

SHARE Notes

SEPTEMBER 2009

VOLUME 24, ISSUE 2

SHARE Fun Walk '09 Goes Virtual, Too

This year, for the first time ever, everyone can join us for SHARE's largest fundraiser of the year, Fun Walk '09. Now in its 24th year, we're asking all of you to link onto www.sharefunwalk.kintera.org/2009 and find out instantly how to become a "virtual" walker if you can't make it to the UMass Dartmouth campus on October 18.

With one keystroke, you can register to walk, sponsor a walker, or make a general donation using a credit card. It's that easy. The best thing you can do for SHARE is to spread the word via this wonderful Web site to all the family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and acquaintances on your e-mail list. We're looking for 100% participation from everyone reading this newsletter. Now you can be a "walker," too—no matter where you live or what you may be doing that day. Please take a moment to check it out and give us a hand.

The tough economic times have

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Lending much-needed support to SHARE is a family affair for Fun Walkers (left to right) MacKenzie, Stacy, Carolyn, and Sid Martin.

SHARE truly needs your help to make this special fundraiser a major success! PLEASE SIGN UP TODAY!

really taken a toll on SHARE, and we don't want to disappoint the people that turn to us for help by having to turn them away. Although the financial picture appears bleak, our organization is busier than ever, with demand for our services growing every day. That's why we rely on fundraisers like the walk to keep afloat. But we can't do it without your help. Please join us—virtually or physically—for Fun Walk '09.

If you are fortunate enough to come to campus on October 18, you are guaranteed to have a lot of fun. The walk starts at 10 a.m. in the Athletic Center. You can enjoy complimentary doughnuts and coffee during registration, which begins promptly at 9 a.m. Any walker who turns in \$50 or more can choose

either a free T-shirt or coffee mug, as well as an item from the Treasure Chest.

Once again, our top walkers will earn valuable gift certificates to local restaurants and other establishments thanks to the fantastic generosity of neighboring merchants. As always, there will be other prizes, activities, and food and refreshments served buffet-style when you finish the route.

In addition to our "virtual walk" Web site, we have an enclosed "support form" in this newsletter that you can fill out. If you sponsor one of our long-time clients like Linda or Paul, you'll certainly be there in spirit!

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Summer Fundraisers Held in Support of SHARE

SHARE is grateful to the hard-working men and women who organized events over the past couple of months to raise money to support our work.

The 26th Annual Ben Boyle/Ron Kostyla Golf Classic was held on July 26 at the Richmond Country Club in Hope Valley, Rhode Island. Enthusiastic golfers braved the sun and rain to raise approximately \$5,500 to provide services and equipment to children and adults with disabilities. Special thanks to Bill Pimental and Bob Bjorklund, the Sunday Morn-



Photo by Greg Germanowski

Tournament organizers Bob Bjorklund and Bill Pimental congratulate the winner of the Jet Blue Challenge.



Ed DeMello of South Dartmouth receives his "Professor's Choice" trophy from SHARE founder Les Cory for his mint-condition 1966 Mustang.

ing Golfers, and the Pawtuxet Valley Rotary Club, organizers of the event.

August 9th was an extremely busy day on the UMass Dartmouth campus. The 15th Annual Classic Auto Show and Fun Day featured 135 classic and antique cars and trucks on display, as well as dozens of flea market vendors. The event raised more than \$5,000 to support the work at the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering. Organizer Dave Martin and the rest of his crew did a super job. The more than 1,000 people who attended also got a chance to see Rob Cagnetta from Heritage Restora-

tion, Inc. use his huge pumpkin chucker to toss watermelons through the sky at a once-classic car—now a little less classic.

Later that afternoon, SHARE's first helicopter golf ball drop event took place over the UMass Dartmouth track. The big winners were Daniel McCarthy of New Bedford, Joe Rebeiro of Berkley, and John Freeman of Fall River, who donated his share back to SHARE.

Our thanks to all of the folks who worked tirelessly cooking, selling, running games, judging entries, taking photos, loading watermelons, awarding trophies, and working to keep all the events on schedule. A good time was had by all. Don't miss this event next year.

Of course, SHARE is especially grateful to all the golfers, car show enthusiasts, and individuals who participated in these activities. They continue to help SHARE bring the gift of communication to people of all ages with disabilities. ■

Comedy Show Planned to Benefit SHARE

Are you ready for some side-splitting laughter? Did you think "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" was an awesome movie? Well, Out of the Gutter Comedy will present a show on Friday, October 16, 2009, that celebrates the uniqueness of Portuguese culture and highlights the amusing moments of being first-generation Americans. In this region, many people will certainly be able to relate to those experiences!

