
	<b>LiGHT Grant Application 2024</b>	
<b>2024 LiGHT Grant Cover Form and Guidelines</b>		

**Name of individual, group or organization:** Helping Hands

**Contact name(s):** Kylie Tomlin, Executive Director

**Address:** 116 E Dustman Rd., Suite B, Bluffton, IN 46714

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**Name of the program as it would appear on the grant award:** Helping Hands' MomTime Community Group

**Describe who the grant award will serve and approximate number affected:** This grant will support mothers engaged in our women's community group, MomTime. Many participants in this program find themselves in vulnerable circumstances, having encountered trauma and striving to overcome generational cycles. In 2023, our group recorded 234 visits, and we are on track to exceed 340 visits in 2024, reflecting a 44% increase.

**Dollar amount requested:** \$2,450

**Would the program be offered if only a *partial* grant from LiGHT is made?** Yes

**Summary paragraph of the grant award requested:**

➤ May be utilized for part of the presentation.

MomTime aims to create an environment where women of diverse ages and backgrounds can encourage, connect, and evolve collectively. Our year-round curriculum, guided by a dedicated facilitator, offers an array of educational opportunities, including insightful guest speakers on important issues, life skills demonstrations such as baking and cooking, and activities designed to foster creativity and self-expression. Additionally, we organize outings that frequently lead to relationships beyond the scope of weekly meetings and outside the walls of Helping Hands. The presence of a supportive community and consistent engagement is crucial for women – the need is multifaceted, as it not only impacts mental health, encourages personal and social development, and builds connection; it also combats isolation, self-doubt, and loneliness. Working against things such as these is critical as women work to overcome trauma, heal, and become self-sufficient.

**Complete all requested items below:**

- 1) This Cover Form
- 2) Project Narrative, 1-5 pages typed, including:
  - What need in the Community will this program address? Give evidence to substantiate your request. (i.e. data, letters of recommendation, etc.)
  - What do you want to do?
  - What is your timeline?
  - What results do you expect?
  - If partnering with other organizations, please list.
  - Describe the program and tell how the funds from the grant will be used based on your budget
  - Signature page: To include endorsement of the project or program by the requesting agency's Board of Directors. This page must include a signature of the Board president.
- 3) Detailed budget

## Project Narrative

### Community Need

One compelling article stated, "Retrospective and prospective studies consistently show that individuals exposed to human-generated traumatic events carry a higher risk of developing Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than those exposed to other kinds of events. These studies also consistently identify perceptions of social support both before and after a traumatic event as an important factor in determining vulnerability to the development of PTSD" (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008).

The type of social support that is offered through MomTime is consistent, empathetic, and non-judgmental. This creates a space that provides safety and understanding, allowing freedom to be transparent about their past experiences or current situation. Charuvastra & Cloitre (2008) found that "At a cognitive level, positive social support may facilitate this process as it conveys the message that one is taken care of and is a member of a group whose task is in part the protection of its members." It is important to note that having a place such as MomTime can help dismantle the silence and stigma that can surround trauma, allowing for open dialogue and growth. It also offers an opportunity to gain new or different resources and perspectives that can foster healing.

Being a part of a supportive network not only aids in emotional recovery but also empowers women to reclaim their sense of identity and well-being. This can encourage personal and social development as the type of vulnerability we often see within this weekly group leads to encouragement and accountability, which helps them to find strength and resilience in their daily life and circumstances. A reliable and supportive community, where they can share experiences, seek advice, and find encouragement, helps to build self-esteem and confidence. This is essential for overcoming personal challenges and achieving goals. In addition, being part of a community group with different backgrounds, thoughts, and opinions helps women develop important skills such as communication, empathy, and collaboration. Engaging with others in a supportive space on a weekly basis enriches their social lives and enhances their ability to build meaningful relationships that we often see flourish outside the walls of Helping Hands. By attending MomTime, women grow their circle of people to reach out to.

Empowering women in their mental health, in their personal and social development puts them in a better position to make lifestyle changes and adapt as their circumstances may change. According to *Women's Empowerment for Positive Life Changes* (2023) "Recognizing the intrinsic link between mental and physical well-being, an empowered woman places great emphasis on self-care. She adopts a routine that resonates with her- be it mindful meditation, engaging in hobbies, seeking therapy, or simply indulging in a rejuvenating spa day. This helps her establish coping strategies for major life changes." While some of the women we serve may not be in a space to regularly incorporate self-care or have time to pick up a hobby, we often see a connection between the women regularly engaged in community and being able to make lifestyle changes. When trials come their way, we also see a difference in how they navigate

setbacks. Also stated in *Women's Empowerment for Positive Life Changes (2023)*, "Perhaps the most significant advantage of empowerment is the resilience it instills. In adversity, an empowered woman remains adaptable, always ready to evolve, learn, and move forward. She understands setbacks are temporary and that her empowerment journey is a marathon, not a sprint."

Ultimately, having or not having a community or collective group to be a part of can play a pivotal role in shaping a woman's development. The need is multifaceted, as it not only impacts their mental health, encourages personal and social development, empowers them to become self-sufficient, promotes healing, and builds connection; it also combats isolation, self-doubt, and loneliness. Community is also essential in parenting, as it provides peer support for the mothers, and peer interaction for the child!

Women, particularly those in vulnerable or transitional phases of life, may experience social isolation. A community provides a sense of belonging and connection, which is vital for combating loneliness. A supportive network helps women build meaningful relationships, enhancing their social support system and overall quality of life. We are reminded of the impact of this program because of what one of the moms served through this program stated, *"There aren't words worthy to express the difference and impact that you have on our lives, and the lives of many others! Proud to call you friends, thank you for always being there and doing life with us! Truly life changing."*

In addition, please see the letter of recommendation attached.

