Planning for the Future – Our 2014-2018 Strategic Plan

2014 marked the first year of Helping Hands’ latest five-year Strategic Plan that was co-authored by our staff and Board of Directors in 2013. There are many new challenges to take the place of the old ones. The need to create a new, larger home for The Monkey College, with room for retired monkeys as well as those in training will be a key focus over the next five years. Additionally, retaining our current staff and expanding our training program are needs that must be addressed in order to maintain the steady development of helper monkeys.

Furthermore, we must build connections to new volunteer leaders who will work with the Executive Staff to continue to carry out our mission in the years to come. And all of this cannot happen without the support of our donors who will help us to fund our annual operating needs while increasing our reserve funds to ensure that we can care for the monkeys regardless of any unexpected influences on yearly fundraising efforts.

The staff and Board of Directors used the following six objectives as we created our individual goals and timeline that will govern our path from 2014-2018:

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.

We look forward to sharing Strategic Planning Updates with our donors and friends in the years to come! Thank you for your critical support of our mission.
My name is Mary Kay. Amy and I live in a small town in the northern United States. A car accident 28 years ago caused me to become handicapped. I heard about Helping Hands while watching a CBS TV news report. I thought it quite comical that I could get a monkey to help me out, but I really didn’t give it any serious thought at that time. Because I believed it was too far-fetched of a notion— not something that could happen in my mundane life. So I immediately put the thought aside.

A few weeks after I saw the news segment I was doing a computer search on hand splints and up popped the Helping Hands website. I laughed to myself and went on with my search. Several weeks later I was researching something else and AGAIN the Helping Hands website came up. That’s when I knew I needed to look into this monkey idea. After reading all about how a service monkey could help, I started to think about how a service monkey could help me.

“A monkey does not care how many times she has to pick up a pencil, in fact, the more, the better!”

That’s when I began my search. I thought it quite comical when I came across Helping Hands on the internet. I thought about how a service monkey could help and if I didn’t do a good job it would show in her health and her disposition towards me. I am Amy’s caretaker, her protector and savior when something scary is near and I relish this role.

Having a service monkey makes my life a bit easier by all the tasks she does so willingly and without hesitation. Anybody who has had to have someone help them with menial tasks knows that people get very exasperated at constantly performing these chores repeatedly. But a monkey LOVES to do them and a monkey does not care how many times she has to pick up a pencil in the span of one minute. In fact, the more the better in Amy’s case! Our favorite things to do are to be outside while Amy practices the fine art of entomophagy (insect eating). We also love to hang out in our greenhouse basking in the warmth of the sun planting, reading or listening to music.

Our relationship over the last 10 years has just become very normal. I can’t say when it changed from sheer awe to just being one of the family although I will say that there are times during every day that I look at Amy in wonderment and still can’t believe I have her. I think about the people that made the decision to gift me with this AMAZING monkey and realize all over how lucky I am.

If someone were contemplating applying for a service monkey I would say if you are an animal lover, if you are alone for a portion of the day, if you have a need for more independence in your routine, if you are a patient person then you should make room in your life for a monkey helper.

I send my deep and heartfelt appreciation to all who support Helping Hands. Without your generous donations, philanthropic nature, and undying love of Helping Hands the world would not have this unique organization.

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Your support helps build a partnership, bringing a well-trained monkey into a home. A helping monkey can do so many things for their recipient such as open doors, drawers, containers, refrigerators, and much more - all of those obstacles that are major roadblocks for people living with disabilities that no one else gives a second thought about. A gift of a one-year donation becomes a gift of freedom for a recipient. I cherish Amy with all my heart, and I thank you for the past 10 years. We look forward to the next 10 together.