



WHERE DIFFERENCES DO NOT MEAN DISABILITIES

2022 IN REVIEW

This year, Hands to Love was able to put into action the work we did “behind the scenes” during our almost 3-year COVID-19 hiatus. We’ve reimagined groupings, extended programming, and hosted Hand Camp in our new venue at Keystone Camp. The entire H2L Family has been in our hearts and the focus of our mission and vision. We hope you enjoy this look at our incredible year, as well as the beautiful journey that became Hands to Love.



Pine Derby Winners at Hand Camp '22

“THERE’S A PLACE FOR US,
FOR WE ARE GLORIOUS!”

THIS IS ME!

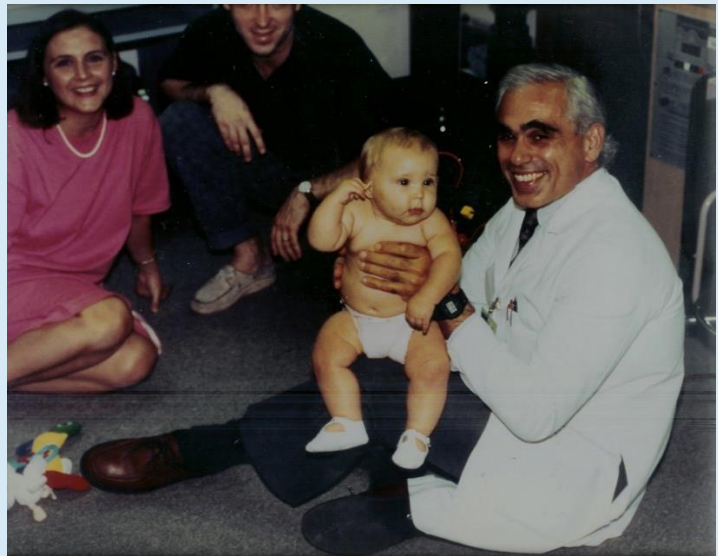
Our popular H2L TALENT SHOW will make a return to Hand Camp! Watch for sign-ups in February 2023!



HAND CAMP 2023 MARCH 31 - APRIL 2

SALVATION ARMY
KEYSTONE CAMP
6581 SE 9TH AVE
STARKE, FL 32091

The networking and support of parents of children with upper extremity limb differences began in our clinic over 40 years ago. The concept for a “hand camp” to address the unique needs of this special population of our patients was inspired by a presentation to our staff in the late 90’s. And the rest is history! In 2001, our first camp served 15 families, though the registration numbers have grown over two decades to nearly 80 families in 2019.



Our original venue of Camp Crystal Lake was annually filled to at capacity, but we made it work. The COVID pandemic caused a 3-year pause for Hand Camp but, thankfully, in March

of this year we acted according to our Camp theme and did “*Whatever It Takes*” to hold our signature event in a new, larger venue at Keystone Camp and Conference Center. We had 54 families in attendance who traveled from 15 states – even from as far away as Alaska! We love the Deitz family who have made that trek from Juneau for eight camps! We felt as though we’d picked up right where we left off in 2019, allowing our campers to enjoy a weekend full of activities designed to empower themselves. Many parents, both first timers and those returning for their tenth camp, all found the support they desired.

We are so proud of the legacy of service that the many volunteers have provided since our inception that make this event possible. Our “*Compass Corp*,” a troop of 126 volunteers comprised of professionals, college students, service club members, AULDs (Adults with Upper Limb Differences) and a new group of “*Legacies*” which are graduates of the camp program showed up and delivered!

On November 3rd we were honored with a *Legacy Award* by the Community Foundation of North Central Florida here in our hometown of Gainesville. This recognition was such an honor and allowed us to recognize some of the contributions of the many supporters and volunteers through the years, specifically acknowledging those who have supported Hands to Love financially and through their service. Bob and Barbara Matthias were recognized for challenging us early on to fundraise more effectively through their matched giving.



Many camp parents have engaged as leaders, but Brian Caslow is a real standout. Brian, his wife Diane, their ULD camper Garrett and his sibling Zackary were a charter family attending our first camp in 2001 until Garrett was well into high school. For 18 years, Brian selflessly served in many leadership positions beyond his camper’s involvement and gave of his time, talent and treasure in ways that define our volunteers.

The Caslow Family

Many other groups have supported Hand Camp through the years including students seeking community service hours, UF student groups including GRIP, SOTA, Scouts and many others. Kara Poole, as well as Jerelyne Idica, are practicing OTs who served as students throughout their entire college careers and have continued as leaders in camp programming ever since. All of these volunteers are representative of the fabric of professional colleagues, friends and family who have supported us in furthering the Hands to Love mission:

The mission of Hands to Love is to demonstrate that difference does not equal disability. Under the guidance of volunteer medical professionals, Hands to Love empowers the entire family through a network of informational and emotional support, while providing adaptive concepts for everyday activities and uncommon adventures.



Jerelyne



Kara

We feel very blessed for the more than 20 years of service alongside so many that believe in this meaningful program.

Love and Hugs,
DR. PAUL & RUTHIE DELL
Hands to Love Founders



Ruthie

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

During the Hands to Love Annual Board of Directors Retreat last September, board members were guided by Barzella Papa (President and CEO of Community Foundation of North Central Florida) in reflecting on the 22-year history of Hands to Love. All were challenged to remember everything, both good and the bad, that has led us to where we are today.

For many, looking back may be scary; yet it is a necessary practice so that growth can happen. Looking back allows us to learn from mistakes, process difficulties, find opportunities, and celebrate successes. After the hard steps of reflecting on the past, many come away with hope for the future and the ability to keep moving forward.

