

Voices of Resilience

*The pandemic experience
at Helping Hands*



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Helping Hands, Inc. 2021 Annual Newsletter

CEO'S NOTE



In my time at Helping Hands, resilience has been the goal for our children. We were motivated to help them

to use the memories of the abuse that they suffered in their home environments as fuel to become better, tougher, and find hope within it all. We have reinforced this principle by providing therapy, independent living instruction, educational support and remediation, and showing them just how important they are to their community and the world.

The pandemic has forced the adults at Helping Hands, and myself personally, to address our own resiliency. Just how tough are we? Could we recover from the quickly emerging challenges that the Coronavirus has created for us? I must say, like every other business in the world, the crisis has created "difficulties" that we did not foresee. In my generation, there was never a shortage of toilet paper, meat, cleaning

supplies, or protective equipment. These are all things that we took for granted in our daily operations but feared losing access to during the early stages of the pandemic. It left me wondering: do we have the "stuff" to make it through this? How do we protect ourselves, our families, and our children from this threat that we cannot see or understand? How do we function when the world has shut down, but we cannot, not when we are entrusted to care for some of South Carolina's most vulnerable youth.

Well, here we are, almost two years later, weary but not defeated. Many of our fellow agencies across the state did not fare well during this period and have now closed their doors. But Helping Hands still stands, with only one resident testing positive for coronavirus-19 to date. We are not fully recovered, but our staff and board have demonstrated the resiliency that we have asked for from our youth for all this time.

We were able to stand because of your care and attention. The countless shipments of cleaning supplies, board games, hygiene supplies, thermometers, and medicine. The impromptu pizza

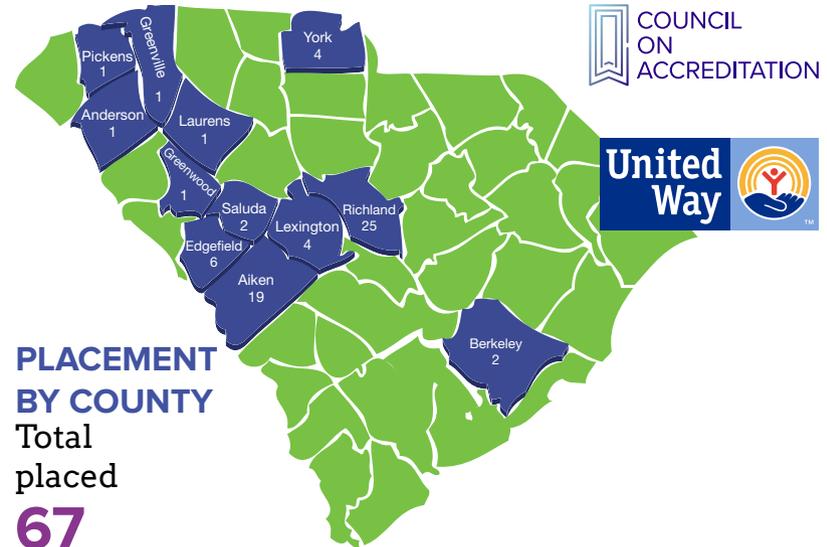
parties, cookie deliveries, and comfort baskets from local business, churches and individuals has helped to make it through this time, both financially and emotionally.

This pandemic has helped us to find our own resiliency. It turns out, we are "tough enough" to get through almost anything when we do it together. Thank you!

Carmen Landy
Chief Executive Officer

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HOW DID THE COVID PANDEMIC IMPACT YOUR WORK AT HELPING HANDS?



Carmen Landy
Chief Executive Officer

We take young people from all over the state of South Carolina on an emergency basis. Our children are in crisis, so we don't have time to screen and wait three days for COVID results or figure out what other things are going on with them health-wise because of the pandemic.

Although our administrative offices did close, we couldn't shut down. We had to figure out a way to stay open, stay safe and make sure that we did everything we could to protect our staff from a disease that we didn't understand.



Monica Jeffcoat
Director of Residential Services

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted all aspects of work for me. We could not utilize volunteers on campus due to the pandemic. Furthermore, clients were not able to have in-person visits with families and DSS.

We went from in-person meetings to virtual meetings and trainings. Clients attended virtual school on campus for the first semester of the 2020 school year for safety reasons.



Tiiu Goode
Director of Community Programming

Because we're so deeply rooted within the school system, a lot of our programming came from about how we were used to going into the schools to help Blind Boys Council work with the youth and with everything that we had to rely solely on virtual sessions when that was available. And we just had to readjust to what was what was the new norm.



Rysheeka Bush
Clinical Program Manager

The pandemic had very little impact on the way that I work.

I'm very fortunate, as a mental health professional, to have my

clients here with me. However, we did have young people who already have providers who needed to stay connected.

