

# 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

1979-2014

## HELPING HANDS: MONKEY HELPERS

CARE organization

NEWS

EVENTS

PLACEMENT

HELPERS

Active Professionals

SPECIAL

PLACEMENT

YOUTH



**ONLY A FORTUNATE FEW ORGANIZATIONS** have the opportunity to recognize 35 years of achievement—a full generation’s worth of effort, dedication, barriers overcome and accomplishments. From its roots back in 1979 as a post-graduate doctoral dissertation, Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers has grown to the national non-profit organization it is today. A 35th anniversary is an appropriate time to look back and reflect on the extraordinary people whose inspiration and resolute commitment have enabled so much success. Progressing past the hopes and uncertainty of the early days, today we have the assurance that Helping Hands’ mission—the training and placement of capuchin monkeys to be in-home assistants and companions to people with severe mobility limitations—is of irreplaceable value to those we help.



In reflection, we recognize some of the most significant things we have learned during our first 35 years. Early on we realized that capuchin monkeys would be able to do simple tasks that are helpful, and would mutually benefit from a strong bonded and caring relationship with people. We have affirmed that it is possible to do our work free of charge to the human recipients, funded by charitable donations from philanthropic individuals, foundations and corporations. We have built an institution that is organizationally and financially strong enough to take lifetime responsibility for the monkeys. And, as affirmed by the testimonials of our many, many recipients, we know that the partnerships we create make a life-preserving difference.



At the beginning of our next phase—the next generation—of Helping Hands’ organizational life, our staff and board of directors are focused on the future of the program. There are many new challenges to take the place of the old ones. Creating a new, larger home for The Monkey College, with room for retired monkeys as well as those in training, and an expanded training program are needs that must be addressed in the next few years. Maintaining the steady development of helper monkeys is the key to the next 35 years of service to the individuals we serve. We need to build connections to new volunteer leaders who will work with the Executive Staff to continue to carry out the mission in the years to come. Increasing our reserve funds to ensure that we can care for the monkeys regardless of unexpected influences on our annual fundraising efforts is an utmost responsibility. Beginning in 2014, and for the next five years, Helping Hands’ strategic planning and implementation effort will focus on identifying how and where to best provide care for, house, and train our current animals, and when needed, source the next generation of monkeys.

All of these challenges will be taken up and resolved through the efforts of those who today work together to preserve Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers, and by new individuals who will choose to work with and through the program over the next few years.

During the past 35 years Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers has provided a resourceful, caring, effective and exciting alternative for people living with severe mobility limitations. With the help of our supporters—financially, volunteering, and ambassadorial—we know that the next 35 years will see successes we can only dream about today.

Susan Keyes  
Chair, Board of Directors

Megan Talbert  
Executive Director



**2014 BOARD  
OF DIRECTORS**

Susan Keyes  
Chair of the Board  
Robert Stern  
Chair Emeritus

Michele Cunneen  
Kathy Porter  
Harry Potter, Jr.  
Eric Reddy  
Stephanie Rogers  
Robert Sanders  
Alan Solarz  
Lynn Trimby, Treasurer  
Jane Yusen

*Established in 1979, Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers for the Disabled is a national non-profit 501(c)3 organization that raises and trains capuchin monkeys to provide daily assistance to people living with spinal cord injury or other mobility impairments.*

*Helping Hands supports each service monkey and his or her human partner during their many years together through interactive mentoring of the placement, and close supervision of the monkey’s behavioral, nutritional and veterinary needs. Relying on private contributions, Helping Hands provides these specially trained service animals and their lifetime support free of charge to our recipients.*

## 2014-2018 OVERALL STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

- I. To increase and sustain the rate of successful placements with qualified candidates.
- II. To ensure that Helping Hands monkeys have an excellent quality of life throughout their lifetimes.
- III. To optimize the opportunities for and effectiveness of the Helping Hands training program.
- IV. To recruit, retain, and fully utilize the talents of a strong, sufficient and committed group of volunteer and professional staff leaders.
- V. To move towards an appropriate, long-term facility that is sized and configured to meet the needs of all aspects of Helping Hands' mission and program.
- VI. To continue to strengthen Helping Hands' long-term financial sustainability by developing a robust, broader base of philanthropic support.



*Robmar has been impressed by the professionalism, commitment, dedication, and passion of the entire team at Helping Hands. Their hard work has consistently resulted in monkey helpers enriching, and in many cases totally transforming, the quality of life for their recipients. Fostering a special relationship between helper and recipient, where each benefits from, and to some extent is dependent upon, the other, is at the very heart to Robmar's philosophy of supporting projects which change the human/animal bond at their core.*

*– Marie-Christine Jaeger-Firmenich, President, Foundation Robmar*

*Mere words cannot convey the gratitude I feel towards Helping Hands and the GENEROSITY of all the incredible people that support the organization. Since the day I discovered Helping Hands I have had some of the most unique and remarkable experiences that I could ever imagine.*

