

SHEI's **mission** is to assist young people and individuals with disabilities to discover their inner strengths so they may lead positive, fulfilling lives.

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Treasurer
Liesl Hasenfuss
Secretary

SHEI Directors

Chris Adams
Kathy Everest
Dorothy Jeffrey

SHEI Staff

Carol Conforti-Adams
Executive Director
carol@sheinh.org

Laura Clark
SHEI Communication Specialist
laura@sheinh.org

Michelle Maslanka
WHIM Team Leader
michelle@sheinh.org

Find us on Facebook
Wheelchair Health in Motion (ask to join)

whim4wellness@gmail.com



SHEI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2022

New Resources & Plenty of Togetherness!

By *Laura Clark*
SHEI Communication Specialist

This time last year, Sunset Hill Educational Institute (SHEI) had recently held an open house for the grand opening of the new ADA* accessible pathways on-site at the facility. Since that day in October 2021, SHEI has successfully spent January-August 2022 assessing and piloting a curriculum for the first level (one of three) of the Nature's Way program. Nature's Way, designed by SHEI collaborator and friend Andy Jeffrey of Proactive Growth, is a program that fits perfectly with SHEI's mission and the ongoing needs of SHEI's participants. SHEI's accessible pathways, in turn, provide an excellent setting in which to guide participants through curriculum lessons.



Retreat Week drumming and song

Nature's Way curriculum assessment began on Zoom in the colder months during the first quarter of 2022. While the pathways thawed, a team of 11 individuals with disability, the Nature's Way Advisory Council (NWAC), used their knowledge and experience to assist Andy and SHEI staff with program

delivery ideas and test-ran program material on program concepts (i.e. broadening perspectives with nature as a guide) and activities (i.e. meditation/breathwork).

When SHEI's accessible pathways dried out after the spring thaw, SHEI began piloting the Nature's Way program in two separate 4-week sessions. Over the summer, 15 individuals signed up; pre- and post-



Large gathering for NH-USA SCI Peer Group

evaluations were given digitally and remain anonymous. **Evaluation data demonstrated a 100% positive shift in mindset after completion of the first level, or Tier 1.**

It's been a pleasure working with Andy to bring the SHEI community a new resource with the Nature's Way program, especially since the program's content focuses on mental health and internal empowerment. SHEI staff look forward to continuing program



Doug Ewing shares bird watching knowledge during Nature's Way gathering



Sunset BBQ under the newly constructed pavilion

development with Andy as two more program levels (Tier 2 and Tier 3) are constructed and delivered to SHEI participants.

Nature's Way wasn't the only new resource SHEI had to offer individuals this year. **SHEI also had new and improved outdoor space filled with 2000 feet of accessible pathways (including an ADA accessible restroom and covered pavilion) for people to safely gather in nature!**



Yoga at Nature's Way with Mary Carroll

This year has been an incredible year of resource growth for the SHEI community. SHEI's accomplishments have accrued due to private donors like you, foundation donors like the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, SHEI participants, volunteers, SHEI's Board of Directors, brilliant minds like Andy, and the dedication of SHEI staff. Join us for exciting plans to come in 2023!

*ADA refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a law that ensures people with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities as everyone else. ADA design implies that equal access is upheld.

Director's Notes



By Carol Conforti-Adams
SHEI Executive Director and
Founder

Wow! What a year it has been for the SHEI organization. With the completion of the accessible pathways last fall, we began development of the Nature's Way (NW) curriculum with our colleague Andy Jeffrey and the NW Advisory Council. **Our NW approach is to connect with people that face physical or mental challenges, assist them in**

nourishing their human spirit and help them understand that just as in nature, human-beings can grow and adapt to create a "new perspective" of their life. In June I witnessed this transformation first-hand as WHIM members completed Tier 1 of NW and reported great results.

So much has happened at this 1780's homestead property. Forty years ago when I first saw this property as a young healthcare pro-

fessional, I visualized a Wellness Center. Who knew the twists and turns one's life would take. Now, as I've lived independently at Sunset Hill with a disability of quadriplegia for 20 years, the healing power of this homestead on the hill has given me a strong sense of purpose -- both in adapting to life's challenges and with gratitude for the opportunities! SHEI tops that list!

It's been a pleasure to see the transformation.

"Keep hope in your heart and grit in your soul."
CCA

What participants are saying ...

"All of the Nature's Way lessons were powerfully supportive and transformative."

"I would love to come back and will absolutely tell my friends."

"I took the incredible leap to think that this aging, disabled body of mine is also finding new ways to exist, thrive and help others."

Wedding of WHIM friends, Alan & Amy, at SHEI



SHEI in our Community

Since 2006 SHEI has worked locally and at the state level providing mission driven programs 100% free. With our new outdoor facility, SHEI offers a destination to connect and nourish the human spirit. But **SHEI is more than WHIM and Nature's Way.**

For the next five years, SHEI Executive Director Carol, who completely volunteers her time for the organization, will be advocating for individuals with disabilities as a representative on the UNH - Disability and Health Advisory Work Group. Carol

and SHEI will provide both a professional and clients' voice to develop and implement an action plan that documents unmet needs, gaps in information, and barriers, with the goal to strengthen efforts that promote accessible healthcare visits and health promotion programs for adults with disabilities.

On behalf of SHEI, Carol is also the coordinator of a UNH-Extension initiative called Building Community Resiliency and donates her



Sponsored by KCN, youngsters made Stone Soup To Go at the Warner Public Library

entire compensation to SHEI. Carol formed and facilitates monthly Kearsarge Community Network (KCN) meetings, programs, and events promoting community gatherings and trainings. This fall KCN is sponsoring a workshop for 4th and 5th graders that promotes kindness, respect, empathy and positivity in school and life.

