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Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative

Kim Wilmot,

Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) and Friends of SMEC Host Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon



The community showed up in force to participate in the Friends of SMEC's Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)

DARTMOUTH — Students and adults served by the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) were joined by their family and friends, SMEC

staff and members of the community for the Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon on Saturday, Oct. 24.

The Walk-A-Thon was organized by the Friends of SMEC, the Collaborative's parent organization, which supports SMEC's programs, services and the needs of individuals served in SMEC programs.

"Our mission is to improve the lives of those in our community who rely on our services," said SMEC's Director of Communication Sherri Tetrault. "Originally established to assist individuals with developmental disabilities in achieving independent living as adults, Friends of SMEC has evolved to encompass support for all of the SMEC programs, benefiting students and adults alike."

The funds raised last weekend will be channeled toward making a meaningful impact in the lives of SMEC's students and young adults.

The event also collected painted rocks for 6-year-old Madison Lang, of Overland Park, Kansas, as she bravely battles cancer. In late May, Madison was diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma — a rare cancer located in her stomach.

To help her cope, family and friends began painting rocks filled with words of hope, encouragement and the things that make her happy. Madison loves rocks.

SMEC asked the community to help add to Madison's rock collection when they showed up for the Walk-A-Thon.

By the end of the walk, a huge pile of joyful rocks for Madison had formed.

"Our entire Collaborative pulled together and created a lovely mound of painted rocks," said SMEC Executive Director Kim Wilmot. "I hope they bring true joy to young Madison and her family. We are sending them our genuine thoughts of optimism and encouragement as they face this diagnosis together."

The Oct. 24 Walk-A-Thon started at 9 a.m. at 56 Bridge St. in Fairhaven.

Vocal Coach Sharon Jensen's Student Showcase, featuring several local students — including Miss New Bedford Teen 2027 Leeyah Nunes Wynn, Miss New Bedford

2027 Avery Barboza, Brynn Higginbothom, Emma Terach and Bianka Chibante — performed for the crowd.

"We are so appreciative of the boost that our Collaborative gets from the efforts of the Friends of SMEC," said Executive Director Wilmot. "We also extend our gratitude to the SMEC community and so many members of our host communities who turned out on Saturday to show their support for the important work that we do every day, offering education and guidance to so many."

Friends of SMEC initiatives include providing interest-free loans to those transitioning into independent living situations, covering the costs of tickets and transportation for work and community activities, funding chaperones for young adults on trips and supporting essential needs like field trips and classroom equipment.

"Our dedicated Friends of SMEC Board of Directors, primarily composed of parents of our students and consumers, works tirelessly to uphold our mission," Tetrault said. "They convene regularly, arrange informative sessions, and organize fundraisers year-round."

These vital community services have become even more critical as prices soar and government support has waned.

The Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon helps SMEC raise essential funds and increases awareness of the special education Collaborative, founded in 1975, that serves as an extension of 10 public school systems that make up its membership — Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Fall River, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, Rochester and Old Rochester Regional.

Anyone interested in donating to Friends of SMEC can email Tetrault at stetrault@smecollaborative.org or call 508-717-1932.

About SMEC

The Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative is a public education collaborative established in 1975. SMEC is an extension of 10 public school systems, which make up its membership. The present membership includes the

Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Fall River, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School, Rochester and Old Rochester Regional public school districts. SMEC accepts students for enrollment in its programs from school systems throughout Southeastern Massachusetts. The Collaborative's programs and services are locally based and locally directed and are designed to supplement the special education resources of its member districts. SMEC offers a variety of services for students with special needs aged 3-21 as well as adults with developmental disabilities. To learn more about the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative, visit smecollaborative.org.

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Even a local pooch participated in the Friends of SMEC's Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Jillian Nielsen, an adult in SMEC's Adult Day Health (ADH) program, submitted the winning T-shirt design for the Friends of SMEC's Eighth Annual Health and Wellness

Walk-A-Thon. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Nate Trull and friends participated in the Friends of SMEC's Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



Vocal Coach Sharon Jensen's Student Showcase, featuring several local students — including Miss New Bedford Teen 2027 Leeyah Nunes Wynn, Miss New Bedford 2027 Avery Barboza, Brynn Higginbothom, Emma Terach and Bianka Chibante — performed for the crowd. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



One pair took a dance break during SMEC's recent Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



SMEC's recent Eighth Annual Health and Wellness Walk-A-Thon also collected painted rocks for 6-year-old Madison Lang as she bravely battles cancer. SMEC supporters worked hard painting a big pile of rocks full of love and encouragement prior to the event. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



SMEC supporters worked hard painting a big pile of rocks full of love and encouragement prior to the event. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



SMEC supporters worked hard painting a big pile of rocks full of love and encouragement prior to the event. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)



SMEC supporters worked hard painting rocks full of love and encouragement. The rocks will be shipped to Kansas to cheer up a young girl who's battling cancer. (Photo Courtesy Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative)


Friends of SMEC
Top Pledges!!
1
Tied 1st Place
Kayla Soares
and
Michelle Gomes
2
2nd Place
Ryan Connors
3
Tied 3rd Place
Dylan Manuels
and
Laura Rose



A message from Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative

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