

a SPECIAL VISIT FROM MUSICIAN RICK CHARETTE

By Dan McAllister, Program Manager
Scarborough, ME

On September 20th, Highland Ave. in Scarborough, ME had their monthly pot luck supper. As usual, all other programs were invited and, along with them, a special local musical guest joined them. Michael Meade, a resident at Highland Ave., has been a long-time fan of Rick Charette. Michael has seen him in concert numerous times over the past years and has always enjoyed his music. Michael has met Rick at past shows, has had pictures taken with him and has a framed Rick Charette autographed t-shirt on the wall in his room at his home. As word got out that Michael was indeed a Rick Charette "groupie", Bill Shultz, State Director at RRM, let it be known that he knew Rick and would try to arrange a performance at Michael's home. Things worked out and Rick came over to the house to perform for Michael and his guests.

The weather wasn't cooperating that day so Rick came in with his speakers and equipment and set up in Michael's living room. Michael had a front row seat and, with his guests, thoroughly enjoyed the show. It didn't take long for the guests to warm up and soon all were singing along and having a great time. Rick was very interactive with all the guests, took requests, and played all the favorites. After an hour of playing, the group gave Rick a rousing round of applause. Rick showed his appreciation with an encore. Rick went around to each audience member and thanked them, then said he had a great time and would love to come back to perform again. From Michael's reaction, it was assured that he had a great time. Then the sun came out and all went outside for a BBQ. Great time had by all!!!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KEVIN!

By Sharon Cleary, QA Specialist
Emerald St, Keene, NH

On October 4, 2011, Kevin celebrated his 54th birthday with his parents, brother, service coordinator and many staff from WKS and RRI. He enjoyed the company of all those he sees everyday, he enjoyed his gifts and of course the chocolate cake and ice cream. For all those who know Kevin very well, he is already counting the days until his birthday in 2012.



Getting By With a Little Help From His (Furry) Friends

By Tim Pulsifer, Program Manager
Peru, NY

It has long been established that animals can have a tremendous therapeutic value for an individual with a disability or anyone else for that matter. You won't get any argument from Brian Pray, a living testament to just how much our pets can help us keep things in perspective and meet many of life's biggest challenges by just being there.

Brian, who suffered a major TBI back in 1985 and receives his Service Coordination and Independent Living Skills Training from Residential Resources (Peru, NY), cites the presence and unqualified companionship, loyalty and love of his pets as a key factor in his rather remarkable life journey.

"They're very important to me," explained Brian, who has been forced to deal with barriers few of us could imagine as a TBI survivor and credits his animals for helping him progress along the way. "They're like my kids. They're always there for me and, with them, I'm never alone. To me, they're that important."

The value of a pet is something that Brian has never taken for granted and became particularly evident over recent months. In addition to the day-to-day challenges presented by his TBI this past winter and spring, Brian was faced with an additional and very personal crisis. He had to cope with the loss of his long-time pet and friend, a beautiful purebred German Shepherd named Foxy. Brian had reared Foxy since puppyhood. As if he had not had enough to deal with, Brian was rather suddenly faced with the prospect of making a decision no pet lover or owner ever wants to have to make. Due to advancing age and failing health, Brian would have to have Foxy put to sleep. It was a sad day indeed.

"I loved Foxy, I still miss her," said Brian, still a bit misty-eyed as he recalls. "But I just couldn't watch her suffer. I had to do it." Facing life without Foxy was not an easy thing for Brian. Even to an outsider (or a service provider looking from the outside in), one couldn't help but sense the absence of a pet that had been a joyful part of the Pray household for almost 13 years. From the vacant fenced-in front yard, still sporting the "Beware of Dog" sign, to the slightly mangled chew toys and rawhide, to the empty dog dishes and the run out back, the void was unmistakable.

As sad as this event was for Brian, a man proud of his resilience and personal perseverance, he was not about to let these circumstances get the best of him. Curling up in

a ball and (understandably) wrapping himself in self pity was just never an option. Not pre-accident, not now, not ever.

As he has always responded in the past, Brian has bounced back quite nicely. Foxy could never be replaced, nothing could change that fact but that didn't mean that Brian could not move forward and find room in his heart for a new family member or, in this case, two new ones.

Within a very short period of time, Brian has added not just one, but two new critters to his household. The welcome additions are, a feisty golden retriever pup named Zimbo (Zimmer if you please) and a spunky little ink-black kitten known as Blackjack. They wasted little time setting up shop in their new home. And despite all the maintenance and upkeep the newcomers demanded, nothing could have made their master happier. Talk about your pitter-patter of little feet (or paws, in this case); times two!

"They're best friends," commented a smiling Brian. "They have gotten along since day one. They keep each other company when I'm not here and play and sleep together next to my bed every night. They're a lot of work but I don't mind. I love them like they are my kids. They mean the world to me."

