



General Press Release

Hearts and Hands: A Helping Hand for Older and Physically Challenged Adults

If you're an older or physically challenged adult, what do you do when you can't drive, but you need to get someplace: the doctor or dentist, the bank, the grocery store, or even the hairdresser? What if you need some yard work done, but you just can't do it by yourself? Or if you live alone, and you just need someone to talk to? If your family is just around the corner, or you have a wide network of friends, maybe you can depend on them for some of your needs. But what happens when they're not available?

That's when Hearts and Hands can help. Hearts and Hands is a not-for-profit organization which pairs screened, trained volunteers with older or physically challenged individuals for basic transportation and in-home supports. Hearts and Hands provides rides to doctor appointments and other medically-related services. In some areas, Hearts and Hands can also help with companion visits/caregiver respite, wellness checks/phone pals, and minor home repairs and maintenance. All of these services maintain or improve the quality of life for our older and physically challenged neighbors. Hearts and Hands provides services in Akron-Newstead, Alden, Amherst, Boston (NY), Clarence, Holland, Lockport, Marilla, Wales and the Tonawanda Indian Reservation, with administrative offices at 2710 North Forest Road, Suite 205, Getzville, NY (within the Town Square for Aging) and program coordination offices in Akron, Amherst, Clarence, Lockport and the Southtowns (Wales).

"If you have a need, and you're physically challenged or an older adult, Hearts and Hands will try to match an available volunteer to assist you with that need," says Tracy Reed, Program Director. "The key to our services is a group of dedicated volunteers willing to help their neighbors, for whom we are very grateful. Our service gives peace of mind to older or physically challenged individuals, knowing they will still be able to get their medical needs handled, without having to go into institutional health

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care and leave the home and community they love. It relieves their families, too.”

Volunteers comment that they receive much more than they give as they help their neighbors in need. Says one volunteer: “Volunteering for Hearts and Hands is easy—you only take the assignments you can do; you can refuse the ones you can’t. Many volunteers do one assignment a week or less. But I do three a week—I have the time, and I find it very rewarding. And someday, when I need help, there will be a volunteer available for me.” Volunteers must attend an orientation session prior to becoming a Hearts and Hands volunteer.

One in five residents of Erie County is now over the age of 65—a statistic which is expected to hold steady for at least the next 20 years. As this population ages, Hearts and Hands’ services will continue to be in demand. Hearts and Hands has become a vital part of the Western New York community, serving over 700 people annually, many on a weekly basis. This number will only increase as the organization moves into new areas.

For information on how you can become a Hearts and Hands volunteer, or to find out if services are available in your area, call Program Director Tracy Reed, (716) 406-8311, ext. 107.

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