

# HORIZONS

FALL 2022



MAKING A  
**SPLASH**  
WITH CME KIDS!

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is a picture of me, taken this summer on Crotched Mountain's accessible Gregg Trail with my brother-in-law. Visiting from La Paz, Bolivia, he couldn't wait to walk our accessible trails. Fernando, or Nani, as we call him, had a life-changing stroke at the age of 30. Both his right hand and right leg are almost fully paralyzed. He walks by using his body to swing his leg forward.

Now at the age of 65 walking is even harder for him. Uneven paths and roots and rocks could send him sprawling. So the chance to go for a walk in the hills of New Hampshire was exciting. Accessible trails don't exist in Bolivia. Imagine that. Exhausted, but thrilled, Nani had a memorable walk.

There is something necessary about being outside and being independent. Something that we search for and need, beginning in our childhood.

I grew up in New Hampshire. While it was many years ago, like most kids, I just loved summer (yes, even for my 6 am swim lessons in the cold lake water). In the warm afternoons we would bike to the lake to explore the rocky shorelines, sail, catch crayfish and spend hours in the water. That joy from my childhood is what you see on the cover of this edition of *Horizons*. Pure, distilled joy—an infectious delight from that little boy Manny, who is able to experience that which makes him the happiest kid in the world.

For Manny, being in the water delivers immense fun. It is where he finds his happy place. But as you will learn, it's not as easy for him to throw on some trunks and jump into the deep end.

Manny is five years old and blind. Keeping Manny safe in the water is of preeminent concern for his family.

Thanks to your generosity, and the power of CMF Kids, Manny was able to find an avenue for big-time pool fun with our great friends at the Granite YMCA.

Crotched Mountain Foundation partnered with the YMCA to launch the Swim Angelfish adaptive swim program, which allowed Manny the opportunity to receive personal swim lessons from a trained instructor. There are few trained adaptive swim instructors in NH, yet there are many children and families who need adaptive swim lessons. We provided funding for training of more instructors, because the need was there. More on this incredible partnership can be found in the next few pages.

For Manny, and the children who will come after him to enjoy the Swim Angelfish program, those smiles will light up the aquatics centers, keeping them safe and provide the proof positive that summers can be special for all kids in NH, regardless of ability.

Sincerely,



Ned Olney  
President



# THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY

## Momentous! Jim Piet elected as incoming Board Chair

At the September 6 meeting of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, James (Jim) C. Piet was appointed Chair of the Board of Directors. This is a wonderful milestone in Crotched Mountain's 100-year-old mission, celebrated for many reasons, not least of which is that in the mid-1980s Jim became an alum of the former Crotched Mountain School in Greenfield.

In 1964, Jim first came to the school for an evaluation by Crotched Mountain's specialized clinicians. A young child at the time, Jim faced severe mobility and speech challenges. A few years later, his parents made the very difficult decision to enroll their young son as a residential student.

And it was tough for Jim too—being away from home—unable to speak to his fellow residents or staff. But Jim fondly remembers many caring staff, especially a speech therapist with a disability of his own named Clint.

“Just like my own parents, Clint constantly challenged me, and helped me become the person I am today,” Jim says.

Jim rose to those challenges then, and throughout his adulthood. He earned his M.S. degree and is the Public Relations Specialist with the NH Department of Education and Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. He volunteers and supports many disability-related initiatives.

“I joined Crotched Mountain's Board of Directors sixteen years ago to give back, and to help the next generation of students with disabilities reach their own potential,” said Jim. “I've been a proud volunteer and donor to Crotched Mountain for decades and we should all lend our support when we can.”

At Crotched Mountain we believe that with the right support at the right time, there are no limits for a child with a disability. ■

*To discuss how your support helps those served by Crotched Mountain, please contact Kevin Harte at 603-669-0821 or at [kevin.harte@crotchedmountain.org](mailto:kevin.harte@crotchedmountain.org). And don't forget to check out the many ways to give at [crotchedmountain.org/donate](http://crotchedmountain.org/donate).*



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# THE RIPPLE EFFECT

For Manny, this is pure bliss. The splashing, the bubble-blowing, the big jumps—it doesn't get much better than pool time at the Granite YMCA for this high-energy, big-smiling five year-old. But for Manny and his mom Kym, getting to this point was far from easy. That's where CMF Kids—and you!—come in and make a splash.

Manny is five years old and has bilateral microphthalmia, which means he was born without eyes. Every morning, Manny wears prosthetic eyes.

