



handstolove

“where difference does not equal disability”

## Where Are They Now?

### Greetings Hands to Love Family!

“My name is Aileen Dixon, and I’m incredibly honored to share a little about where life has taken me since my days as one of the original Hands to Love campers back in the early 2000s, when camp was still held at Camp Crystal Lake!

Looking back, some of my favorite memories come flooding in—painting ceiling tiles for the orthopedic office, trying wakeboarding for the first time, and cheering on other kids as we learned to overcome everyday challenges together. Whether it was playing basketball, celebrating small victories, or helping parents troubleshoot concerns like ‘How will my daughter ever tie her own swimsuit?’—camp was always more than just a weekend. It was a community. A place where people came together to learn, grow, and support one another.

One memory that really stands out for me was the show-and-tell showcase, where I shared a poster about my work with horses and livestock through 4-H and FFA. That moment wasn’t just about sharing my interests. It was about realizing that what made me unique could inspire others too.





That love for animals shaped much of my life. I grew up competing in equestrian sports and even spent time volunteering with the U.S. Para Dressage team. My passion led to a 15+ year career in veterinary medicine, starting in the kennels caring for hospitalized and boarding patients and eventually becoming the practice manager for a local veterinary hospital in Gainesville. I later transitioned to the University of Florida's Small Animal Hospital, where I worked in accounting and recruitment.

But as life often does, new opportunities and shifting priorities led me down a different path. After having two wonderful children and reflecting on the work-life balance I wanted, I made the decision to shift careers. Today, I work in UF Advancement as the Assistant Director for Strategic Initiatives with Parent and Family Giving.

I love the work I do, as it allows me to connect with UF families and help them find meaningful ways to support the university community. One of my favorite aspects of this role is supporting programs that truly make a difference, including those that empower and uplift students with disabilities.

One of the most meaningful "full-circle" moments of my career so far was returning to Hands to Love camp during a visit with the director of UF's Disability Resource Center. Coming back—not just as a camper, but as someone helping to support and advocate for others—was an incredibly heartwarming and surreal experience.

I've stayed connected with a few fellow campers over the years thanks to social media, and it's been amazing to watch where life has taken each of them. Hands to Love will always hold a very special place in my heart, and I'm forever grateful for the friendships, lessons, and confidence it gave me.

To all the campers and families reading this: know that your journey is your own, and every step forward is something to celebrate."

*Aileen Dixon*

## OT Tip of the Month

With back-to-school shopping upon us, here are some tips to consider when picking and packing your backpack for the new school year!

- Choose a backpack with padded straps that sits centered and flush against your back. The bottom of the backpack should be at your waistband. While two straps are usually best, plan to try on a few options to find what feels best for your body.
- Pack the heaviest items, like books or laptops, closest to the body. Save the outer pockets for your lighter things.
- A full backpack should weigh **no more than 10% of your body weight**.
- Add an adaptive zipper pull or your favorite keychain to make backpack zippers easier to manage.

Send any questions about the OT Tip of the Month to  
[kara@handstolove.org](mailto:kara@handstolove.org)



## Walmart Spark Good Round-Up

### Support H2L While Back To School Shopping!

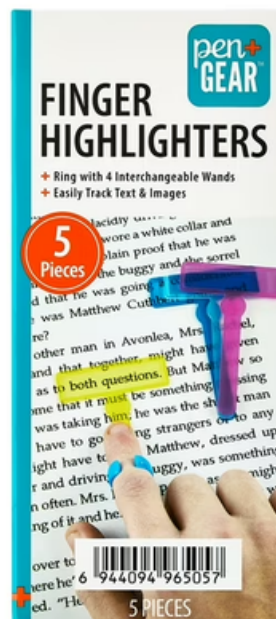
The Walmart Spark Good Round Up Program is ready to go! Spark Good will help you support H2L by rounding up to the nearest dollar on all purchases made through Walmart.com or the Walmart App. You will also be able to view the Hands to Love Walmart registry and have donated items shipped directly to us before Hand Camp! Follow the steps below to support Hands to Love with every Walmart order.

1) Follow the link to the [Congenital Hand Camp Profile](#)

2) Sign in or create a Walmart account

3) Click the blue button to make Congenital Hand Camp your default charity

4) Shop!



### Exciting news: Walmart now offers a variety of adaptive school supplies!

These inclusive tools include adaptive pencil grips for better grip and hand positioning, finger highlighters and reading strips to aid with visual tracking, adaptive cuffs to assist with grip and control, and loop scissors to promote independence with cutting. The prices are pretty great too!

Hands To Love

x

sparkgood.





# About H2L

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!

To give, click [here](#)



## HAND CAMP AT HOME

### Fluffy Slime Recipe

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup white school glue (e.g. Elmer's)
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 3 cups shaving cream (for fluffiness)
- Food coloring (optional)
- 1 tablespoon contact lens solution (must contain boric acid and/or sodium borate)
- A bowl and spoon (or spatula)

#### Instructions:

1. Mix glue + baking soda in a bowl
2. Add shaving cream and stir well
3. Add food coloring if you want
4. Add contact lens solution and stir until slime forms, If it's too sticky, add a few more drops of contact solution (a little at a time). Don't overdo it or it will get rubbery!
5. Knead with hands until smooth and stretchy

Be sure to tag us on social media and reveal your creations!