



WHERE DIFFERENCE DOES NOT EQUAL DISABILITY



One of our most favorite traditions during the Christmas season is to exchange cards with friends and family from across the country. And we are blessed to have lots of family! Our siblings, nieces, and nephews, lots of cousins but also more than seventy University of Florida hand surgery fellow's broods and hundreds of H2L campers, their families and throngs of volunteers. We enjoy updates on each one's activities over the past year and especially love watching the kids grow up.

Maybe it is a function of age, but we have become increasingly aware of our campers and their families maturing with us! I recently bumped into a young man in the grocery who was a camper along with his sister in the early 2000's. He had a lovely wife and young daughter with him and was all grown up! Last summer I was delighted when a representative from the Disability Resource Center at U.F. facilitated my participation in a briefing on resources for students and this poised young woman was a past camper and was all grown up too! We delight in every update of the successes and development of our campers and their families over the years and are thankful for our Hands to Love family and feel abundantly blessed!

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND BEST WISHES
FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2024!**

RUTHIE AND PAUL DELL



NOW OPEN!

**VOLUNTEER
APPLICATIONS**

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER AS A VOLUNTEER](#)

HAND CAMP 2024 IS COMING!

Friday April 12th - Sunday, April 14th
Keystone Camp and Conference Center
Starke, Florida

REGISTER NOW!



NOW OPEN!

**FAMILY
REGISTRATION**

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER YOUR FAMILY](#)

MORE FOR HANDS TO LOVE IN 2024

BY COURTNEY WAMPLER, H2L EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hand Camp was started over 20 years ago by Dr. Paul Dell and his wife Ruthie, and a team of visionaries who desired to connect children with upper limb differences and their families. Ultimately, this led to the creation of Hands to Love (H2L) and, throughout the years, H2L has seen exponential growth. As a non-profit grows it is a healthy practice to take a step back and evaluate its mission, which is what the Board of Directors did throughout 2023. To initiate this discussion, they were presented with this question: "Is Hands to Love an event, Hand Camp, or is it an organization?" The Board's response was that they wanted H2L to be more than an event; they wanted it to be an organization that benefits children with upper limb differences and their families.

Once this was determined, it was important to ensure that the H2L Mission Statement matched this vision. Thus, the Board did the important work of updating the H2L Mission Statement. The revised mission statement needed to reflect the new vision of H2L as well as the initial motivation behind the creation of H2L. To address the latter, Ms. Ruthie (Dell) provided essential insights into the creation of H2L and historical statements were reviewed. A draft was created, revised, and discussed, all of which led to the approval of H2L's new organizational mission statement:

HANDS TO LOVE (H2L) EMPOWERS CHILDREN WITH UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCES AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH CONNECTIONS, SUPPORT, AND RESOURCES.

This new mission statement has already helped to provide clarity to who H2L seeks to serve; children with upper limb differences, congenital or acquired, from birth to 18 years old and their families. It also aided in defining those who support the children and families that we serve:



MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS: Occupational Therapists, Hand Surgeons, Nurses, Orthopedic Fellows, students seeking degrees within medical professions, and others.

ADULTS WITH UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCES, affectionally called "AULDs."

LEGACIES & LEGACY FAMILIES: Children with upper limb differences who have graduated from H2L programming and their families.

FRIENDS OF HANDS TO LOVE: Individuals that believe in the mission of H2L and dedicate their time, talent, and treasure to ensure the continued support of the children and families that are impacted by H2L.

Now that H2L had an organizational mission, it seemed appropriate to create a mission statement for the primary program, Hand Camp. Creating a mission statement for Hand Camp will help to communicate the Board's new vision and provide clarity between H2L, the organization, and its program. With this in mind, Hand Camp's mission statement incorporates the mission of H2L while expressing the main goal of the program:

HAND CAMP BRINGS CHILDREN WITH UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCES AND THEIR FAMILIES TOGETHER TO CONNECT, SUPPORT, LEARN, AND INSPIRE ONE ANOTHER WHILE ENGAGING WITH THE H2L SUPPORT NETWORK AND PARTICIPATING IN FUN, SUCCESS-ORIENTED EXPERIENCES IN A CAMP-LIKE ENVIRONMENT.

Taking time to do this work was vital to ensure that H2L always stays true to its original heartbeat while ensuring its sustainability. The Board will now use the new organizational mission statement as an inspiration and motivation to bring more to Hands to Love in 2024 for the sake of children with upper limb differences and their families.

**ANNOUNCING THIS YEAR'S
HAND CAMP THEME...**

HANDS to LOVE



**WE CAN'T WAIT TO
HEAR YOUR STORY!**



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!

