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## Contact us!

501 E. Central Ave.  
Missoula, MT 59801  
USA  
406.370.4717

info@eleanoresproject.org  
www.eleanoresproject.org

Eleanore's Project, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit private operating foundation.

## Welcome!

I am writing this from St. Paul, Minnesota, where I was honored to receive the St. Catherine Award from the Alumnae Association of the College of St. Catherine. It was surprising and humbling to be nominated in relation to my work with Eleanore's Project, because for me, it seems ordinary. This work feels right, compelling and most of all, a blessing. I am blessed to work with

marvelous volunteers, board members and colleagues in North America, Jordan, Peru and the United Kingdom. I have the opportunity to meet new colleagues who become friends, and work with my wonderful family on something that is much bigger than us. But mostly, I am honored to be allowed into the lives of children and youth with disabilities and their families

in faraway places. The differences of our languages, culture and religion are transcended by our common experiences and concern about life with disabilities. They live in circumstances much more difficult than my own and have taught me so much about what it means to be human. They are the ones who deserve an award.

- Tamara

## Footprints in Peru: Reflections from Becca Gillis



"Some people come into our lives, leave footprints on our hearts,

and we are never ever the same." This quote does a perfect job of summing up my experience in Peru. Before participating in Eleanore's Project, I had no idea what to expect or how it would change my life. The children, families, workers, and volunteers of Eleanore's Project

were truly an inspiration and I am so grateful for all of them. Before returning to the U.S., I wondered what it would like to be home. As I stepped into my apartment and started unpacking, I was flooded with tears as I realized that everything I needed was at my fingertips and that I had comfort and security. While this was unfortunately not the case with so many of the people in Peru, they were still happy and eternally grateful for

everything.

I will never forget our first day at Yancana Huasy when the bus arrived with all of the children and families. I had tears in my eyes as the parents quickly filed in holding their children by the head and feet with their limbs hanging in every direction. As I stepped back and looked at their reactions, I had tears of sadness thinking about how unfair it was

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## Who Are We?

Eleanore's Project, Inc. began in 2004 in memory of Eleanore Kittelson-Aldred as a legacy from her family.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for children with disabilities and their families, through provision of mobility equipment, education

and related activities in collaboration with like-minded organizations in the U.S. and other countries.

*("Footprints" continued from page 1)*  
that these children had not received previous medical help, but also tears of joy as I knew that we were going to be able to help these individuals and provide them with something that would ultimately change their life and future. Also, seeing how each child's smile, personality, and behavior changed after receiving a wheelchair and knowing how grateful the families were is something I will always remember.

And finally, while I have many memories of the trip, my most memorable experience was the night Javier (from Lima) received his wheelchair. The look of excitement and happiness on his face was priceless, as he and his mother thanked us over and over again. Then, as he was getting ready to leave and saying his good-byes, Rick walked over to him and said "I have three words of advice for you...study much, learn lots, work hard...and you are going to

change the world." I truly believe that he will and whether Javier knows it or not, he already has...by touching all of our lives.

*Becca Gillis is a student of Occupational Therapy at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota. She joined Eleanore's Project in Peru in March 2008.*

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## **Summer 2008 Activities**

### **Montreal, Canada**

Tamara, Rick and Arwen will attend the biennial International Society for Augmentative and Alternative (ISAAC) Conference August 4-7, 2008 in Montreal. We will give a 70 minute oral presentation called, "A Communication System for Eleanore: One Family's Journey". Tamara will present a poster session titled, "Positioning for Postural Control: A Foundation for Success in Communication and Other Functional Activities". Friends and colleagues at the AAC Conference in Peru last August encouraged us to submit presentation proposals to ISAAC. We are excited about the prospect of sharing the vision of Eleanore's Project while learning from others around the world.

### **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

On August 8, 2008 we will fly from Montreal to Jordan to join volunteers from the U.S. and Canada for an expedition with a different flavor from August 10-23. Because of various circumstances, we were unable to ship a container of wheelchairs to Jordan this year. However, we will still be holding wheelchair clinics around the country to follow up with wheelchair recipients from 2006 and 2007. Repairs can be hard to come by in Jordan where the terrain and climate "eats up" wheels and casters, as there are no wheelchair or bicycle repair shops. We hope that will change one day, but for now we will be able to do repairs that are not possible locally, re-assess and consult on challenging wheelchair seating issues, and make plans for the 2009 container of rehabilitation equipment. We will give seminars

on wheelchair seating and mobility, plus other relevant topics, including our presentations from the Montreal conference.

This expedition embodies our commitment to fostering long-term change and building capacity in the places where we work. We always speak about the importance of follow-up and education in providing high quality wheelchair services. On this expedition, we will model these activities as important enough to warrant a special trip, even without new equipment. This is a significant part of providing and modeling high quality services like those we expect for children in North America. We are grateful to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet for their major funding of this effort through the Partners in Justice Fund, and continuing their support of our work in Jordan for the second year in a row.

### ***Do you want to hear from us again?***

We know that our cause may not be your cause. We want to send this newsletter only to those who want to receive it. Please tell us if you want your name removed from our list – we will not be offended! Call us at 406-370-4717 or email us at [info@eleanoresproject.org](mailto:info@eleanoresproject.org) if you wish to be removed, or use the form on the reverse of this page to indicate your mailing preference. Thank you!

## *Adrift with Joy*

Richard Parnell

*Richard Parnell, a wheelchair technician from Minneapolis, Minnesota is a volunteer with Eleanore's Project. He wrote this poem after the most recent expedition to Peru. Richard has also volunteered in Jordan.*

*Ruth and her father (right) traveled six hours from their rural village Apurimac into Cusco to visit our wheelchair clinic.*

*Silvana (below, left) and Marisol (below, right) are two best friends from the same village as Ruth.*



Ruth awaits  
as bubbles  
slowly  
descend

awaits  
her chance  
to descend  
carefully  
into a padded  
wheelchair

one that can hold her  
securely  
as if on her father's lap

so she can move  
comfortably  
supported by all around her

as if on air

adrift with joy.



*We thank all of you who made the March 2008 expedition possible. We hope these smiling faces bring as much joy to you as they do to us.*

*Javier, a 12 year-old boy from Lima, came to us in an armchair mounted on four small casters (left). His mother pushed him over rough roads to school every day. In his new wheelchair (above), Javier has greater independence and the new chair will ease transportation as he progresses in school.*



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