

UNIT 5 LESSON 4 PAGES 58–59, EXERCISES C, D, AND E

Former college athlete Pete Frates was diagnosed in 2012 with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS, also commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. ALS is a relatively rare disease that attacks the nervous system. Eventually one loses the ability to move or speak—even the ability to breathe. Life expectancy after diagnosis is two to five years. But Pete Frates had a goal. He wanted to spread awareness of the disease and get people to contribute to its cure. And he had a big idea. It went like this: You made a video of yourself dumping a bucket of icy water over your head. You posted it on a social media site and challenged your friends to do the same thing within twenty-four hours or donate \$100 to ALS research.

What happened next was huge. Social media users all over the world took up the challenge and posted videos of themselves. On Facebook, more than 2.4 million Ice Bucket Challenge videos were shared and were viewed 10 million times, reaching more than 400 million people. On YouTube, more than 2.3 million videos were posted. The challenge was mentioned more than 2.2 million times on Twitter. Everyone—from kids to next-door neighbors—to famous celebrities and politicians—talked about it and took the challenge themselves. Whole communities—families, schools, and companies—took the challenge together. And in just one month alone, the Ice Bucket Challenge raised \$100 million in donations. The challenge had its critics. Some said that it was mainly about having fun rather than doing charity work. In most of the videos, the cause—which was supposed to be finding a cure for ALS—was not even mentioned. Some called it a publicity stunt for celebrities and politicians. Other critics said that it was just an opportunity to be the star of your own video, without having to give anything. There were those who felt that people should have skipped the ice bucket entirely and simply donated money instead. Another point critics made was that, since ALS was a rare disease that affects few people, it would have been smarter to donate all that cash to a more serious problem, such as providing medical supplies for the Ebola epidemic that was turning into a crisis in West Africa at that same time. Nevertheless, people who are involved in charity work felt it was a very exciting phenomenon and a very successful event. It helped increase awareness of ALS, and raised much needed money for research. Perhaps most importantly, it made people feel connected as a community—that by getting involved and collaborating with each other, they might be able to cure the world's problems. According to Susie Erjavec-Parker, owner of a Canadian social media and marketing firm, the Ice Bucket Challenge engaged people as a community in several ways: For one thing, it appealed to the natural desire in most of us to help other people. Secondly, it created an ongoing conversation people could watch on social media and share with their friends and family. And it was easy and fun to do. In fact, 21 percent of the videos posted on Facebook led to money donations. Organizations dedicated to researching a cure for ALS received more donations than ever before. That's not bad at all.