

Steve Lewis Subaru Shares the Love Donates \$30,500 to Whole Children

Out of the blue last summer, Whole Children got an exciting message from Steve Lewis Subaru, our Hadley neighbor down the road from the Inclusive Community Center (ICC). It said that Whole Children had been chosen as their local community nonprofit to benefit from the 2020 Subaru of America Share the Love event.

Each year, the dealership chooses a local non-profit to include in a list of organizations that Subaru buyers can select to receive a \$250 donation from Subaru of America, Inc. That \$250 is matched by the local dealership.

The Share the Love event ran from November 19, 2020 to January 4, 2021, during which information about Whole Children was available in the Steve Lewis Subaru showroom and portraits of Whole Children students from the Portraits of Pathlight project were on display. Included in the exhibit was a portrait taken for the event of Aidan O'Donoghue with his family's Steve Lewis Subaru. Whole Children and Milestones teacher Eddy Hougen and his daughter Emma also starred in a commercial to promote the Share the Love event.

This April, Whole Children was again floored to get a call from Steve Lewis Subaru saying that they had a check for \$30,500 to deliver!

Steve Lewis himself, owner and president of the dealership, brought the check to the ICC in May, along with other representatives from the dealership and from Subaru of New England. Delivering the big (one in size and one in amount) check to Whole Children, Steve said, "We are proud to support Whole Children as our hometown organization that received the Subaru Share the Love event donation this year. While Whole Children is our neighbor in Hadley, they provide vital services to children and teens with disabilities throughout the valley, as well as resources and support to their families."

Happily receiving the check was Whole Children Director Maggie Rice, her son Cade Holden and Jack the dog. "We are deeply grateful to Steve Lewis Subaru for choosing Whole Children as their local organization for the Share the Love event this year," said Maggie. "Their generous donation helps us provide a wide range of inclusive programming for children and teens that build skills and, of course, are a lot of fun."

We all extend our heartfelt thanks to Steve Lewis Subaru for their generosity and for sharing the love with us. And thank you to the community members who chose Whole Children when they bought their new Subaru.



Getting the Band Back Together

After a long break, The Friendship Band is finally belting out their one-of-a-kind tunes once more. The band of about ten members resumed rehearsals (via Zoom) in the winter session and continue to play this spring.



The group had to rethink the way they focus rehearsals, so they start each virtual session with an opening circle (where they might talk about music they like, bands they like the "look" of, or use five words or five syllables to share how they feel that day). Then they work on rhythm or matching pitch and end with a short lesson, which includes looking at other bands' styles, listening to a recorded Friendship Band song or writing lyrics for a new song.

"I think the band is really important to all of us," said Chris Harper, Milestones program manager and a member of the band. "When we weren't meeting at the beginning of Covid, it was at the top of our list to figure out a way to get the band back together, even if it meant we weren't going to be able to play instruments together. Just to have that hour once a week to be together seemed worth it. We have so much fun and usually spend half the class cracking up. It is definitely my favorite hour of the week."

Keep the Fun Going

The Darren FUNd supplies individuals with classes, games and other necessities for fun



Kim Pietraszkiwicz

Following the rise of Covid came the crashing wave of change of life as we knew it. The new “norm” brought us masks, social distancing, quarantines and other unforeseen challenges. Home visits were paused, day programs cancelled and routines were uprooted and altered. Through it all, those served by Pathlight’s Shared Living and Adult Family Care (AFC) programs found consistency and comfort with help from The Darren FUNd.

The FUNd was created in 2007 with the sole purpose of spreading happiness. After welcoming Darren Harrington into their home, longtime care providers Anne Marie Corrieri and John Perrin found themselves inspired by his contagious positive attitude. They created The Darren FUNd to “pay

forward” the joy he brought to their family. Through the years it has helped many individuals have experiences ranging from once-in-a-lifetime trips to the everyday kind like a membership to the local Y—that they wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise.

