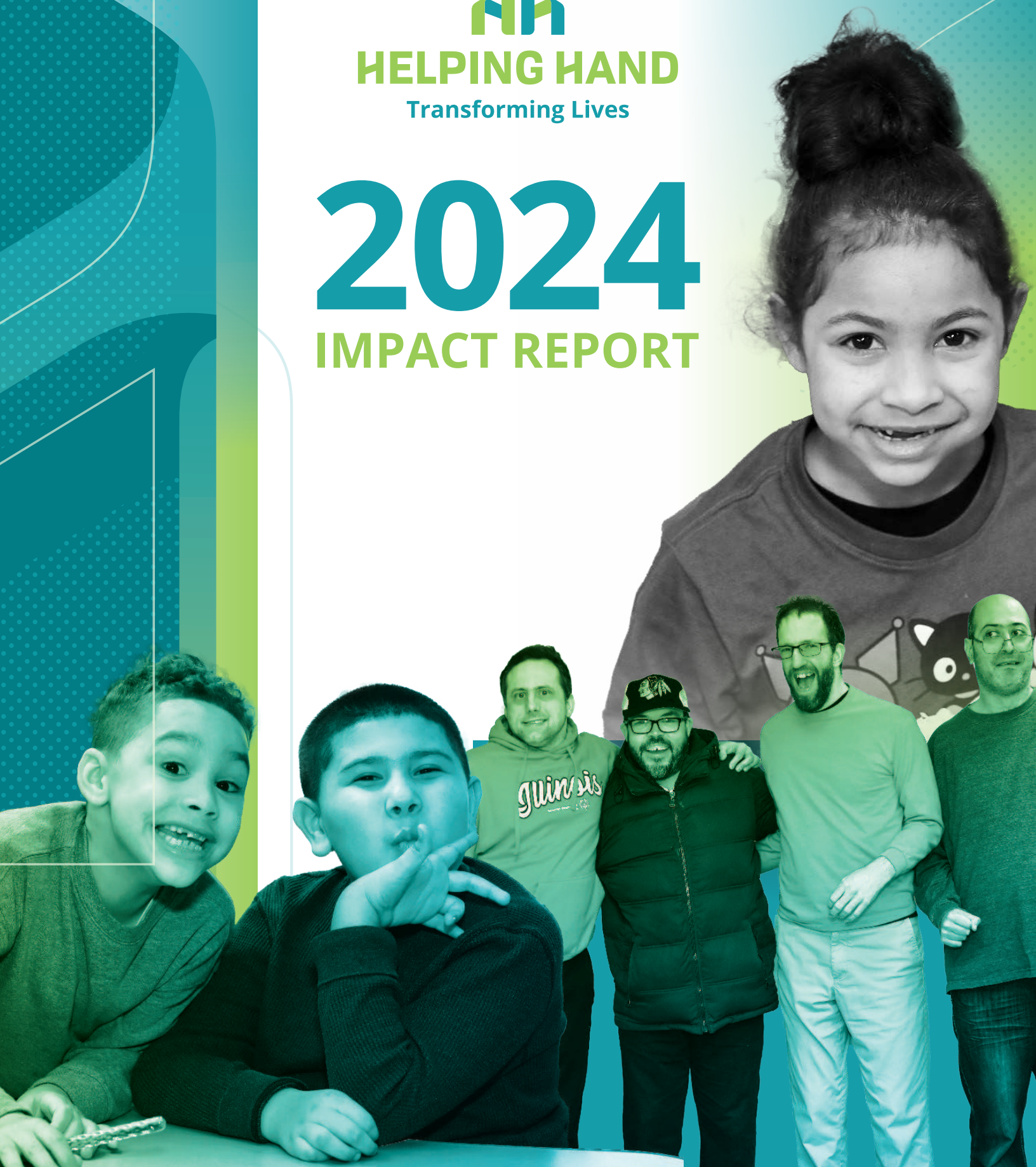
HELPING HAND

Transforming Lives

2024

IMPACT REPORT





Transforming Lives

Dear Friends of **Helping Hand,**

As leaders of Helping Hand, we are continually inspired by the generosity of individuals like you who share in our mission and vision for the future. Your ongoing support is not just important—it's essential. Because of you, we provide life-changing programs to not just the children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities but also their parents and siblings.

At Helping Hand, we believe in setting the highest standards of genuine care and education. Thanks to your generosity, this past year, we have expanded our residential services collaborating with families to open the Richmond home and preparing to launch two more homes. These beautiful, safe, and empowering spaces are equipped with a cutting-edge self-reliant software, empowering our clients to develop greater independence and reach further than ever before. This technology helps individuals learn, manage daily tasks, and build confidence, reinforcing our commitment to self-sufficiency and personal growth.

