

# Sunset Hill Educational Institute

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## Where We've Been

SUNSET HILL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE (SHEI) in 2007 received our 501c3 as a community-based nonprofit organization focusing on two major target populations with a mission **to assist young people and individuals with physical disabilities discover their inner strengths so they may lead positive, fulfilling lives.**



Early on, SHEI implemented an on-site **Youth Transition Program (YTP)** which integrates each individual's goals and abilities to actively

develop job and life skills. In partnership with the Kearsarge Adult Diploma Program (KADP) students earn extended learning opportunity (ELO) credit towards their high school diploma.



In 2011, SHEI's Director discussed career and life plans while working with two young women living with quadriplegia due to traumatic spinal cord injury. During these encounters is when **Wheelchair Health In Motion (WHIM)** program was established. With mentoring and

assistance from SHEI, they helped develop WHIM, which produced an in-depth chair exercise training manual and trained peer leaders who presently conduct weekly chair exercise programs in six different communities in NH. WHIM is a state-wide program with over 100 members, WHIM collaborators with adaptive sports organizations and many others professional



agencies. This year, SHEI/WHIM coordinated 20 recreational, educational, and social events. ***WHIM continues to coordinate a FREE, peer-driven program that provides the tools for increasing quality of life and promoting wellness in individuals living***

***with physical disability or low mobility through innovative upper-body aerobic exercise and positive peer support within their own local community.***



# Rolling forward with

# Wheelchair Health In Motion

a program of **Sunset Hill Educational Institute**

BEFORE WE ROLL FORWARD INTO 2020 with the WHIM program, let's look back at a successful 2019 - a year of

many adventures around the state and even into Maine! Success for us can be measured by the quality of the peer interactions we foster through group gatherings.

This year, in addition to our six ongoing weekly WHIM exercise groups, we collaborated with several organizations to bring our participants as much outdoor freedom, fun, and fitness as possible! Most of our events remain 100% free and open to folks with a variety of strengths and abilities. ~ Laura & Chris



**KEEP WHIM MOVING!**

Your tax-deductible donation will help us continue our programs and services.



*SHEI/WHIM BBQ in May*



*POUND in the Park*



*Fun on the Trail*



*Fit4Wellness: Pickleball*



*Impossible Dream Trip*



*Crotched Mountain Hike*

With thanks to our dedicated WHIM Staff.

WHIM Program Coordinator

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## *Wellness Matters at SHEI*

THIS PAST YEAR, SHEI offered a 4-part series, titled “The Ongoing Journey of Life” at the SHEI facility. Participant discussion focused on learning about one’s belief systems, the steps of mindfulness, and experiencing sound healing. In addition, SHEI collaborated with local professionals to address the increase in mental health concerns, such as depression that “accounts for nearly half of all disabilities among young people between the age of 10 and 24.” (2018 WHO Report) SHEI’s Youth Wellness Initiative (YWI) will focus on resiliency skills and collaborate with other professionals to provide an experimental learning program addressing the interconnectedness of wellness in the natural surroundings at SHEI.



## *Where We Are Going? 2020 goals “Fit Well Accessibility Project”*

In 2020, SHEI is looking to offer a new service called **WHIM at Home** through construction of a



**virtual learning center at the SHEI facility.** This will allow individuals to access a weekly interactive **virtual WHIM exercise/peer support class using SHEI as a video conferencing hub.** This virtual platform will bring WHIM classes into people's homes, which will increase participation for many individuals who have barriers (e.g. transportation) to connect with their peers. Eventually, SHEI can offer individuals virtual access to other WHIM

services, such as: educational opportunities, advocacy awareness, disability resource sharing, and more.

Another focus of SHEI’s in 2020 is adapting the grounds at SHEI’s facility so wheelchair/mobility assistance-users can safely experience nature as a means to refresh the health of their mind, body, and spirit. By **constructing accessible, interconnecting hard-packed pathways on the grounds, SHEI can allow people with physical disabilities involving paralysis to explore and experience the natural geographical beauty and nurturing peacefulness of this rural mountain view location.**



In 2019 we had two SHEI/WHIM events here, where 30 wheelchair-users attended. Some WHIM participants had limited access, due to soft, uneven terrain. Increasing the accessible outdoor area will provide an environment of inclusion for all.

SHEI’s 2020 goals “Fit Well Accessibility Project” and completion will increase access, either by the virtual conferencing hub or hard packed pathways, to many wellness opportunities coordinated by SHEI/WHIM.

## *President's Report*

The Sunset Hill Education Institute (SHEI) has used its positive development role model for 13 years with remarkable results. Hundreds of individuals have been fortunate enough to receive SHEI's services and experience their programs. We are deservedly proud of these positive *quality of life* impacts, and look forward to continued service to those communities that might be overlooked.

We recognize that the need of services for individuals with disabilities and those in transition has continually increased and that SHEI must continue its vital work to reach as many segments of our target population as possible. With the two major initiatives for 2020 we are continuing along that path. The magic of SHEI is alive and prospering as we embark on our 2020 goals.

~ *Harry Siedel*

## *A Word from our Treasurer*

2020 promises to be another growth year for SHEI/WHIM. As a small non-profit we have reached out and have made a positive difference in so many lives because of our volunteer Executive Director, our small but mighty staff and our faithful donors. We plan to continue to reach larger portions of our target population with our free services. Your help to supply these much needed services by donating to our 501©3 nonprofit organization is greatly appreciated by so many.

~ *Pat Vaicaitis*

### **SHEI Board of Directors 2020**

Carol Conforti-Adams *Executive Director*

Harry Siedel *President*      Kathy Everest *Vice President*

Susan Scalera *Secretary*      Patricia Vaicaitis *Treasurer*

Henry Howell      Dorothy Jeffrey

## *Executive Report*



What a wonderful journey it has been developing and implementing the SHEI/WHIM programs and services. Our small organization has had an impact in

enriching many individuals' lives, including my own. I'm so grateful and appreciative to oversee SHEI operations. I work with so many wonderful people from SHEI Board of Directors, WHIM staff, WHIM members and the many other professionals and agencies we network with.

With the SHEI Board of Director support in our 2020 SHEI/WHIM goals, I'm excited to get started:

- Coordinating pieces for the Fit Well Accessibility Project and then taking on the role of WHIM leader for the weekly virtual exercise program, which will allow me to stay honest with my own fitness.
- To open accessible pathways at SHEI facility for all abilities to enjoy in the health benefits of nature.
- Working with other professionals in building Youth Transition and Wellness programs.

Living with a disability of paralysis since 2002, I would have never imagined then, that my life could be so full with purpose and joy.

~ *Carol Conforti-Adams*

## **YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS!**

94% of all funds raised for SHEI/WHIM go directly to our programs and services. If you believe in our mission, please donate today to our nonprofit organization. Mail your contribution to:

**SHEI PO Box 435 So. Sutton NH 03273**