SHARE's largest fundraiser of the year has gotten a makeover, and you are all invited! Instead of UMass Dartmouth’s “Ring Road trek,” our annual Fun Walk has become a stroll at New Bedford’s own Buttonwood Park Zoo at 425 Hawthorne Street. Please fill out the registration form included with this issue of Share Notes or register by e-mail, and we will promptly send you a pledge form and everything you need to participate.

Then, join us at the zoo on Saturday, September 24, 2011, for a day of fun, food, and elephant-sized prizes! Your completed pledge form is your admission ticket to a day of fun. Check-in begins at 9:15 a.m. at the zoo and runs through 9:45 a.m., when the doors open for your free admission to visit the animals and enjoy a great time with your family.

Before you set off, you'll still have the opportunity to catch up with familiar faces and enjoy coffee and doughnuts courtesy of Towne Donut Shoppe. Your donations of $50 or more on your pledge sheet will entitle you to an array of great gifts! Not only will you receive a spiffy SHARE baseball cap, but you’ll also get a ticket for lunch in the zoo cafeteria. If you bring your family, we will provide an extra lunch ticket for every additional $50 you collect.

For every $50 your sponsors donate, you’ll also earn a raffle ticket in our gigantic raffle featuring the zoo’s most famous resident, Emily the Elephant. At 12 noon, Emily will select the winners in a drawing with truly gargantuan prizes. You won't want to miss seeing Emily in action!

As always, you’ll have the chance to win valuable gift certificates to local restaurants and other local businesses that are generously supporting SHARE in this effort. And donations of $250 put you into our special winners’ circle, where you’ll receive an attractive SHARE full-zip fleece jacket and more raffle tickets to increase your odds of winning.

So remember…it’s all new—new date, new day (Saturday), new location, and new time. The SHARE Stroll at Buttonwood Park Zoo. Same great cause. Spread the word!

Any questions or to register, call SHARE at 508-999-8482.

Enjoying last year’s Fun Walk were SHARE client Greg Walsh, his grandmother Ellen Leahy (left) and mother Janice Walsh (right), along with SHARE President Les Cory and Vandette Little, one of Greg’s home nurses.
SHARE Fundraiser is Virtual

If you can’t make it to Buttonwood Park Zoo for SHARE’s annual Fun Walk on September 24th, you can still participate! Just link onto www.sharefunwalk.kintera.org/2011 and find out instantly how to become a “virtual” walker. With one keystroke, you can register to walk, sponsor a walker, or make a donation using a credit card.

We’re asking everybody to please spread the word about this website to all family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors on your e-mail list. You can be a “walker” in spirit for SHARE no matter where you live or what you might be doing on September 24th! Please check it out.

In addition to our “virtual” walk website, this newsletter includes a “support form” for your convenience. It’s just another way to sponsor one of our longtime clients like Linda or Paul if you can’t make it to SHARE’s fundraiser and still want to help us.

Thank you in advance for thinking of SHARE when you plan your charitable giving. SHARE relies on this walk and other fundraisers to help clients with disabilities like cerebral palsy, ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease), spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, and many other conditions. We need your support now more than ever as we navigate through these tough economic times!

Dedicated participants in SHARE’s Fun Walk include Rosemary Sullivan and Eileen Canavan, shown at the 2010 event. This year’s fundraiser is moving to New Bedford’s Buttonwood Park Zoo on September 24th. Registration begins at 9:15 a.m.

Gigantic Raffle Planned

At 12 noon on September 24, 2011, Buttonwood Park Zoo’s superstar Emily the Elephant will select lucky winners in an epic raffle with fabulous prizes. Proceeds will benefit SHARE and the Zoo.

First Prize: An ELEPHANT painting or $500
Second Prize: An Android Tablet Computer or $250
Third Prize: Tickets to a Boston Bruins’ Game
Fourth Prize: A Digital Camera or $100
And many other great prizes, too!

Tickets ★ $10 each, three for $25, seven for $50, or 15 for $100

Get yours today by calling us at 508.999.8482

Remember—you won’t want to miss Emily choosing the winning numbers!

Join us near her home at noon!
In Memoriam: Janice B. McKeachern

SHARE lost a dear friend and supporter with the passing of Professor Janice B. McKeachern on October 1, 2010. Janice was an avid supporter of SHARE’s work for more than 20 years. She generously bequeathed a portion of her estate to SHARE, for which we are most grateful.

A lifelong New Bedford resident, she was the daughter of the late Daniel H. and Edith (Crapo) McKeachern and a graduate of New Bedford High School. Janice studied nursing at Newton-Wellesley Hospital and later received her graduate degree in nursing from Boston University.

Janice was employed at St. Luke’s Hospital for many years and then joined a small group of nurses to establish the nursing program at Southeastern Massachusetts University—now UMass Dartmouth. After many years as a professor of nursing at the University, she retired in 1989.

She was one of many faculty members here who provided inspiration, advice, and encouragement to the founders of the SHARE Foundation. Les Cory recalls that Janice was a knowledgeable resource for information about disabilities such as Rett Syndrome, Guillain-Barre, and Shy-Drager in the days before the Internet made information searches routine.

She was 84 and living at the New Bedford Jewish Convalescent Home at the time of her death. She was predeceased by her sister Avis McDonald and her brother Daniel C. McKeachern. Survivors include nieces in Texas. We will miss her kind words and quiet, thoughtful manner.

Computer Controlled By Looking At It

For SHARE clients with extensive physical limitations, their highest functioning ability is to move their eyes. Today, there are systems on the market that enable people to control a computer literally by looking at it. The down side of eye gaze systems is their cost. The first one that SHARE helped to buy cost nearly $20,000. Prices have come down, but eye gaze systems still cost more than $10,000.