Appealing to You

SHEI's success in providing free services and programs is made possible only by the continued support of our committed donors. If you believe in our mission, please contribute your tax-

deductible donation that will allow us to continue to offer resources and expanded programming at no charge to our participants. If you know of anyone who would benefit from our services, we would

love to hear from you. Visit our website at www.sheinh.org to learn more and [contribute online.](#)



WHIM Stays in Motion!



Annual hike at Crotched Mountain Accessible Trails

By Michelle Maslanka
WHIM Coordinator

The Wheelchair Health In Motion (WHIM) program's online classes, called WHIM At Home, continued this year offering participants exercise and remote social gatherings twice a week from January-May. WHIM at Home provides people with disability who may have transportation barriers and are looking to improve their health the chance to enjoy positive peer

support and upper body exercise from the comfort and safety of their homes. The Zoom platform has allowed us to reach more people

and even connect with those outside of New Hampshire. In addition to WHIM exercise/peer support classes, this year we also introduced a healthy eating support group and a monthly social hour on Zoom.

WHIM kicked off spring with pickleball and tennis clinics at the YMCA Allard Center in Goffstown, NH. During the summer months, WHIM offered multiple opportunities for participants to get active outdoors by

partnering with Northeast Passage (NEP) to offer two cycling opportunities to WHIM participants, and with New England Healing Sports Association (NEHSA) to provide two chances to kayak. We closed out the summer season with a crowd favorite, our annual WHIM & NH-United Spinal Association Hike on Crotched Mountain Accessible Trails.

"Being part of this group has changed me as a person."

WHIM Participant

In addition to the opportunities for exercise and socialization, we put out a call to action for all WHIM members and supporters to voice their support of Medicare coverage of elevation systems on power wheelchairs -- a policy change, which would benefit many of our participants.



Lesson on Ridge Top Circle

Group exercise, positive peer support, group outdoor recreation, and advocacy has kept WHIM in motion all year. WHIM is excited to keep that motivation going for 2023!



Kayaking with NEHSA



WHIM Coordinator Michelle enjoys the Ridge Top Circle

Help Keep SHEI Sustainable

By Chris Adams
SHEI Board of Directors

When I think of all of SHEI's recent accomplishments, I'm amazed at the positive growth sprouting from the house where I grew up. Each project, outing, meeting, gathering, event, or training is the result of hard work, grants, and generous donations. As SHEI grows, so does it's impact. We look for-

ward with much excitement towards what's next. Word of SHEI is spreading, and offerings are replicable year over year. **SHEI has remarkably been able to offer all programs at no cost while only using less than 5% of its budget on operating costs.** New grants go towards new projects, not toward keeping things running. SHEI is at a vital point. We now have

the ability to make SHEI, WHIM, & Nature's Way SUSTAINABLE for a long, long, time.

Building on the pillars that have been created, a lasting impact on the lives of many is right in front of us.

Your donations make that happen! For that we are extremely grateful, because your generosity creates the capacity for these great things to take shape. Thank You.



Seated massage with Liesl Hasenfuss

Touching Many Lives

One silver lining of the pandemic for SHEI has been reaching a broader community. In one instance, Zoom brought SHEI together with Connecticut resident, Elaine Kolb, who traveled to join us for Retreat Week at Sunset Hill. Throughout the year, Elaine brought her poetry and song to WHIM at Home.

We were delighted to meet Elaine in person. She came bearing peace symbol necklaces that she shared

with all, reminding us of her lifelong commitment to social justice. During her visit, Elaine shared her wisdom as an instrumental warrior for ADA and an inspirational civil rights activist. We very much enjoyed her humor, song and smile during Retreat Week.

Elaine, 73, has been a cultural worker for over 50 years. Literally stabbed in the back at age 28 in Atlanta, GA, Elaine is partially paralyzed with a spinal

cord injury. As a poet, songwriter, activist and performer, Elaine has dedicated her life to social justice issues even before her injury. She was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to Australia as part of the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 and was enthusiastically involved in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. She uses humor, music, and personal stories to touch and open hearts, minds, and souls.



Songwriter and activist Elaine Kolb (r) traveled from Connecticut to attend Retreat Week



The Mother Drum provided a steady heartbeat at the Retreat Week drum circle

SHEI and Nature's Way programs are greatly enhanced with facilities like the accessible restroom (below right) and the covered pavilion



Nature's Way Lesson with Andy



Stay in Touch with SHEI

Nature's Way **Tier 2: The Nature of Humans** is being piloted this fall. The full program will be offered to the public in 2023, along with a youth program, **Navigating Resiliency in Nature**. This is just a sample of the types of wellness and resiliency training programs that can be offered at SHEI with our expanded outdoor facilities. Like-minded professionals are encouraged to [contact us to reserve](#)

[space](#) for your professional programs, retreats and outings. Private use of the pathways is by reservation only.

We hope you stay in touch with SHEI to keep up to date with all of our wonderful programs. [Join our email list](#). Search Facebook for **Wheelchair Health In Motion** and request to join this peer-driven private group. Sign up for WHIM at Home each Tuesday and Thurs-

day at 1 PM. Email us at whim4wellness@gmail.com for more information.



[Scan or click to watch our Nature's Way video](#)



SHEI's community involvement extends to FEED Kearsarge Victory Gardens

SHEI's ADA accessible pathways are available for professional programs, outdoor classrooms, and private gatherings