

Stories are made of special experiences that influence the main characters in some way.

The theme of this year's Hand Camp, **This is My Story**, demonstrated this as each child with an upper limb difference is the main character of their own story. Hand Camp is one of the special experiences within the bigger story of their lives.

Hands to Love welcomed 77 children with upper limb differences and their families from 21 states to Hand Camp 2024. During this amazing weekend, new friends and new memories were made. These are both embedded in the individuals' stories. Memories like the color run, conquering the ropes course, sharing s'mores and conversations by the fire, and celebrating one another are created because of the marvelous volunteers who are dedicated to the mission of H2L.

Planning and executing Hand Camp is a work of heart for those who make Hand Camp a reality. There is considerable behind-the-scenes work that is done to prepare for camp. About 250 volunteers sacrificed their weekend to serve campers and their families, ensuring that campers wrapped up the weekend with new they understand the impact that Hand Camp has on children with upper limb differences and their families.

Many of our volunteers have first-hand experience with the impact of Hand Camp and are passionate about serving Hands to Love. They are motivated to return, year after year; and they eagerly share their gifts and talents by whole-heartedly serving in various Hand Camp roles. They enhance the positive impact that Hand Camp makes on everyone.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who offered their time and talent and who compassionately served to provide Hand Camp 2024. Each volunteer provided support that allowed children with upper limb differences and their families to grow and make memories throughout the entire weekend.

To demonstrate our gratitude and to honor the dedication of our volunteers, this year has been declared the **Year of the Volunteer**, and the *John Dufek Volunteer Scholarship Fund* was established.

Gratefully,
Courtney E. Wampler
H2L Executive Director



*The **John Dufek Volunteer Scholarship Fund** provides scholarships to volunteers who are eager to serve children with upper limb differences and their families during Hand Camp but would be unable to without financial assistance. John served Hands to Love as the President of our Board of Directors from 2008-2011. Having served on the board of Catholic Charities for many years, John shared his vast experience in non-profit leadership with Hands to Love. Give to the fund [here](#).*

Why I Travel to Volunteer at Hand Camp

by Jocelyn Hunt

Each spring, I load up my backpack, grab my passport, and head south. My destination? Keystone Camp in Starke, Florida - a whole 1,312 miles (or 2,112 kilometres for my fellow Canadians) from my home in Parry Sound, Ontario, Canada. Why the trek? Because for one jam-packed long weekend, this camp becomes home to Hands to Love's Hand Camp: an incredible place where young people living with upper limb differences and their supportive families build friendships, seek support, conquer challenges, and can just be their authentic selves.

This year at camp, I had the privilege of serving and supporting the Teen Retreat. Driving up the camp driveway on Thursday, I'll admit, I had a few butterflies in my stomach. Working with young adults can be unpredictable, and frankly, I wasn't sure what to expect. I remember my awkward (understatement) high school years as a teen living with a hand difference and the challenges I had to work through. But my nervousness quickly washed away. These incredible teens turned out to be a force of nature – their energy, brilliant minds, empathy, and fresh perspectives were powerful.



They surprised me with their depth and self-awareness - a maturity that went well beyond their years.

A memory I cherish (aside from getting covered head-to-toe in bright colours from the colour run), was sitting around the campfire with this fabulous group of teens. I witnessed their willingness to share their experiences, show emotional vulnerability, ask for help, and support one another unconditionally. As a volunteer mental health therapist and registered social worker, I observed a beautiful and diverse range of emotions surface throughout the conversations. Positive emotions such as: excitement, hope, acceptance, compassion, playfulness, confidence, gratefulness, respect. As well as some of those tougher emotions we don't always talk about such as: anxiousness, anger, loneliness, frustration, rejection, disappointment, guilt, grief. All of which are part of the human experience, important to recognize, and make space for.

Interestingly, these emotions were also present for family members and fellow AULDs I had the privilege of connecting with during camp. By the end of the weekend, the experience of Hand Camp grew well beyond just volunteering my time with other people in another country. Not only was I being given a personal gift of learning, healing, and growth; there was also an opportunity to be a part of something bigger - a chance for continued conversations around mental health and well-being at Hand Camp. Now that's something to get excited for!

So sure, the travel to get here might be a few miles (or kilometres, depending who you ask), but the impact of Hand Camp?

*Life-changing. It's an
experience I wouldn't trade
for anything in the world
and always a journey
worth taking.*

~ Jocelyn Hunt

Thank you!

UF Fellows
SOTA Students
Occupational Therapists
H2L AULDs (Adults with Upper Limb Differences)
H2L Legacies (Alumni Campers)

Volunteers from DC, FL, IL, IN, MN, NY, OH, SC, TX, VA, and Canada

GRiP (Generational Relief in Prosthetics)
Vero Beach Scouts
Gainesville Scouts
Junior Volunteers

Our Sponsors

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Special Thanks

for transporting volunteers and families to and from the Jacksonville Airport

Tipper Transportation

<https://www.tippertransportation.com>)

Different Heroes (the Haight Family's nonprofit).

for FANTA&T&C food

Griffin Catering

for being wonderful hosts

Keystone Camp and Conference Center



OUR MISSION

"Hands to Love (H2L) empowers children with upper limb differences and their families through connections, support, and resources"



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 special families. These services are available with the generous support of our donors like you! Thank you for helping us make a difference in the lives of the families we serve. To give, click [here](#).



The AMAZING GIVE was truly

AMAZING!

We raised \$ 54,430, which provides 73% of the funding needed for Hand Camp 2025.

Thank you so much for your generosity!