Throughout the pandemic, The FUNd responded to lift the spirits of and spread happiness to the individuals of Shared Living and AFC.

The FUNd was used to purchase musical instruments and art supplies as well as board games and puzzles. Kurt Leichsenring, an AFC member, was able to enroll in several of Milestones’ online recreational classes with the help of The FUNd.

“Kurt loves attending the Men’s Group,” said Brianna Kring, Kurt’s placement coordinator. “It’s allowed him to interact with others and has been a positive experience for him. He looks forward to the class every week.”

The Darren FUNd also afforded several unique opportunities for everyone to come together – while being socially distanced. The programs were able to offer an interactive Zoom presentation put on by Riverside Reptiles Education Center, as well as two virtual bingo games. The FUNd not only covered the cost for the party favor bags (filled

with treats, crafts and other goodies) that were given out at the summer and Halloween car parade events but also the music entertainment provided by DJGerry2Time.com. Gerry Theriault, who is served by Shared Living, was ecstatic when handed the check for his services—his first ever paid music gig!

Although it’s been a struggle for everyone to remain positive throughout the pandemic, The Darren FUNd without a doubt made it easier for Pathlight’s individuals. Darren’s sunny disposition and loving spirit have manifested through The FUNd as it continues to brighten the days of those served by Shared Living and AFC. When times are hard, let’s remember to ask ourselves Darren’s favorite question, “How ‘bout be happy?”



DJ Gerry

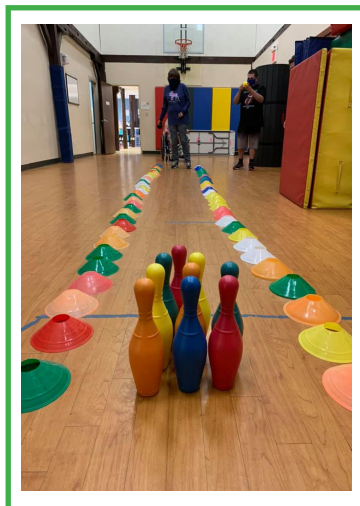
Milestones Days Getting Brighter

The Milestones community-based day program is slowly starting back up in person, with small masked groups coming to the Hadley center two days a week (one group on Monday and Tuesday, a second group on Thursday and Friday). Remote classes continue to run five days a week for all.

The groups have been thrilled to get to see their friends in person, take walks, work on art projects and just hang out together. The glimpse of life getting back to normal has lifted so many spirits!



Katie O'Reilly and Jac Boucher



Defining Moments: 2021 Annual Autism Conference

Caitlyn, 10, was recently diagnosed with autism. Her mother felt alone and scared. But all that changed two days later when she was gifted a scholarship to attend the 2021 Annual Autism Conference on April 29. There, her mother found a community that shared a common desire to promote understanding, appreciation and awareness of people with autism. It was a life changing moment; she no longer felt so alone.

Hosted by Pathlight’s Autism Connections Program, the virtual conference offered an opportunity for families, teachers, professionals, and individuals with autism to come together to be inspired, motivated, and educated.

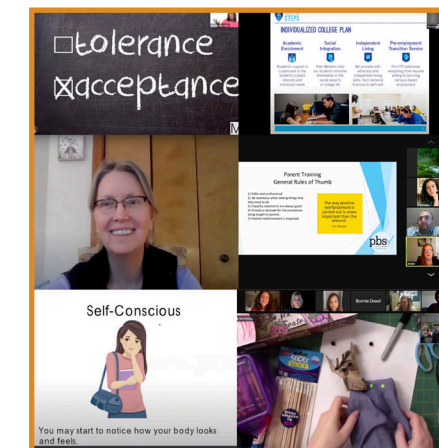
Two keynote addresses and 18 breakout sessions represented a range of topics of interest such as “The Intersection of Autism and Systemic Racism” and “The Ups and Downs of AAC” to all attendees. Attendees were also able to speak live with exhibitors in chat rooms, while the virtual Exhibitor Hall provided attendees with full descriptions of available programs and services.