It became our responsibility to make sure that we had the technology and all the things that we needed to make sure that they could engage in telehealth services with their current providers to keep that contact going.



Derith Beard
Lead Tutor

I had always, up until the pandemic, worked in the afternoon and into the evening. With the kids home and getting into school early in the morning, I needed to set my alarm for pre-dawn, which is unusual for me, and to be on campus by 7:15 in the morning.

I would be there all day for all of their lessons, from kindergarten through high school.

It was really eye-opening, because I was able to see some of the issues that the kids had firsthand and be able to do something about that.



Geneva Wright
Volunteer Coordinator and Outreach Advocate

Back in March 2020, the most impactful thing was that volunteer activities and events came to a screeching halt. At that time, we were doing one of our biggest projects, Project Vision, which involved 40 to 80 volunteers, while also trying to figure out what was going on in the world.

That was the time where everybody realized we're going home for a couple of weeks. Those couple of weeks ended up being several months. It was difficult because the volunteers were no longer able to come on campus. We did not want to expose the residents to very many people. It was made more challenging when our kids came home and we could not have volunteers on campus to help with tutoring.

Another challenge was the inability for volunteers to throw birthday parties as that could lead to an outbreak in our small agency.

WHAT ADJUSTMENTS DID YOU MAKE TO ADAPT TO THE NEW REALITY BACK IN MARCH 2020?



Rysheeka Bush

I had to freshen my skills and knowledge on telehealth services.

As a licensed professional, there are certain ethical codes that we have to follow.

I did online training to ensure that we were within the guidelines and ethical protocols for telehealth as well as make sure we had the technology and the software to provide the service.



Carmen Landy

When the Governor's mandate to shut down was announced and the

school district announced shut down within three days, we were put on crisis mode so we had to make major adjustments.

For one thing, we had to figure out how to have school on campus. We're thankful for our partnerships with the school district and our existing partnerships that already had us equipped with a computer lab and broadband access so that our young

people could engage. We needed cameras that we didn't have and were in short supply because everybody on the planet needed them.

At the same time, we needed to make sure that our young people didn't sit around all day. In the parts of the day that weren't filled with school, we had to make sure that we had other things for them to do.

We also had to make sure that we made them feel safe on campus.



Derith Beard

All of the kids were with me all day. I would help a kindergarten student and then an eleventh grader so I had to switch around what I was doing and thinking.

I enjoyed it because it really challenged me and it challenged these kids, too. They were on Zoom and on computers all the time. That was not what they were used to.

It took some work to keep them focused on what they were supposed to be doing.



Tiiu Goode

The biggest adjustment was meeting virtually. We are so used to going out, meeting with peers, meeting with families, and doing activities face to face. We had to, instead, meet on Zoom or conduct telephone calls. We also relied heavily on email.

We could not be as personal as we used to be. So we all had to learn new platforms and try to reach people in different capacities.



Geneva Wright

With volunteers not being able to come on campus, outreach opportunities were also affected. I either couldn't go out to the community or the format changed.

As an example, I was able to do a virtual tour with United Way via Zoom. Using my iPad, I gave campaign professionals a tour of the agency while they were able to ask questions. It was super engaging despite the virtual format.

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM CHANGES

We were charged with making sure that new admissions were isolated from existing residents while they received COVID testing. Everyday we do temperature and symptoms checks. Efforts were made to avoid the spread of COVID within our environment.

While residents were not required to wear masks to give them a sense of normalcy, staff were instructed to wear them at all times while on campus to keep the youth safe.

Should there be an outbreak or positive case we have the PPE equipment to continue providing care and make them feel comfortable.

Staff did a really great job of planning and executing activities so that our young people just stayed active and had an opportunity to feel normal and forget about the pandemic, which was our goal.

WHAT KIND OF EMOTIONS DID YOU HAVE AT WORK?



Carmen Landy

There was a lot of fear and anxiety associated with the pandemic because I was giving information that I wasn't altogether sure was correct. It was new and developing science.

However, I had staff members who were depending on me to make sure that I gave them the right information to move forward and to do their job safely. They counted on us as leadership to make sure of that.

There was heavy pressure in making sure that I was being accurate and careful with the language that I used and we gave people direction at every opportunity.



Monica Jeffcoat

At work I was very stressed and overwhelmed. I had to adjust to guidelines

from DSS, CDC, and other governing agencies. I had to make sure the staff, current, and future clients were safe. I also had to worry about my personal safety and the safety of my family. It was a lot to deal with.



Tiiu Goode

Initially, not knowing a lot about COVID-19, I was kind of scared and nervous.

Once the pandemic became a new normal, things picked up. I got used to wearing masks, making sure my space is sanitized, and not having as many visitors.



Rysheeka Bush

I was very nervous for the staff as well as myself, because this is something new.