After the annual retreat, our Hands to Love Board Members came away renewed and refreshed with a fresh vision for what the future holds for Hands to Love. They are guided by the hope that Hands to Love will be around for generations and motivated to continue the work in front of them.

As you take a look back at 2022 throughout this newsletter, I hope you come away with the same excitement for the future that the board has. Hands to Love is only able to continue to provide encouragement and community to children with upper limb differences and their families because of the variety of ways our H2L Family provides generous support to the organization. For that, Dr. Paul and Ruthie Dell, the H2L Board of Directions, and myself are truly grateful!

Happy Holidays!
Courtney Wampler, H2L Executive Director

My name is Jim Dufek, and I'm the treasurer for Hands to Love. I've been involved with Hands to Love in different ways for more than 16 years and am honored to be able to continue to support this amazing organization! Today I am asking for your help. Every year Hands to Love hosts Hand Camp in Florida, where over 80 families take part in adapted camp activities, networking and support groups, parent programming and, most importantly, building friendships that last a lifetime.

Hands to Love relies on our amazing donors to help cover the cost associated with Hand Camp. While we don't charge families to attend Hand Camp, it costs Hands to Love on average \$1150 for a family to attend. With that said, everything helps. From a donation of \$20 to sponsoring a family to come to camp, your donation makes this all possible! Please consider giving this holiday season.

Hands to Love is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We strive to provide all Hands to Love events and activities at the lowest possible cost to our families. We are able to provide low-cost services to these special families thanks to the generous support of our donors.

Hands to Love relies on the donations of generous supporters like you. Thank you for helping us make a difference in the lives of the families we serve!



Scan here to give!

THINKING OF COMING TO CAMP FOR THE FIRST TIME?

JOIN US!

Last year was my family's first time at camp. My son Isaac had recently turned five and it was incredibly valuable for all of us. I'll give you an overview of our experience and answer some of the questions I had or didn't know I should have had in case you have them too.

~ JUSTIN REYNOLDS ~

OUR EXPERIENCE

Isaac was one of the younger campers so he struggled to stick with his group. Each activity is scheduled for 30-45 minutes. He usually lasted about 10-15 minutes and then wanted to wander off and do his own thing. And that was totally ok. He was participating and processing according to his ability. And while I was worried he wasn't connecting or absorbing things, I was completely wrong.

By the end of the weekend and ever since he has brought up things from Hand Camp that made an impression on him. Most amazingly was the sudden change his teachers saw when he returned to preschool. Previously quiet and almost always wanting to do things by himself, he returned with a new found confidence. His teachers were amazed at how much he began to speak up and how much more he not only interacted with, but began to initiate and lead playtime with his classmates. He also shifted from discussing his hand as something that holds him back, to talking about it as something that makes him unique and proud.

Hand Camp may only be a few short days but it really was a transformational experience. Needless to say, he has been ready to go back since we got home from last year and he is especially excited to bring mom and his little brother along so they can experience it, too.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This year Hand Camp will feature a new grouping within the Fireflies! Four through six year olds will be **FIREFLY EXPLORERS** and have their own unique program catered to our youngest Fireflies. Their activities will be shorter and more exploratory. We can't wait to hear what Isaac thinks about them!



Read on for questions you may have answered by Justin Reynolds!



I'M NOT FROM FLORIDA. IS THAT OK?

Yes, we came from Pennsylvania and there were families from all over the country.

WHAT IS THE HOUSING AT CAMP LIKE?

It is very similar to a Best Western, which also happens to be one of the closest motels if you choose to stay off campus. We had a nice room with two beds and plenty of room for a playpen on the floor. The room had its own bathroom with a tub and shower.

HOW IS THE FOOD?

It is a kid friendly buffet: think pancakes and eggs or hot dog and veggie dogs with mac and cheese. Vegetarian diets are accommodated. There is a snack shack if you need a sugar boost between meals. If your kiddo has a preferred snack, bring plenty so you aren't trying to rush into town during events.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK THAT ISN'T OBVIOUS?

Basketball shoes and sports clothes if you'd like to join the annual grown ups game. Clothing for cool evenings/mornings and rain gear just in case. I'd recommend extra socks since the grass can be pretty wet in the mornings.

WILL I HAVE TIME TO TALK TO OTHER PARENTS?

Yes, each camper is assigned a volunteer called a Family Pal. In our case, an amazing high school student kept Isaac company throughout the weekend. This let me have time to talk to other parents, attend parent focused events, or even take a shower in peace! I also did join most of his stations since he was pretty nervous, at least at first.

WHAT ABOUT SIBLINGS?

Siblings older than five seemed to join the group aligned with their age rather than stick with their sibling who is the camper. There is also a group for kids under five. Siblings don't get their own Family Pal so, for kids under five, one parent tended to stay with them in that group.

WHO ELSE IS AT CAMP?

One of the coolest parts of camp was meeting all the camp alumni who came back as Family Pals and volunteers. As much as Isaac loved watching peers, it was also incredibly helpful for both of us to meet these wonderful adults who have traveled a path similar to what is ahead for him; to hear their stories, to feel their love for the kids, and to be reassured that despite challenges he will face due to his limb difference, life will be so much more than just fine.

OUR MISSION IS TO PARTNER WITH FAMILIES TO ADDRESS THE UNIQUE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCES THROUGH FUN, SUCCESS-ORIENTED EXPERIENCES FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY.

OUR VISION IS TO DEVELOP STRONG, CONFIDENT PEOPLE WHO LEAD IN THE WORLD!

AMY & GRACE MCCLELLAND, NEWSLETTER CO-EDITORS