APD board member, whose culinary skills remain a work in progress and whose identity I have sworn to protect, made Matthew's recipe but forgot to sprinkle the cheddar cheese on top of the meat mixture before sealing the pie crust. Rather than undo the top crust, the board member sprinkled the cheddar cheese over the top of the pie crust. He reports that the results were surprisingly tasty, if a bit unconventional. Either way, with the cheese on top of the meat mixture or perhaps sprinkled as an afterthought over the top crust, Cheesburger Pot Pie is sure to be a hit!



Merica House
Test Kitchen Rating



Thanksgiving

Deirdre Shields

Merica House Resident

My family's routine at Thanksgiving varies from year to year. Sometimes my sister Maureen and I go to the home of our parents in Williamsburg to celebrate. Sometimes we may visit my brother Andrew and his family in Washington.

This year the family came to Merica House to have dinner with Maureen and me.

My mother cooked the turkey and all the fixings at her home. Then my dad and mom packed the food in their car and drove to Falls Church for the day. There was plenty of food. My favorite was the dressing, which my mother always makes according to a special family recipe.

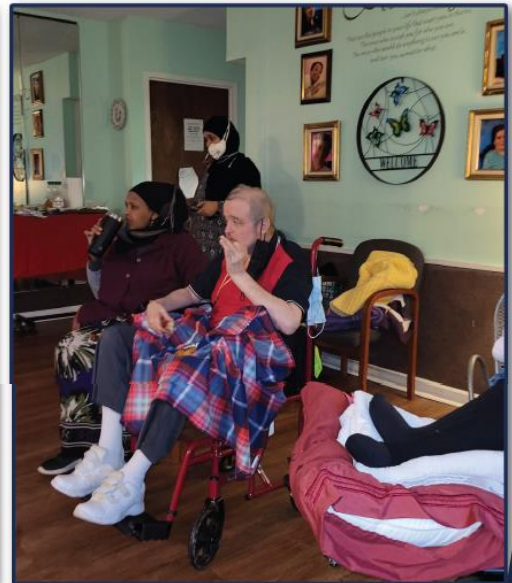
Our friends at Merica House, Cathy Parr and Joe Durbin, joined my family for dinner. So did several of the aides. The turkey was terrific! It was a very happy day for Maureen and me and a nice reminder of everything that our parents do for us.



Pictured at the Thanksgiving feast are (l-r): Ibriham (aide), Cathy Parr (resident), Deirdre Shields (resident), Art & Kathy Shields (Member of the Board and parents of residents), Maureen Shields (resident), Barie (aide) and Joe Durbin (resident).



(l-r) Cathy, Sara, Dee, Hali and Matt show their festive "love is in the air" spirit for Valentine's Day.



The house is always full of smiles! Celebrations throughout the year bring out the biggest of them! (l-r) Hali, Sara and Joe

Everyday, Another Opportunity

Deirdre Shields

Merica House Resident

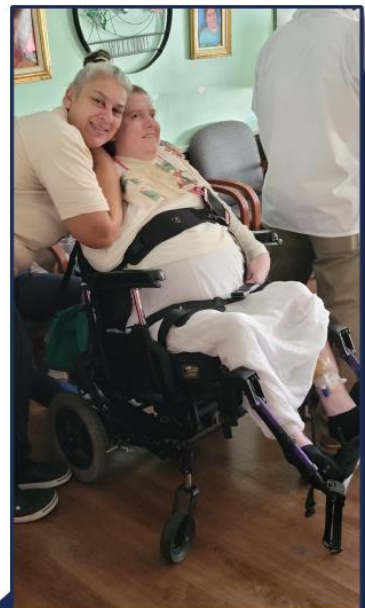
I once heard a story about a former pope. It may have been Pope John Paul II. The story is that the pope was getting out of his car one day and the car door closed on one of his fingers. The pope was in pain. However, his reaction was extraordinary. He said a small prayer, "Thank you, God, for the opportunity to offer up this pain."

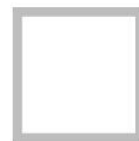
The pope's story makes me smile. If pain and discomfort are opportunities for prayer, then myself and my friends at Merica House have plenty of opportunities like that. For individuals living with cerebral palsy, physical movements always present a challenge. Activities that others take for granted, such as putting on one's clothes each day, are difficult for us. Our physical limitations also present difficulties for the aides at Merica House, who help us get dressed each day.

Knowing that the aides have a difficult job, I have resolved to try my best to help the aides when they are doing things for me. As an example, when an aide is attempting to insert my arm into the sleeve of my shirt or jacket, I try to exert a little more effort at moving my arm, so that the aide won't have to make as much of an effort. There is also a physical benefit for me; with the exertion of greater effort on my part, the muscles in my arm become more accustomed to movement and a little stronger.

Each day presents an opportunity for greater physical effort on my part. Yes, there is discomfort and sometimes pain that goes with that effort. I haven't yet reached the point of being thankful for the pain. However, I am thankful for the many blessings that I have been given. For instance, my disability allows me to meet and interact with the aides and many other individuals whom I would not otherwise get to know.

And, unlike Pope John Paul II, I have never caught any of my fingers in the door of a car. For that I say, "Thank God."





We are so deeply grateful to all of our friends and supporters. We'd like to recognize those who helped us financially in recent months:



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Paula Renfro
Network for Good



Congratulations, Cathy Parr
Ms. Wheelchair Virginia 2022