Our school is also transforming, with the integration of TeachTown, a groundbreaking curriculum used by only a select few top schools in Illinois. This research-based program enhances learning and personal development for our students, ensuring they have access to the best possible educational tools. These advancements are possible because of a strong core of support from you.

"Thank you for being part of this journey. You are transforming lives today—and securing the future for tomorrow. "

A historic milestone in our journey came this year with an extraordinary $28 million transformational gift. This generosity strengthens our future, helping secure the legacy of Helping Hand for generations to come and giving HH the opportunity to continue leading at the forefront of disability services. Alongside this, we launched the Transformation Society, a planned giving initiative that ensures we remain forward focused and financially sustainable for generations.

Yet, even with this remarkable gift, ongoing fundraising remains critical. The needs of our community continue to grow, and sustaining our high level of care requires consistent investment. Your support ensures stability, strategic expansion, enhanced programs, and an exceptional team. With an 80%+ retention rate, we are far exceeding the Illinois and national averages. By supporting Helping Hand, you help us keep compassionate, skilled professionals in place to provide stability for everyone—our clients, students, staff, families, donors, and supporters. Every role, every gift, and every effort contribute to the life-changing work we do together.

Looking ahead, we have bold goals—expanding our impact, leading with cutting edge services, and continually raising the bar for what is possible in disability services. But none of this happens without you. Your continued generosity fuels our mission, sustaining the momentum we have built and ensuring Helping Hand remains a beacon of genuine care, dignity, and opportunity for over 700 children and adults.

Thank you for being part of this journey. You are transforming lives today—and securing the future for tomorrow.



Bill Dwyer,
President & CEO



Rich Mikitka,
Governance Board Chairperson



Thank You to our boards and committees!

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Thomas Lombardo
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**Held position on board*

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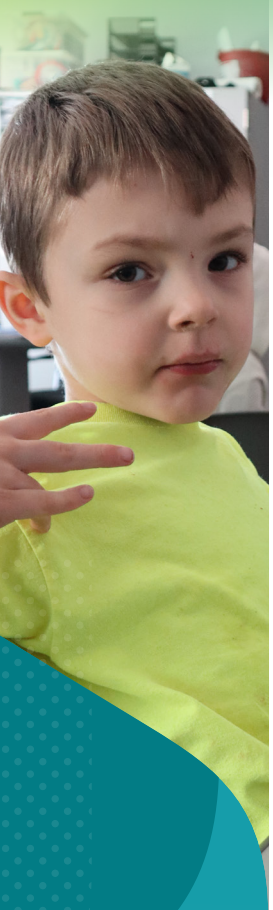


Your Generous Support

Your support is still needed for **future growth** plans!

With your ongoing support, we remain committed to our growth and continued development. Our upcoming capital projects include:

- ✓ Completing the teaching kitchen at our Countryside building
- ✓ Constructing a new parking lot to accommodate the expansion of clinical and educational services
- ✓ Acquiring additional homes to further our mission
- ✓ Installing generators for all residential homes
- ✓ Upgrading furniture in all classrooms promoting a more engaging, comfortable, and efficient learning environment
- ✓ Enhancing technology across all programming
- ✓ Creating a mural for the clinic to brighten and energize the space
- ✓ Renovating school bathrooms to improve facilities
- ✓ Expanding our clinic to have satellite locations within the community

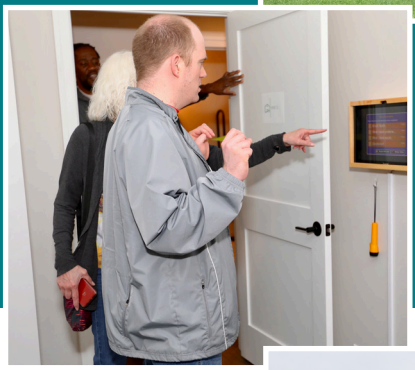


Creating Joyful Spaces for Every Ability

Introducing Our New Richmond Home: A Thoughtful Space for Every Stage of Life

In June, we opened our newest residential home, Richmond, as part of our ongoing residential initiative focused on forward-thinking design for the population we serve. This ranch-style home offers six spacious bedrooms and three bathrooms, thoughtfully designed to provide comfort and accessibility. This home also includes independent technology. With aging in place in mind, we've eliminated environmental obstacles, ensuring that our clients can enjoy a seamless living experience for years to come. This space supports a lifestyle where our clients can truly feel at home for every stage of their life.