Presenting Sponsor, Radcliffe is the Reason and Arthur Too! FIGHT FOR AUTISM continued its valuable support as it has in past years, as did a host of other businesses and foundations. We could not put together this successful event without their support.

At the end of the day, attendees weighed in on how the conference had supported them:

- “Wow, it was part inspiration and part practical, well-grounded strategies. I was struck by the integration of expertise and lived experience, very powerful.”
- “I thought the entire conference was done extremely well. I wasn’t sure how it would be since I had only attended in person conferences. Excellent Job!!”

Autism Connections will continue to provide leadership in local autism related events, bringing together as many resources as possible, and evolving as necessary to meet the needs of our remarkable community!



Love Notes from the Field

A sister sends her appreciation for her brother’s engaged life

Dear Ms. Banta,

You and I have spoken informally in the past about my gratitude for the residential staff supporting my brother Stephen. I have meant for some time to be a bit more formal with my expression of thanks and today found myself once again overwhelmed with how profound an impact Pathlight has had on not only Stephen but me. We are in our fourth year with the amazing staff at Stephen’s home, and I have stopped waiting for the awesomeness to peak; I now know that it will continue unabated and go as far as Stephen wishes to ride the curve.

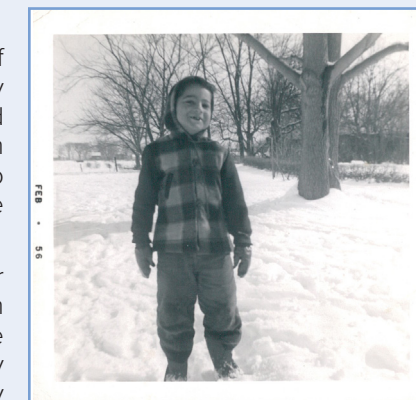
The system which has left such deep scars on Stephen and me as his guardian, no longer looms in the shadows as a constant threat. The battles of old that were so hard fought on his behalf were steppingstones to your entry into his life and home and into my life. I have known since the day I first spoke to your amazing team that Pathlight was the answer to my prayers for Stephen; I had no awareness of how much Pathlight was going to change my life in the process.

Ms. Banta, I have been able to move hundreds of miles away and still sleep at night, without a second thought as to my brother’s wellbeing. I no longer react like a powder keg (or Godzilla taking Tokyo) when confronted with a situation holding shades of past battles because I now know on a cellular level that it is not needed any longer.

I can say without a doubt that Justin is a behavioral expert and has done more to modify my behavior than Stephen’s. A remarkable feat, considering the years of conditioning. I owe him a debt that I can never repay. I still cry when I think about the significance of this. Justin, Kassandra and the entire staff at Stephen’s home are remarkable in their love of the men in their care; my brother is respected, supported, honored and acknowledged as a man of ongoing development, who does not need to be limited by his past.

Endless waves of gratitude into the universe,

Patricia



Patricia and Stephen

Raising A Rare Girl

“The land of disability is the land of discarding the normal...and I’m so grateful for that.”

Award-winning writer Heather Lanier, in collaboration with High Five Books in Florence, spoke in May about her memoir *Raising a Rare Girl* with Cammie McGovern, disability advocate, author and co-founder of Whole Children. The two spoke openly about motherhood, disability rights, writing from the heart and what it’s like to raise children with disabilities. The virtual event was attended by parents, disability advocates, and book-lovers. A portion of book sales from the night went to support Whole Children. It was an honest, heartwarming, informative and fun evening. Thank you to High Five Books, Heather Lanier, and Cammie McGovern!



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WE'RE ONLY \$30,000 AWAY FROM OUR FUNDRAISING GOAL

Your donation by June 30 can get us over the top! You can be part of our success by **sending your gift in the enclosed envelope** or donating securely online at www.pathlightgroup.org/give. Your donation will truly mean a difference in the quality of enrichment programs we can continue to offer.



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