SHARE is fortunate to have a very effective eye tracking system made by Eye Tech Digital Systems, which was donated by the family of a deceased client who had ALS. The eye gaze system operates by tracking the eye movements of users as they look at the communication software on a screen. The user can blink or dwell upon the letters of the alphabet or phrases on the screen to communicate with others. The computer types out the messages the person wants to convey and then “speaks” the words aloud. The unit can be interfaced to a computer, and the user then can send e-mail, use the Internet, and do whatever a keyboard user can do.

Eye gaze systems make life brighter for people with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Client Services Coordinator Beverly Thorn expressed gratitude to the donor and to others who have donated similar systems to SHARE.

“It’s so important for people to keep SHARE in mind when they are thinking of donating equipment or other gifts, because these donations can be of immeasurable benefit to the people we are striving to help.”

New TV/Appliance Controller Under Development at Center

Television remote controls come in many “flavors.” Most have multiple buttons for users who have the dexterity to press individual buttons with their fingers.

For people who lack fine motor control, there are remotes with oversized buttons. For others who may be able to activate only one single switch, perhaps by raising an eyebrow or blinking an eye, there are scanning TV controllers that present the user with choices sequentially. When the desired choice is presented, “CHANNEL UP” for example, the user closes the switch to select that option.

Currently, Mark Whittaker, our design engineer, is working on a TV controller for a client with very spastic hand movement as a result of an auto accident. She cannot use a scanning controller because of the relatively accurate timing required to activate the switch during scanning.

The unit Mark is building uses two switches. One switch advances the scan, and the other one executes the selected function. Both switches are heavily de-bounced to limit errors. This new controller will “learn” from the user’s existing remote so it can replace the remote control from virtually any make or model TV. It also can be programmed to control devices such as lights or appliances through a technology called X10.

This new controller joins an ever-expanding array of devices custom-fabricated to accommodate the unique abilities and needs of specific individuals who have turned to us for help. Next on the drawing board is a remote control that will use speech recognition software running on a small computer to control TV and X10 verbally.
Bilingual Communication Device Assists SHARE Client

Since its inception 30 years ago, the SHARE Foundation has enabled more than 3,000 people with disabilities to communicate with the help of assistive technology. Each client has a unique set of circumstances that Center for Rehabilitation Engineering staff members take into account when custom-making or adapting equipment for his or her use. This past spring, Client Services Coordinator Beverly Thorn faced what she described as one of the “most challenging situations” she’s ever encountered. With research, patience, and the help of a speech and language pathologist from Memorial Hospital Home Care, a solution was found.

Although SHARE client José Aguiar can vocalize sounds, he’s no longer verbal and is suffering from a degenerative muscle/nerve condition that has left him unable to walk. He can read and understand Portuguese, but he is no longer able to communicate by speaking that language. José’s daughter, Nelia, can understand and speak Portuguese, but she cannot read it.

Communication became difficult for José, making it nearly impossible for caregivers or anyone outside of his immediate family to understand him.

Nelia contacted SHARE looking for a communication device after hearing about the program from a nurse at Memorial Hospital in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

After an “intense” period to adapt a system to something that would work for everyone, the Center provided José with a computer on an over-the-bed table and the software package Speaking Dynamically Pro customized with language translation software especially for José’s use. It also provided a single switch TV controller that enables him to operate his TV independently. A switch-activated, wireless chime from the Center also lets José know that Nelia has heard his call (through a baby monitor) when she is in another room. Nelia noted that the chime sounds like a doorbell and, in essence, says “I’m coming.”

Nelia’s voice was recorded digitally so that when her father selects abbreviated Portuguese words on his computer, the system speaks the corresponding words, such as “água” for water. But the computer also writes and says the words in English so that if, for example, a nurse is present, she will understand what José needs.

“The equipment made it possible for him to be able to communicate with people other than my family, and now others can understand him, too,” Nelia explained. “My father is not as frustrated as he was before and is as happy as can be expected for someone in that condition. His attitude is better.”

Nelia said that the TV controller gives José a sense of independence and enables her to use her time more effectively, because she no longer has to retrace her steps to keep changing channels for him. Overall, her experience with SHARE and the Center for Rehabilitation Engineering has been most positive—resulting in an improved quality of life, both for her father and for her.

“Beverly was very nice, and the program is great and has been helpful to my family,” Nelia added. “It has made a difference.”

28th Annual Ben Boyle/Ron Kostylia Golf Classic A Success

MANY THANKS to Bob Bjorklund, Bill Pimental, and their great team of volunteers who organized and ran the 28th Annual Ben Boyle/Ron Kostyla Golf Classic on July 31st. The event was a great success, generating $6,000 to benefit the SHARE Foundation!

Everyone involved did a wonderful job—from golfers to sponsors Pawtuxet Valley Rotary Club and the Sunday Morning Golfers and the folks at the beautiful Richmond Country Club in Hope Valley, RI.

These event organizers, sponsors, and supporters have given their all for nearly three decades! SHARE deeply appreciates their long-standing dedication on behalf of our clients.

Mixed Division winners of the Ben Boyle/Ron Kostylia Golf Classic Tournament to benefit SHARE were (l. to r.) Chad Bjorklund, Melissa Bjorklund, Ben Justice, and Charlie Paquette.
WITH OUR THANKS  We extend our gratitude to the many supporters who have donated to SHARE over the past few 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, 2011 through August 12, 2011.

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