We were all glued to the television getting the latest information that we could.

Because we go home to families and the children come to us from various places, it was important to make sure that everyone was safe.

There was a lot of fear and anxiety associated with the pandemic



Staff member helping a resident during school



Derith Beard

The biggest emotion I had was gratefulness. I received enormous amounts of help from other people here at Helping Hands.

We could not have done what we did without the staff willing and able to over and work with each individual children.



Geneva Wright

I think the emotions that I had at work were more centered around the fact that I had a small child at home and I was also pregnant during the pandemic.

My process was go to my office, lock myself in there, do my work and then scurry home. I just wanted to ensure I wasn't exposing my family.

Furthermore, I avoided the areas where residents live and gather. It was important to me to maintain as much safety as possible.

We were doing everything we could as a team, as staff, and as people to not spread Covid in the place that our residents call home.

Staff training conducted by Rysheeka Bush



HOW IS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTING YOU TODAY?



Carmen Landy

It has shown us that we can't function without the people that are doing the direct work with the young people.

As the CEO, I'm important, but the work can't get done without them.

We have to acknowledge that every level of our organization is key to the delivery of our services.

Moving forward, there is a deeper respect for that.



Tiiu Goode

Currently, we are able to do some face-to-face sessions but still not as many as we used to do. We make sure we use whatever means we can to reach people.

We're still having a lot of virtual meetings, maintaining space, making calls across campus. Otherwise, everything is okay.



Geneva Wright

The pandemic is affecting everyone in little ways. It's as simple as not being able to occupy spaces or needing vaccination status to attend events.

With schools they are having to deal with exposure and possible outbreaks. Virtual schooling is still available because of those risks.

There are so many people just trying to figure things out and I'm right there with them.



Virtual staff meetings have been the norm



Residents say thank you to essential workers

WHAT CHANGES MADE DURING THE PANDEMIC DO YOU BELIEVE SHOULD BE CONTINUED?



Tiiu Goode

Before the pandemic, we were already a close-knit family, so it's important to just continue checking on each other and make sure everyone is OK.

Just meeting however we can meet. Sometimes, we have virtual meetings even though we're in the next office just to make sure that we are still distancing and we're still safe.



Rysheeka Bush

I believe that the use of telehealth and being comfortable with telehealth services should continue.

The staff and I have routines and protocols set up now. We have a designated place for virtual sessions to take place, as well as the technology.

Just because a child comes to us from another county, doesn't mean we have to transfer them to me or to someone else. We can keep their service providers.



Carmen Landy

Helping Hands will continue to provide services at the high level that we've always done. The modifications we made during the pandemic won't change that.

I think what will change is our sensitivity towards the emotions that our staff members bring to work with them every day, but even more sensitivity towards our residents in the situational things that go on in the world every day.

We spend a lot of time focusing on their trauma and grief related to their abuse - the reason that they're here

I don't think we spent enough time really focusing on environmental things. Going forward, it's important to have a greater awareness of how the world from the outside really affects the work that we do here at helping hands.

HELPING HANDS 2020 STATS

32 staff members



314.44
Staff continuing education hours completed

 **100**
Volunteers

 **326.19**
Volunteer hours

 **\$8154.75**
Fiscal impact of volunteer hours

FINANCES

Revenue \$1,400,775
Expenses -\$1,464,239
\$63,464

RESIDENTIAL

 **16**
Average children per day

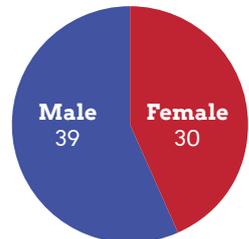
 **87**
Average days in our care

 **219.6**
Life Skills instruction for teens (hours)

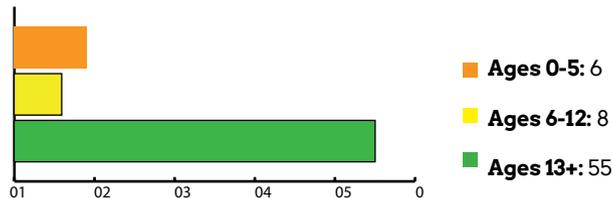
 **16,347**
Miles traveled

 **\$43,147.51**
Amount spent on groceries for three meals and snacks each day

RESIDENTS' GENDER



RESIDENTS' AGE



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

 **476**
AYE Participants

 **11**
Participants in Boys Council

 **26**
Informative single session presentation participants

 **11**
Participants in Girls Circle

 **2,784**
Number of Condoms given out at CAP Sites

 **14**
Real Care Infant Simulators area student participants



**March
2022**

Woodside Plantation Country Club

Aiken, South Carolina

To benefit: Helping Hands and Tri-Development Center
For information, call us at (803) 648-3456



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