Best of all, the comedy/improv troupe's live act at the Sky Room

at Howland Place, located at 651 Orchard Street in New Bedford, will benefit the SHARE Foundation, thanks to the generosity of those involved.

Doors open at 7 p.m. and the show starts at 9 p.m. Light fare and refreshments are available for purchase at the venue. Tickets are \$15 for this age 21-and-older only event. To buy tickets, call SHARE at 508-999-8482.

Out of the Gutter Comedy, whose members are based out of



southeastern New England, have developed an avid following and their shows sell out quickly, so call soon to avoid disappointment. More about the troupe can be found at Myspace.com and Facebook. ■

Finding His Voice

Four-year-old Mitchel Ravida's communication skills improve every day

Jill Ravida of Bridgewater describes the progress her son Mitchel has made as “somewhat of a miracle.”

When he was 18 months old, Mitchel lost his language skills and was diagnosed with Landau-Kleffner Syndrome (LKS), a rare neurological disorder characterized by the sudden or gradual development of aphasia, or difficulty in producing speech.

“We were told that he would never speak or would have ‘Charlie Brown Syndrome’ whereby he would never be understood,” Jill said.

The Ravida family, which also includes Jill’s husband Dominic and children Jade, 16, and Ashley, 8, heard about the SHARE Foundation through a speech therapist who knew about the organization and its client services coordinator, Beverly Thorn.

“At the time we hooked up with SHARE, Mitchel was completely nonverbal and communicated with sign language,” Jill recalled. The Center for Rehabilitation Engineering, which SHARE supports, provided Mitchel with a computer with Boardmaker Speaking Dynamically Pro. This software produces natural sounding, high-quality speech. Using a touch screen, Mitchel was able to point to objects on a screen to express his wants and needs to others.

“Using the computer allowed him to relax and eased his frustration at not being able to communicate...It was a very helpful resource as he couldn’t talk at all,” Jill said.

She noted that Mitchel also would play a few games on the computer and used an interactive “Arthur” character CD that allowed him to watch a story on screen as it was being read and touch objects and learn what they are called.



Photo by Lifetouch

“Every day, I’m thankful. It was hard for me to accept that he wouldn’t be able to communicate... it was very hurtful news. But, we pushed forward,” Jill said.

Fast forward to approximately five months ago and that’s where the “miracle” comes in.

With the help of early intervention teachers and speech therapists, Mitchel started talking. “He would cut off the beginning and ends of sentences and only use the vowels and it was garbled, but he was talking. Through the schools, he’s come very far. He’s now verbal, although he still needs work. In the fall, he starts his third year of preschool where he has a one-to-one aide for social function and communication skills.”

Therapists have told her that her son has a speech disorder called apraxia, which also is sometimes known as dyspraxia. The disorder is characterized by the speaker having trouble saying what he/she wants consistently and correctly.

And Mitchel faces some other challenges, such as difficulty chewing, sensory dysfunctions, and depth perception problems that make it difficult for him to walk down stairs. But Jill describes the boy as “a naturally driven child,” a quality that has helped him to progress. “He’s done most of the hard work himself. He’s very smart and perceptive. His effort level has been the key factor in his ability to achieve this success,” she said. “I’m impressed by his skills. He inspires me and his teachers every day.”

Mitchel is currently continuing to work on his communication skills. “It’s been a long road, but Mitchel’s very focused on learning...I’m extremely grateful to SHARE and the schools for giving him the tools to help,” Jill added. ■

SHARE Fun Walk '09 Continued from page 1

Remember, SHARE relies on this walk and its other fundraisers to help our clients with cerebral palsy, ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease), spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, and many other conditions. During these difficult times, they need your support now more than ever.

So let’s get started. You can become a virtual walker by visiting www.sharefunwalk.kintera.org/2009. Or you can call (508) 999-8482, mail in the enclosed registration form, or e-mail your information to SHARE@umassd.edu, and we’ll sign you up. Rain date is October 25, but we’re ordering up sunny skies and perfect autumn weather for the 18th. See you then! ■

Thank You. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many supporters who have donated to SHARE over the past several months. Your generous gifts are making it possible for us to provide the opportunity for independent communication to more children and adults with disabilities.

The following donations were received from April 1, 2009 through August 31, 2009.

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Design: Brainstorms, Westport, MA
Writing: Susan Gonsalves

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