



THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY

Dancing with Dolphins

FOR CHILDREN with emotional problems or physical or mental disabilities, the opportunity to swim with a dolphin can be an enriching—even a transforming—experience.

At age 3, for example, Joe Hoagland suffered a massive stroke during an operation to repair a congenital heart defect. Conventional physical and speech therapy did little to mitigate the resulting paralysis of his left side. But when Joe entered a pool to play with a dolphin, he laughed for the first time since his stroke, recalls his mother, Deena. She says he became so motivated to try to extend his capabilities that within two years he had regained nearly full mobility.

"He thought he was broken," she says. "It brought his sense of self back again."

So impressed was Ms. Hoagland with the

role dolphins can play in complementing medical therapies that she founded Island Dolphin Care, a charity in Key Largo, Fla., that specializes in using marine mammals to help children gain self-esteem and overcome their challenges in a playful environment. In short sessions, often scheduled over several days, kids become familiar with the dolphins and learn to interact with them, sometimes hitching a ride around the pool. Classroom sessions reinforce lessons learned in the water.

The charity, established in 1992, now has a \$442,000 annual budget. Grants from several philanthropies in South Florida have supported scholarships and educational-outreach programs.

Here, a young participant meets Squirt, one of the eight Atlantic bottlenosed dolphins used in the therapy program.