H2L INNOVATION STATION



by Laura Faye Clubok, MS, OTR/L
On The Other Hand Therapy
 Columbus, Ohio

BIOMECHANICAL PRINCIPLES & USAGE PATTERNS

In last month's column about kitchenware, I mentioned that this month we will discuss usage patterns for holding and carrying items to decrease strain on the upper body. Before we examine usage patterns for children and adults with upper limb difference (C/AULD), let's explore biomechanics for the majority of people.

BIOMECHANICAL PRINCIPLES FOR PEOPLE WITH TWO ARMS/HANDS:

We know from the field of [biomechanics](#) (the study of the structure, function, and motion of the human body) that people with two "typical" arms can optimize their range of motion and strength and minimize injury while engaged in activities. Here are some of the standard biomechanical principles, some of which may seem patently obvious:

- **Keeping items close to your body** when picking up and carrying them, reaching in front rather than to the side whenever possible, and using caution when lifting heavy items overhead all protect the shoulder capsule.
- **Strengthening weak upper body muscles** protects the neck, back, shoulder, and arm muscles.
- **Switching hands and taking frequent breaks from repetitive one-handed activities**, especially those involving force and/or awkward finger, wrist, or arm positions, such as holding a phone or chopping, gives the dominant hand a break. Changing positions to avoid strain and stretching tight muscles are essential wellness strategies. This is especially true if there is any discomfort during the activity, such as when using a computer mouse.
- **Using good posture and proper body positioning** protects joints, muscles, and tendons, especially when lifting or carrying heavy items
- **Using two hands/arms to perform two-handed tasks**, such as carrying a heavy serving dish or lifting a heavy bag or backpack, distributes the load to both shoulders, arms, or hands

BIOMECHANICAL PRINCIPLES FOR C/AULDS:

Having looked at standard biomechanical advice, let's move on to discussing how these may apply to C/AULDS. The tricky thing here is that C/AULDS may or may not have a "typical" side, and the affected side does not come with a "care and use" guide. Because there are so many kinds of upper limb differences - whether one-sided (unilateral), two sided (bilateral), above elbow, below elbow, partial hand with or without a thumb (or opposing digit), part of a syndrome, etc. - there is considerable variation in how children use their limbs. For this article, I will mostly focus on children with one-sided upper limb differences with the assumption that their other side is, for lack of a better term, "typical." But if your child has bilateral arm or hand differences, most of the following will still apply.

- **Learning and using good posture and proper body positioning** are even more important given the unequal demands on the child's body, and even more so when the child's arms are asymmetrical.
- **Resting items on the palm/arm(s) to carry them** is less straining on both sides than grasping with fingers, digits, or nubs. Sliding the palm or arm under items such as a phone, bowl, or moving box

also typically is easier than picking them up by gripping with the “typical” thumb and fingers or not using the limb different side at all.

- **Strengthening and stretching both sides** are important self care habits that should become part of C/AULDs’ daily routine as they grow. More in an upcoming column!
- **Using adaptations to improve grasp on the limb different side** both can reduce strain on the child’s typical side, as well as improve the biomechanics of the limb different side. Some examples of adaptations are a phone strap and [EazyHold universal straps](#) for eating or holding a jump rope or electric toothbrush with the limb different side.
- **Using both sides to perform two-handed tasks** whenever possible reduces strain on the child’s typical side. However, it is important to be alert for compensations that the child uses with the limb different side(s), such as rotating the shoulder forward or holding the wrist at an unusual angle, as these can create strain and muscle imbalances which also can lead to pain and strain. The child needs to be careful not to do activities often that twist or strain their limb different side in a way they would not twist their typical side.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As you consider the principles above, it may be helpful to know *on the one hand* that striving for perfect biomechanics and symmetry for your child at all times is an unrealistic goal, due to the unique anatomy of upper limb differences. And yet *on the other hand*, small changes made in small increments can add up to large effects over time.

Any changes you make at home could help your child immeasurably. Research on behavioral changes has shown that focusing on one small tweak (known as a “[tiny habit](#)”) at a time is more likely to last than multiple simultaneous changes. As your child’s first and best model for behavior, the more you are able to demonstrate and discuss with your child the principles of biomechanics in child-friendly terms (e.g. “Dad is carrying his backpack on both shoulders because it makes his body strong”), the better off they will be.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about this topic, you might consider seeking additional information and resources from an occupational or physical therapist with special credentialing known as [certified hand therapist](#). Please visit [my website](#) for more information about ergonomics, technology use, overuse syndrome, and more!

HEART
EMPOWER
RESILIENT
OPTIMISTIC
EMBRACE
SELFLESS



HAND CAMP H.E.R.O.E.S.

Our HEROES have been identified and nominated by their fellow campers, or other members of the Hands to Love community for the work they are doing to further the mission and vision of the H2L organization. If you know someone who embodies these traits, we invite you to nominate them! Our HEROES review committee reviews each submission to ensure the nominee meets the criteria. To nominate someone, click [here](#).

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

amy@handstolove.org