*– Mary Kay Young, Recipient*

*I cannot describe our relationship by what she does for me. The intangible things are often the very most meaningful. Toby's playfully childlike antics bring me laughter over and over each day. The comforting and tranquil look of her gentle face just a few inches from my own as she gently grooms me. The feeling of her human like hands upon my face. The warmth of her body cuddled up against my neck as she takes a nap upon my chest. She is always giving and forever loving even when she does nothing at all.*

*– Michael Reed, Recipient*

*Helping Hands' donation of Kasey changed my life. She's kindled laughter, affection, and joy. Our family is very grateful for the generosity of every donor and for the devotion of Helping Hands staff to allow me the privilege of having Kasey. Thank you so much.*

*– Ned Sullivan, Recipient*

THE  
THOMAS  
and AGNES CARVEL  
FOUNDATION CENTER

**"THE MONKEY COLLEGE"**

50 monkeys  
in training



7 full-time  
trainers and  
vet tech staff

30-40  
volunteer  
animal care  
assistants

365  
days  
of veterinary  
care

50  
foster homes  
supported

567,208  
gallons of water  
for monkey  
baths and  
laundry

9,125  
loads  
of laundry

10,000  
pounds  
of monkey  
chow

3,800  
pounds  
of vegetables  
and fruit

40  
pounds  
of peanut  
butter

Over  
310,000 miles  
traveled

24/7  
support  
for the  
lifetime  
of each  
placement

What it takes to run Helping Hands every year:



Spinal Cord Injury



Multiple Sclerosis



Muscular Dystrophy

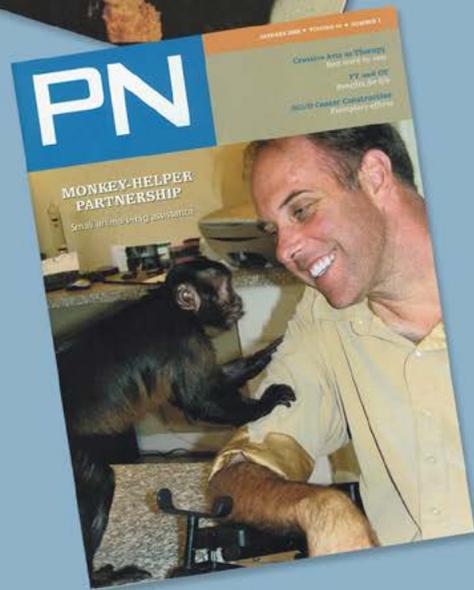


Veterans

Monkey Helper Placements

IN THE NEWS

People

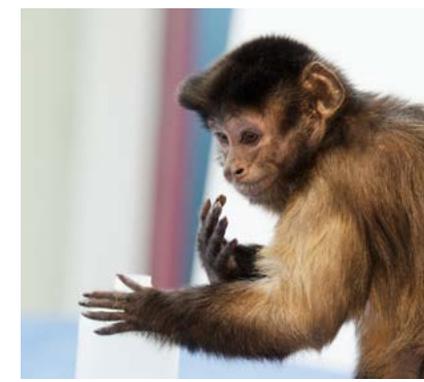


**WHY MONKEYS?** Helping Hands service animals are capuchin monkeys. Capuchins (*Cebus apella*) are New World monkeys, native to Central and South America, however all our monkeys were born and raised in the United States. They are well suited to a home environment and are natural "tool users," using their hands to perform functional tasks and manipulate objects in ways that no other assistance animal can. Capuchins are small, typically 6-9 pounds as adults and about fifteen inches tall, and they can live 30-35 years, allowing them to have long careers as assistance animals. Because capuchin monkeys are highly intelligent, adaptable, and sociable, they can make perfect partners to humans, adding an extra set of hands and a great deal of help and companionship. Moreover, it is unusual for a human to have an allergy to a capuchin as they have hair (not fur) that is similar to human hair. This makes them a great alternative to a service dog for people with canine allergies.

Like humans, these little monkeys build networks, ranking those around them into a hierarchy. Monkey helpers naturally seek strong relationships with those they assist. Capuchins are affectionate and playful and quickly learn to communicate with their recipients. As relationships develop, the monkeys seek to give back to their partners just as much as they gain. They learn quickly that their new partners can offer them boundless attention and praise.

Just like people, all monkeys have their own individual personalities and preferences. Some monkeys are more outgoing while others are shy, some love to cuddle in the sun while others are more active during playtime. Everything from their preference for men versus women, interest in other animals in the home, favorite foods, toys and blankets, and even their learning styles in training is studied first by foster parents and then by trainers at the Monkey College. These individual character traits make each service monkey unique and guide their progression through the Helping Hands training program.

The key to Helping Hands monkey helper relationships is symbiosis: the natural pairing of dissimilar but mutually beneficial partners. As seeing-eye dogs provide eyes to the blind, so too do Helping Hands monkeys provide hands to individuals with physical disabilities.