Helping Hand uses GrandCare, a remote monitoring support platform that can help people with I/DD achieve new levels of independence, for single occupancy and group homes. Our agency is the first in Illinois to use this type of technology!

Opening a World of Play:

A New, Inclusive Playground for Our Clients and Students

We are thrilled to announce the opening of our new adaptive playground, a project made possible through the generosity of our supporters during our annual Gala and Golf Outing. Officially opened in November, this state of the art playground is designed for sensory play, motor skills development, and social interaction. Featuring sensory gardens, accessible swings, and inclusive play structures, the playground accommodates a wide range of abilities, ensuring that every child can enjoy, learn, and thrive in a safe and welcoming space. With this new addition, the children at Helping Hand now have a dedicated place to play, grow, and connect with one another. Thank you to everyone who made this dream a reality!



Playgrounds help children learn how to play and interact with others at their own pace.

Physical activity at a playground promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Playgrounds provide an outlet for negative emotions.

Playgrounds help improve a child's sensory processing through interactions with the environment.

Physical activity at the playground builds strong muscles and endurance.

Playgrounds encourage kids to use their imagination, which builds creativity.

Playgrounds help children develop critical thinking skills.

Playgrounds promote socialization skills.

Playgrounds improve kids' self-esteem.

Playing at a playground helps improve a child's attention span.









New vans purchased to safely transport our clients

A mural installed and new flooring in our HH School



A Space for **Growing!**

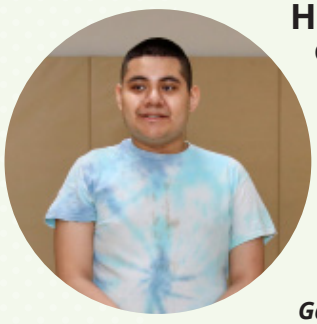
Multiple kitchens and living spaces remodeled in our homes





New ABA therapy space in our Outpatient Clinic

Stories of **Progress, Confidence,** and **Independence**



Helping Hand School

Over the past 4 years of being at Helping Hand School, Gabriel has grown in so many ways. It used to be difficult for him to transition to new spaces throughout the school, as well as to community outings. Now, Gabriel transitions to the gym, has delivered mail to different classrooms within the school, has gone to Sam's Club multiple times for community outings and even made it on stage for the first time ever during this year's Winter Pageant. He also has increased his independence with functional and pre-vocational skills. Gabriel has been working on using the oven and stove safely and has weekly shifts at the school store where he helps check out customers.

Gabriel, Student

Helping Hand Outpatient Clinic

Ramses has been working hard in occupational therapy since the beginning of 2024 and during this time, we have seen so much growth and progress. In our first few sessions, Ramses had difficulty connecting and playing with his OT and now he is taking turns and seeking out play with others during his sessions. He has shown significant growth in being able to participate in sessions without becoming overwhelmed. These huge steps have helped us to be able to work toward our goals in fun and motivating ways!

Rames, Outpatient Clinic Client





Helping Hand Adult Services

Joe has been a client in the community day program and a resident of one of our HH homes in Lyons Township since the early 2000s. A typically shy individual with a small circle of friends, Joe's journey at Helping Hand has been one of growth and transformation. Our Day Program team is dedicated to offering engaging experiences that foster growth, confidence, and connection. Recently, inspired by client feedback, we launched a theater challenge—bringing Grease to the stage! To our delight, Joe, who had never shown an interest in performing before, stepped outside his comfort zone and claimed a lead role!

Joe, Community Day Services and Residential client

Helping Hand Adult Services

Kate has made incredible progress using a stander to improve her posture, circulation, and muscle strength. Though standing has been a challenge for Kate, her determination and the support of our team have helped her gradually increase both the duration and intensity of her standing sessions. This progress has boosted her physical well-being and confidence, reflected in her bright smile. Kate's commitment to this journey is inspiring, and we are proud of her achievements. With the right support and determination, individuals like Kate can reach new milestones that enhance their lives, and we're excited to see her continue to thrive.

Kate, Community Day Services and Residential Client



Transforming Lives through Genuine Care and Education



"I enjoy the work that I do daily at Helping Hand because I am able to help students learn how to do things for themselves! It's amazing to work with a team that is supportive to our students and each other every day."

Sylvia Gonzalez, ITA

"Working at a Helping Hand is a genuinely rewarding experience, where every day is an opportunity to build meaningful connections and support students in and out of the classroom. Seeing firsthand how compassion and dedication can transform lives makes this work truly inspiring."

Julian Rios, Teacher





"At Helping Hand, we are committed to creating opportunities for individuals of all abilities. Through our day programs, residential services, and Helping Hand School, we empower lives. Our employment services provide meaningful work, while our clinical teams—encompassing speech, occupational, and physical therapy—ensure comprehensive support.

