

Helping Hands Needs Help Sometimes Too

POTSDAM - On March 20, Helping Hands Executive Director Jane Wells' aging printer was on the blink, and the charity's Pancake Breakfast fundraiser was hanging in the balance.

Wells, who knows every expense the shoestring charity incurs - down to the penny - while providing vital community services to those in need, was at the end of her wits.

"Time was tight to get the word out to the 450 newsletter recipients who are the charity's lifeblood, and Helping Hands couldn't afford to have their Pancake Breakfast turn into a pumpkin," she said.

Monday morning, Car Chase Workshop Chief Technology Officer Chris Baran took stock of the situation.

Forty-eight hours later, Helping Hands was in command of a new multi-function laser printer several orders of magnitude better than their old one, thanks to the support

of Potsdam's local business community. The Computer Guys, Evans & White Hardware, Larry Reece & Associates, Community Bank NA, North Country Savings Bank, chrisbaran.net and Car Chase Workshop all contributed their money and work to fill the critical gap with a refurbished Hewlett Packard laser-jet printer and make sure the newsletter went out on time.

"This is a giant step for Helping Hands," Wells said of the printer and the pro-bono automation programming Chris Baran did to turn a 3-volunteer, 20-hour job into one a single person could do in 45 minutes. It's a giant step that frees the charity to focus their attention on the people and situations that need them the most.

Helping Hands is an ecumenical charity serving Potsdam, Hannawa Falls, Colton & South Colton, Parishville, Norwood-Norfolk, Pierrepont, and

Stockholm. Their purpose is "to provide compassionate assistance for those in emergency situations and to provide various programs that enable individuals and families to achieve greater self-sufficiency."

The organization runs a food bank, furniture alliance, and crisis assistance service. It has recently begun a car share program with the assistance of Canton College, refurbishing donated autos to be placed with individuals who have previous car ownership experience and are in need of a car for employment purposes.

The Helping Hands Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser takes place April 4 at Trinity Church, Fall Island, Potsdam, from 8-10 a.m. All are welcome. Individuals who have a need, or would like to volunteer, are encouraged to call Jane Wells at 268-0633.