Life has certainly not always been easy for Brian but, thanks in large part to his two new furry friends and the sense of purpose they have added to the Pray household, the here and now as well as the future are now just a little bit brighter. Sounds like some pretty good therapy to me!



New Representation

Ken Lee

Director of Service Coordination

Manchester, NH

"I am confident that in the upcoming election slated for August 9th, my small town of Strafford, NH is on track to choose a representative more adept at leading NH into the future."

These were my closing words in my previous contribution to our newsletter, directly before a special election took place in my hometown of Strafford, NH last August. This happened to be a small election that garnered big news coverage within the state. I'm happy to say that indeed we now have a representative who will, in my opinion, be open-minded to proposals that are in the interest of "balancing the playing field" for folks from all walks of life. After speaking with my new representative, I get a clear sense that he has a "counterpoint" set of assumptions that are in contrast to his predecessor, specifically in regard to the value of diversity with respect to all individual community members.

I have read with great interest and ask you to take the time to read his opening remarks as a newly elected representative. I would then invite comparison with the "parting" remarks of my former representative. To do so you may need to dig up a previous month's newsletter. I hope you feel as I do, that this appears to be a promising positive change for one community.

I wish for you the same sense of access, acceptance, and sense of empowerment that I felt during this small local election process. Please know that I believe YOU CAN be a catalyst toward change within your own community, and I hope this somehow demonstrates for you the genuine promise of positive change whenever and wherever we have an awake and aware electorate.

During my seven weeks introducing myself to potential voters in the district, I was reminded of the inequities that have always existed in society, but which should not exist in the 21st century amid claims that America is the richest country in the world. I observed otherwise. I observed the symptoms of a society whose inhabitants have less buying power today than in 1973. Adjusted for inflation, the comparison is \$33,000 median annual salary then versus \$29,000 today. [Free Lunch, David Cay Johnston, 2007].

Many homes were empty from causes not known to me, with a few exceptions. Many were in foreclosure as evidenced by notices attached to the door. On a short road of eight or ten houses, three were empty or in the process of being vacated. Inability to pay property taxes, I was told, was the primary cause for one displacement in this neighborhood. In another town, I was told by a neighbor that the owner recently lost his job at UNH, and had to move in with parents. In another area, I was told a young couple could not pay the mortgage, and left their home behind.

So many structures were in disrepair... in need of paint and storm doors and porch and step replacement. An elderly woman living alone and mostly confined to a comfortable chair with blanket complained her roof leaks in another part of the house, and she can do nothing

about it but stay out of that part of the house.

Solicitation of aluminum cans was providing recycling cash for the residents of one mobile home. A yard sale was producing needed revenue with which one homeowner could pay a water bill.

None of these were fancy homes; some were even less than modest, perhaps best described as basic.

I am unfamiliar with the meaning behind the phrase "American Dream." My bet is that families around the world fancy the equivalent of the American Dream, though with a much different definition. In some countries, people are too poor to live. Life expectancy is measured in hours or days. Finding enough food to stay alive is their only ambition. In other countries, the dream is to level their \$500,000.00 home and build a \$5 million monument to themselves.

None of my observations in the district caused me to conclude those families were attempting to live beyond their means. They were simply the victims of circumstances that will be discussed in future postings to this site.

Bob Perry

Representative-Elect, Strafford County District #3

APPLE PICKING FUN

By Deb Aherrera, Program Manager
Manchester, NH

The beautiful September weather brought a lot of fall activities to the schedules of Carol Ann, Karin and Freddy, thanks to Chris Fogarty, DSP.

Apple picking at Sunnycrest Farm in Londonderry seemed to be the biggest hit! The yummy apples, the cider and the smell of the apple pies baking made it heavenly!

They enjoyed seeing all the animals, too! But the best part was taking home the fresh apples to have as part of their healthy lunches for the rest of the week!

Thank you, Chris!



The White House Reach-Out

By Stacey Lloyd, Residential Director
Ballston Lake, NY

Each month White House staff who work on disability-related policies host a public, live-captioned conference call to keep the public better informed about important developments on many different disability issues. These calls also connect you to leaders in the federal government who work on these issues. Over the past several months conference calls have featured discussions on accessibility, employment, education, technology, emergency preparedness, transportation, healthcare and the federal budget.

The White House is now offering the opportunity for you to suggest topics you'd like discussed during these calls. Send in your ideas about subjects for discussion, as well as the federal officials you'd like to hear from on these subjects, by visiting <https://www.disability.gov/WHQuestion>.

Thank you to everyone who contributes articles and pictures to the newsletter.

Articles are due by the second Friday of each month for the following month's newsletter. The newsletter will be posted at resresources.com on the fourth Friday of each month.

If you do not have access to the internet and would like a copy of the newsletter mailed to you, please contact your local Residential Resources office to make arrangements.



WKS Incorporated

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