This little guy is just like any other fun-loving little kid: exuberant, active, and always ready to try something new. Besides, he's the first to acknowledge—and quickly move on from—his disability. As Kym notes, his typical overture when he meets a new friend who is curious about his white cane is: "I'm blind. Do you want to play?"

"He's so full of energy and is curious," Kym says. "He wants to try everything."

Because Manny is up for whatever, there are inherent challenges to ensure those experiences are as safe as possible. And when it comes to frolicking in the pool, one of Manny's all-time favorite activities, finding the right option proved to be difficult.

As Manny requires focused, one-on-one instruction, group swimming lessons were out of the question. Kym had private classes lined up in 2020, but COVID hit, and everything halted. Staff shortages compounded the issue, and it was more than two years later when, finally, a class at the YMCA of Concord, a branch of The Granite YMCA became available.

CMF Kids has an existing partnership with The Granite YMCA, dating back to two years ago when they provided support for special programming for children with disabilities during the height of the pandemic. This connection was rekindled for the Y's Swim Angelfish program, which offers adaptive private and small group swim lessons for babies, toddlers, children, and adults with disabilities. Through this program, trained instructors work with swimmers and their families to not only learn to swim but instill confidence and safety around the water. Just like that, Manny had a place to swim.

"Manny's success in swimming lessons takes a supportive instructor," Kym says. "The safety component was my biggest drive to get him enrolled. When he gets to the Y, he listens to how sounds echo off the sides of the pool; he feels the water's surface, tests the buoyancy and blows bubbles.

Kym adds: "Without sight, Manny is learning through sound and touch; I have the privilege of seeing a pool full of water, whereas Manny relies on us to describe everything in detail and give him opportunities to explore. Not only is Manny learning about water safety, but he is also having the time of his life in the pool. These lessons have gone even better than we expected. Liz, the instructor, is incredible. It's been a huge success."

Alec Decato, Aquatics Director at The Y, concurs because of a simple but massive accomplishment: "Manny is now holding his breath and going underwater. It is an incredible achievement."

As a trained Swim Whisperer through the certified Swim Angelfish Program, Alec worked with Manny and Kym to assess, identify, and implement strategies to help Manny feel comfortable, safe, and learn to swim.

Manny's lessons are just the beginning. Thanks to CMF Kids and to you and your fellow donors who have made this possible, more Y instructors will soon be offering more private lessons to children with special needs—children who are so, so eager to splash and play and feel safe and

comfortable in water but have been unable to because the opportunities to learn weren't there.

That's about to change. That's the ripple effect of your generosity. ■





# OUTDOOR RECREATION FOR ALL!

For more than a decade, Crotched Mountain Foundation has maintained the country's longest mountain-based fully accessible trails in Greenfield, NH. Donations from trail users and others help repair damage caused by the harsh New England winters, mud seasons, and the usual wear and tear the trails see from thousands of annual users.

It was obvious at the beginning of 2022 that this wonderful resource for people of all abilities (pictured above with UNH volunteers) needed significant work. Parts of both the Gregg and Dutton Brook Trails were impassable from trail surface damage and wash-outs, downed trees and shrubs, and foliage overgrowth. Many of the scenic vistas were gone.

Long before the trail season began, Crotched Mountain Foundation's grounds expert, Rick Fife, was out there doing everything possible to make the trails ready for safe passage again. This included rebuilding culverts and bridges, rebuilding the trail surface, clearing brush and tree limbs, reclaiming path edges, and mowing miles of edges and meadow.

Earlier this year, he was assisted by a group of UNH student volunteers, and, later in the season, by David Calhoun, who completed logging to restore the trail vistas. Though the work is never fully finished, the results are stunning.

You are encouraged to get out there and see for yourself. Find out more at [cmf.org/trails](https://cmf.org/trails). ■





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## A big thank-you to outgoing Board Chair, Henry Veilleux

About five years ago, Henry Veilleux, from Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group, was invited to join the Crotched Mountain Foundation Board of Directors. Henry went on to serve over three of the most tumultuous years of our mission's history, starting with the COVID pandemic, and then overseeing tremendous changes in how Crotched Mountain supports children with complex disabilities. Henry's term as Board Chair ends this year, and we are grateful for having his steady hand at the wheel of governance.

"Crotched Mountain prevails because of the committed support of our entire community," said Henry, "Donations from caring individuals, businesses, and organizations have shouldered our mission throughout the decades. And now, that generous support continues to help us reach thousands of children and adults with complex needs, every year."



Henry will continue to serve as a member of the Crotched Mountain Board and remain a proud supporter of people with disabilities throughout the region. Thank you Henry, from all of us.



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