

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT Easterseals

BY KATIE CONSTANTINE

» In 1907, Ohio-businessman Edgar Allen lost his son in a streetcar accident. The lack of medical services available to save his son prompted Allen to sell his business and begin a fundraising campaign to build a hospital in his town of Elyria, Ohio. Through this new hospital, Allen was surprised to learn that children with disabilities were often hidden from public view. Inspired to make a difference, Allen founded the National Society for Crippled Children in 1919, the first organization of its kind.

In the spring of 1934, the organization launched its first Easter “seals” campaign to raise money for its services. To show their support, donors placed the seals on envelopes and letters. In 1945, the Easterseals vision was expanded across the country. Easterseals Delaware & Maryland’s Eastern Shore was established in 1948.

Easterseals is a valuable resource for the community, serving children, adults, and seniors with disabilities. The organization serves 1.4 million people, offering a wide range of services at 73 affiliates nationwide. Adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, including veterans, spend their days in adult day programs where they can choose from activities such as day trips, shopping, arts, activities and games. Seniors living with Alzheimer’s or dementia are given the option to participate in an adult day program, or an in-home services program, which allows them to live



Bryson participates in our Early Intervention program. He is pictured with his parents.

in their own homes with the help of a caregiver. Children are given access to Child Development Centers, and early intervention programs, which help young children with disabilities achieve their goals in cognitive, social/emotional, communicative, adaptive and physical development. Services may include occupational, physical, or speech therapy. Most early intervention services take place in the home or, in the case of working parents, at child care facilities in the local community

“Easterseals isn’t just for children, Easterseals is the “go to” place for families to find the answers, programs, therapies and services they need, and for the community to understand the population we serve,” said CEO Kenan J. Sklenar. “We serve people through the entire life spectrum.”

Easterseals is dedicated to aiding caregivers through specialized programs and their community outreach program. They provide support

groups, trainings, and other caregiving resources. They also provide programs like Camp Fairlee, a dynamic outdoor program that provides a break for both patients and caregivers from their normal routines.

The respite camp at Fairlee Manor in Chestertown, Maryland works with Easterseals to serve children and adults with disabilities. Fairlee Manor’s residential camp serves an average of 50 to 75 children and adults each week throughout the summer, and on select weekends year-round. The camp provides outdoor recreation for children and adults. Sessions offer a wide range of activities, including arts and crafts, sports and games, and nature walks.

“I enjoy watching campers grow each year during their time away from home. Their stories of growth and transformation are always touching. I love hearing from the parents about how much camp means to them as it gives them a break for a



Mark enjoys the freedom and independence that Camp Fairlee offers. His parents are able to enjoy vacations without having to cater to the constant demands of Mark's needs.

weekend. They can relax knowing their child is in capable hands and enjoying themselves," says Kenan. "We just expanded the campus and the transformation is astounding."

In addition to outdoor enrichment activities, Easterseals encourages "brain games" through their Brain Health Center, which provides information, tools, and services to help patients on their brain health journey. Easterseals promotes brain health through a variety of approaches, such as ongoing learning and skill-building experiences.

"I hope Easterseals continues to grow and touch lives. I hope we make changes by educating our community about disabilities, and the value of Easterseals," says Kenan. "I would like more people to know about our programs and services and the impact we make in the lives of the people we serve, who happen to be your neighbors, friends, and coworkers. I would like Easterseals to be able to serve even more families and change lives."

The Ambassador Committee

» The Ambassador committee is made up of four volunteer Chamber members, coordinated by Sr. VP of Membership, Chuck James. The ambassadors come from a variety of member categories: big companies, small business, retail stores, sole proprietors, etc. The purpose of the Ambassador Committee is to increase membership and retention, and to act as a liaison between the State Chamber staff and the membership at large. The Ambassadors attend Chamber events to welcome new members to the Chamber, assist in connecting existing members with each other, and help to recruit prospective members. Ambassadors "take the temperature" of existing members with monthly member satisfaction calls and bring issues to the attention of the Chamber staff that may not come to the surface otherwise.

In 2016, the Ambassadors made nearly 1,000 phone calls to existing members, noting changes in contact information and surveying them on various topics related to their Chamber experience. They attended 30 events, and spoke with countless members.

The Ambassadors earn points for all these activities. The points are totaled up at the end of the year and an Ambassador of the Year is named.

This year's Ambassador of the Year is Ralph Petti of Ripcord Solutions Risk Management, and locally for Keller Williams Real Estate, for an unprecedented fourth year in a row. Please congratulate Ralph when you see him – and you will see him often at Chamber events up and down the state. Thanks, Ralph! Well done.

The committee is looking for some new members for 2018. If you have been a member of the DSCC for at least two years and are interested in devoting some extra time and energy to the Chamber, we'd like to talk to you. Please contact Chuck James.



Ralph Petti, Keller Williams/Ripcord Solutions, 2017 DSCC Ambassador of the Year.

Members of the 2017 Ambassador Committee:

Eric Bentley, *Microsoft Store*
 Jack Coleman, *Stouch Lighting*
 Ralph Petti, *Keller Williams/Ripcord Solutions*
 Mike Schwartz, *Legal Shield*

2017 Ambassador of the Year:

Ralph Petti, *Keller Williams/Ripcord Solutions*