



WHERE DIFFERENCE DOES NOT EQUAL DISABILITY



## THE GIFTS OF HAND CAMP

BY SYDNEY MESHER,  
RADIO CITY ROCKETTE

Hand Camp was a gift of a weekend to **celebrate, explore, and cherish** our unique differences as limb different friends. The community is full of **love and laughter**, and it allows people of all ages to share and learn about their limb differences. From music classes to rock climbing, and getting to use adaptive devices, this camp has many resources to learn and play.

I am so grateful for the connection and the relationships that I created at Hands to Love's Hand Camp, and I know I will continue to connect with these people for the rest of my life.

It was so beautiful to see so many young faces find **connection and excitement** in meeting other limb different friends. I only wish I had something like this when I was growing up, and I am so thankful to have found it at this point in my life.

**HAND CAMP**  
**2024**  
*Start the Countdown!*

(THURSDAY)

**APRIL 11, 2024**  
**TEEN CAMP RETURNS!**

(FRIDAY-SUNDAY)

**APRIL 12-14, 2024**  
**HAND CAMP!**



## FROM OUR H2L EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### UNIFIED COMMUNITY

**Community** is defined as *a unified body of individuals brought together by proximity, common interests or common experiences*. The Hands to Love Family is indeed a community of similar experiences connected to their or their child's upper limb difference. I have been reflecting on this since leaving Hand Camp 2023.

My family has been attending Hand Camp for nine years, and this was my first as Executive Director. As I walked away from Hand Camp this year, I gained a new perspective - one that gives me hope, not only for Hands to Love, but also for the future of our world. As I assisted with Family Registration this year, it was more apparent to me how diverse the Hands to Love Family community is. Each Hand camp family is unique and comes to Camp with their own world views, cultures, perspectives, and even languages. None of the families look the same; some have many children, some have one. Some have adopted children, some are single parents, and some have grandparents as guardians. Despite this diversity, 70 families came together, united in support of their children with upper limb differences.

Our world's current climate is plagued by division yet, at Hand Camp, our children experience a safe, unified environment where they feel loved, encouraged, and supported. Parents are free to learn from each other; the atmosphere is one of respect for the work involved in caring for a child with upper limb differences. Seeing that level of cooperation and collaboration reminds me that, given the right circumstances, people still choose to put differences aside to love their neighbor as themselves.

This enhances the lesson H2L teaches: Difference does not equal disability. Our community demonstrates that friendships happen despite differences of any kind. The H2L Family children experience diversity as a natural part of friendship. They take their Hand Camp experiences and this lesson out into the world and move mountains. I understand, in a new light, that what Hands to Love does is so much bigger than we could have ever imagined. I am humbled, proud, and grateful for the Hands to Love Family.

~ COURTNEY WAMPLER

Hands to Love is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. We strive to provide all H2L events and activities at the lowest possible cost to our families. We rely on the donations of generous supporters like you in providing services to upper limb different youth and their families.

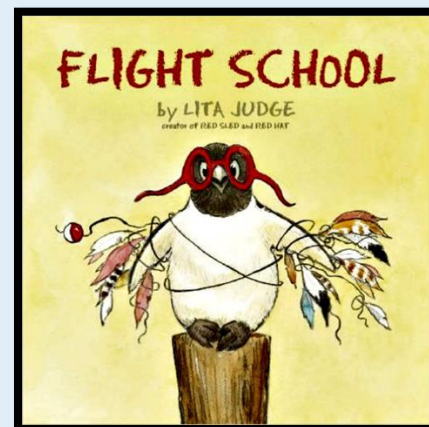
Thank you for helping us make a difference!



SCAN TO GIVE!

If you would like to make a monthly recurring donation, please click [here](#).

## A GREAT READ ABOUT RESILIENCE



Little penguin has the soul of an eagle, but he wasn't built to soar. With irrepressible spirit, Penguin follows his dreams to flip, flap, fly! Even if he needs a little help with the technical parts, this penguin is ready to live on the wind.

Ages 2-8

# MEET OUR H2L BOARD OF DIRECTORS!

## BRIAN BECKETT

Brian lives in Gainesville Florida with his wife Blake, son Bryce (18), and daughter Bailey (15). Their furry family members include their dog Amara and two cats, Oci and Harry.

Brian - more often known as "Beckett" - has been a teacher at Camp Crystal Lake Outdoor and Environmental Education Center for the past 17 years. This summer marked his 33rd at CCL summer camp.

Brian is an AULD and serves on the Hand Camp Planning Committee. His expertise in all things of the outdoors and camp provides an incredible support to Hands to Love. Brian was the Special Guest at Hand Camp in 2006 and has been involved ever since.

Beckett shared that, "As a teacher and camp professional I see every day the power camp has on young and old alike. To help give that experience to children with limb differences and their families is priceless!"

Thank you, Beckett, for all that you bring to Hands to Love!





## DAWN DUKES

*"We are united through our differences - big or small, on the inside or on the outside - we all have them. It's what someone does with their difference that makes someone special. We all are special, not in spite of our differences, but because of them." ~ Dawn Dukes*



Dawn recently moved from Morrisville, NC and now resides in her hometown of Gainesville, FL. She, her husband Clayton, and daughter JJ are all familiar faces around Hand Camp each year. Dawn works in Financial Sales at Cosco systems, Inc. Her dad, Bob Robar, is our H2L Travel Agent. Dawn serves on the board as our Legacy and AULD Programing Coordinator. AULDs are Adults with Upper Limb Differences.

Dawn has symbrachydactyly of her left hand. Having been recruited in 2001 by both a high school friend and original H2L camp planner Ginger Stirna for the Inaugural Hand Camp, she has helped define the AULD experience. She has worked with all aspects of programming - from children to teens to parents. The amazing opportunity to be involved with Hands to Love and help our campers find their own inner strength does not escape Dawn. As an adult, she attributes much of her success in business and sales to being unforgettable. She remarked, "People just remember me, whether it be because of my [little] hand or my charming personality, or both, I feel this has been a catapult for me in my professional career."

As a mother, she is proud that her daughter has learned, at a very young age, to look for the differences in people that make them special and to celebrate those differences. Each year Dawn is inspired by someone new. Sometimes a camper, sometimes a parent, sometimes a volunteer. No matter who it is, she is grateful and truly thankful for the experience. It motivates and encourages Dawn to work harder over the next year to give back two-fold what she received at camp the year prior. Thank you, Dawn, for your passion for H2L!

IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR OUR H2L NEWSLETTERS, PLEASE REACH OUT TO AMY MCCLELLAND, EDITOR

[amy@handstolove.org](mailto:amy@handstolove.org)