*Did you know? Spanish explorers named capuchin monkeys after the distinctive brown hoods worn by monks of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin.*



## HELPING HANDS STAFF

Megan Talbert  
President  
and Executive Director

Andrea Finnerty  
Director of Development  
and Communication

Alison Payne  
Director of Training

Marie Gordon  
Associate Director of Health Care/  
Veterinary Technician

Skott Wade  
Office Manager

Carol Holt  
Director of Individual Giving

Erica Noyes  
Development Associate

Jennifer Dowdy  
Placement Trainer and Manager  
of Husbandry Staff/Volunteers

Allyson Migneault  
Placement Trainer  
and Veterinary Technician

Marissa Cuda  
Placement Trainer

Jessica Raider  
Placement Trainer

Natalie Shelton  
Placement Trainer

Joe Murphy  
Husbandry Assistant

**PLACEMENT** The Placement Program includes two categories: New Placement and Active Placement. The New Placement program phase begins during the application process when we receive a written application and references. Through a deliberate and careful plan that includes written application, references, telephone interviews, a home visit, and a readiness assessment, we gather detailed information about each applicant. After this rigorous selection process our team matches approved applicants with monkeys in training to select the right monkey for the individual and the environment. When the final match is made, our Placement Team arranges to spend up to one week conducting on-site training in the recipient's home. Our staff also works closely with state officials to acquire all the appropriate permits to receive and house a Helping Hands service monkey. During the Placement Week, our Placement Team focuses on helping a recipient bond with his or her new monkey helper. They also conduct additional training to customize the monkey's skills to the recipient's specific needs and environment. Our staff teaches the recipient and his or her family and other caregivers about how to care for their new service animal, and about the monkey's behavioral, health, and diet needs. All modified equipment and additional supplies needed for the monkey's housing and care, are provided by Helping Hands at no charge to the recipient. During the first year of a new placement Helping Hands staff advisors carefully monitor progress and provide instruction to ensure the long-term success of each relationship.

During the Active Placement phase of the Placement Program, Helping Hands continues its commitment to all monkey-recipient partnerships by routinely evaluating each placement to confirm that it is developing successfully and to actively address the ongoing needs of each team. Recipients can reach staff by phone 24/7 for consultation, guidance, or advice. Helping Hands maintains ownership of its monkeys throughout their lives in order to oversee their ongoing health care and other needs.

**TRAINING** Located in the Thomas and Agnes Carvel Foundation Center in Boston, The Monkey College pairs highly skilled, full-time trainers with monkeys to develop them into competent, reliable service animals. Every monkey is individually trained to perform daily tasks for their recipients within the home environment. These tasks include fetching dropped items (such as a phone, mouth stick, and remote controls) from the floor, helping to retrieve out of reach items, loading DVDs, pushing buttons on TVs and computers, opening bottles of water, turning pages of a book, scratching itches and much more. Working one-on-one, the trainer uses a laser pointer and simple words to direct the monkey's behavior. Praise, affection, and small food rewards reinforce new skills. Training

is customized to each monkey's personality and abilities. At each level the tasks become more complex and the training environment becomes increasingly home-like to prepare these service animals for life in their recipient's home. In this area of the program, Helping Hands training staff works with a rotating population of approximately 45-50 monkeys. Trainers are assisted by paid work-study students from Boston University and local volunteers who conduct husbandry care.

**SOCIALIZATION/FOSTER PROGRAM** The Socialization Program provides foster homes to raise monkeys from birth through adolescence until monkeys are ready for training. They learn to interact in a home environment and develop their readiness for training at The Monkey College. Through this program the organization also coordinates supportive homes for monkeys who have entered their twilight years or who require closer medical supervision.

**YOUTH EDUCATION** Since 1998, Helping Hands has educated thousands of children about safety and ways to help prevent spinal cord injury by bringing informative and engaging educational programs to schools, camps, and youth groups across the country. In 2012, the organization renamed the program "Living Permanently Enabled". It is a fun and lively 30-to 45-minute presentation focusing on disability awareness, traumatic injury prevention, and the concept of being permanently enabled in one's own life. Through interactive activities, film clips, photos and questions, the organization's staff delivers a dynamic program promoting a message of resilience and awareness in an age-appropriate manner.

**VETERINARY CARE: KEEPING MONKEYS HEALTHY AND HAPPY** Consistent with our mission, Helping Hands remains dedicated to providing top quality care for all the monkeys in our program. Our staff routinely works with a network of veterinarians across the country to monitor the health and medical needs of all of our monkeys in foster and placement homes, as well as at The Monkey College.

We have learned much during the past 35 years about the diet and health care needs of capuchins as they age. We proactively develop our knowledge and network to ensure that we can provide the highest level of veterinary care for all our animals throughout their entire lives.

Helping Hands is fortunate to have the volunteer services of our Medical Advisory Committee comprised of primate experts throughout New England. They assist our veterinary staff in evaluating and consistently improving our techniques for the care of our monkey population.



*Every day we learn something new from our students. They are loving, curious, eager to learn and often make us laugh with their unexpected antics.*

*– Alison Payne  
Director of Training*