What sets Helping Hand apart is our dedication to each individual. We are more than an organization; we are a family that celebrates unique abilities and fosters independence, growth, and joy. Together, we are making the world a more inclusive, hopeful place."

Lakita Washington, Adult Programming DSP

"I enjoy coming to work because of the joy I witness on our clients' faces when teaching them new concepts in science. I am continually impressed by their keen observation skills; when I am not feeling well or having a challenging day, they always know just what to say or do to lift my spirits. It's a rewarding experience to realize that, while I'm caring for them, they are also offering care and support in return. When I am absent without prior notice, their immediate concern for my well-being makes me feel truly appreciated and valued."



Angelina Smith, Adult Programming DSP

EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT!

TRANSFORMATION SOCIETY

Honoring William McCoy:
A Gift for the Future

William McCoy became a beloved member of the Helping Hand family when he joined the Helping Hand Day Program in 1958. For 62 years, he remained a valued part of our community, leaving a lasting impact on everyone around him. Those who had the privilege of working with Bill remember him fondly—his dedication to his job at Countryside, his ever-present Cubs hat and jacket, and the signature cologne that accompanied his warm smile each day.

As we celebrate William McCoy's legacy, we also recognize his final act of generosity. When he passed away in 2024, Helping Hand received a transformational bequest—an extraordinary gift that deeply humbled us. We knew such a significant contribution came with great responsibility, and with careful consideration, the Helping Hand Board of Directors and Executive Team have chosen to establish something enduring in his honor: The Transformational Society.

The sole purpose of The Transformational Society is to ensure the long-term financial stability of Helping Hand so we can continue serving our community and families for generations to come.

To safeguard this generous endowment, we are committed to investing it wisely, allowing it to grow over time. If the interest is used in the future, it will be used for three dedicated areas:

- **Research and Development** – Advancing innovative, state-of-the-art programming.
- **Best Place to Work Commitment** – Ensuring Helping Hand remains an exceptional workplace.
- **Capital Improvements** – Enhancing our campus, homes, and facilities.

Through this initiative, Helping Hand will:

- ✓ Ensure the mission remains resilient
- ✓ Enable the flexibility to evolve
- ✓ Stay responsive to future needs



As we celebrate William McCoy's legacy, we also recognize his final act of generosity

This is a unique opportunity to shape the future, ensuring that Helping Hand continues to thrive for years to come. Like William McCoy and so many cherished members of our Helping Hand family, we invite you to consider remembering Helping Hand in your estate plans and becoming part of this transformational journey.

For more information, please contact Erika Vavrik at Erika.Vavrik@helpinghand-il.org.

Thank you to our donors!

Gifts received from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
$250 and Above

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Our Programs and Services

Outpatient Programs | Our Outpatient Program therapists are specialized in pediatrics and developmental disabilities and stay up to date on the newest evidenced-based and client-centered practice. There are a variety of services to support clients and families, including: behavior therapy, mental health therapy, feeding therapy, group therapy, hearing screenings, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and teletherapy.

HH School | Our year round therapeutic day school serves all children with intellectual and developmental disabilities from Early Childhood to Transition. We are proud to offer high educational staff to student ratios.

Community Day Programs | Offering a wide variety of educational tracks that focus on the overall wellness of adult individuals while helping them gain independence in the community and in their home. These educational tracks are provided onsite, offsite, and virtually. Other support services include case management, behavior and counseling services, as well as nursing.

Community Living (CILA) | Our 14 houses in the community become homes when our quality residential team members provide genuine care and education. In this environment, staff prioritize relationship building and mental health while developing independence in skills of daily living. Through activities within the home, HH clients grow in their connection with one another developing friendships and healthy relationship skills.

Aging Program | Providing comprehensive programming, support, activity, socialization, and substance to the daily lives of adult individuals with disabilities as they age or experience dementia

Employment Services | Our Employment Services help drive individuals to success in various stages of services including prevocational counseling, career counseling, and job maintenance.

Afterhours/Respite Services | Provides individuals with disabilities enriching, structured activities that promote independence, social engagement, and personal growth while giving caregivers much-needed respite. Designed for clients who require additional support beyond traditional day services, the program offers opportunities such as employment readiness training, self-reliance education, and community-based social outings.

Major Communities Served

Berwyn, Brookfield, Burr Ridge, Chicago, Cicero, Countryside, Downers Grove, Hinsdale, Justice, La Grange, Lyons, Riverside, Summit, Westmont, Western Springs, Willowbrook

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