### **What will be Done**

With this grant, Helping Hands will be empowered to offer women in our community a weekly group that meets them exactly where they are in their journey, fostering experiences that promote connection and support. The group is enriched by regular volunteers who serve as mentors, providing guidance and encouragement in an organic, welcoming environment. While Helping Hands already offers a safe space, the grant will enable our MomTime facilitator to plan a year of enriching activities and crafts, guest speakers, demonstrations, and outings. These initiatives are designed to inspire creativity, self-expression, and the development of practical skills.

For example, more recently, an art teacher guided the women through a painting project, which provided both an artistic outlet and a moment of relaxation amidst the pressures of daily life. This holiday season, our facilitator has planned an evening for creating gingerbread houses, allowing women to make joyful memories that may inspire them start new traditions with their own families. While we prioritize meaningful conversations and discussions, we also recognize the value of lighthearted experiences that build lasting bonds.

Additionally, guest speakers are thoughtfully selected to address significant topics such as grief, loss, addiction, abuse, trauma and more. This grant would allow Helping Hands to maintain a space where women can engage in these vital conversations without fear of judgment, while

also finding safety and support. This encourages women to continue to engage! Consistent participation strengthens the group dynamic, fostering deeper investment in both personal growth and community connections.

This grant will enable our facilitator to continue organizing demonstrations tailored to the participants' unique needs and circumstances. For instance, earlier this year, one week featured a demonstration of a simple, budget-friendly recipe with a few ingredients, along with suggestions for modifications to suit individual preferences or constraints. In addition to fostering meaningful connections, this group emphasizes the development of essential life skills, equipping participants with practical tools for everyday living.

As this group has grown and members have become more dedicated to engagement, we have seen lasting relationships be built and invested in, even outside our walls! This has encouraged our facilitator to plan meaningful outings that provide a more relaxed approach to relationship building through a shared experience. Last year, the women's community group traveled to Shipshewana where they enjoyed a dinner and a play. This year, they will head to Indianapolis for a "dinner and show experience" at Beef and Boards. These outings offer participants opportunities to enjoy experiences they may not otherwise have access to, while also strengthening relationships through shared moments. A staff member noted that last year's outing inspired deep conversations and relationship-building, demonstrating the power of connecting outside the usual group setting. These consistent, meaningful interactions, fostered within and beyond the weekly meetings, will continue to be supported by this grant, ensuring the women have spaces to bond and grow together.

Beyond these activities, the group also engages in community service, offering the women opportunities to give back in ways that are meaningful and accessible. This year, they've contributed to a prison ministry, helped with maintenance at a local non-profit, and visited the Wells County foodbank, reinforcing their sense of agency and connection to the wider community.

Lastly, this grant will help extend the program's benefits to the children of participants. While the mothers engage in group activities, their children are cared for by volunteers, removing a common barrier to participation. Our Children's Program Director thoughtfully plans lessons and activities for the children, creating an integrated and supportive experience for families. This grant would significantly enhance our ability to provide consistent, nurturing environments where women can form meaningful connections, develop practical skills, and make lasting memories, both within our walls and beyond.

## **Timeline**

At Helping Hands, our MomTime community group operates on a weekly basis throughout the entire year, providing ongoing support without a set end date. Participation is open to all women and mothers, regardless of age, ensuring inclusivity. The grant funding will enable us to sustain this vital community throughout the year, while also enhancing the program with

special activities, outings, and additional resources designed to enrich the experience and foster deeper connections among participants.

### **Expected Results**

With a thoughtfully designed curriculum and schedule, we expect continued growth in group participation, as seen throughout 2024. The positive experiences of the women involved often lead them to invite friends, creating a self-sustaining cycle of engagement. Based on current attendance trends, we anticipate a 44% increase in participation from 2023 to 2024. This grant will allow our facilitator to continue offering intentional, meaningful experiences, which we project will contribute to further growth in 2025.

Moreover, once women engage in one service at Helping Hands, they often expand their involvement to other programs. Participation in MomTime frequently leads women to discover additional resources such as parenting education, food assistance, goal setting, OB medical services, couples coaching, and material assistance. Many also engage with the Helping Hands store, where they can earn "credits" through program involvement. For example, attending MomTime earns three credits per week, which can be spent on essentials like diapers or wipes, or even on gift cards or gas cards, providing tangible support for their families and alleviating financial strain.

Our vision for MomTime extends beyond simply connecting women to Helping Hands; it empowers them to become active participants within the broader community. The group fosters a sense of safety, connection, and support, allowing women to heal from trauma, navigate crises, and rebuild their lives. As they receive consistent care and support, they are empowered to give back, contributing to a stronger and more resilient community.

### **Other Partnerships**

Currently, no other organizations are helping us reach this goal.

### **Program Description and Fund Usage**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Outings and Events	\$1,850
Meals and Food	\$350
Activities	\$250
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,450</b>

## References

- 1) Charuvastra, A., & Cloitre, M. (2008). Social bonds and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 301–328.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085650>
- 2) *Women's Empowerment for Positive Life Changes*. (2023). Rapoport Psychological Services. <https://www.rapoortpsychological.com/therapy-blog/womens-empowerment-for-positive-life-transitions>

Applicants Signature: Kylie Tamun

Board President Signature: J. J.



To whom it may concern,

I have been attending MomTime consistently for almost a year, Helping Hands' community group for women. MomTime has helped me gain so many mom friends and it allows me to get out of the house and be around mothers. It also gives my children time to get out a play with friends!

It honestly helps with my mental health because I go all week without talking to anyone but my children and significant other. It's nice to know I have a place to go to visit with moms and learn new things. The volunteers are always so sweet, and Jami (the facilitator) does an amazing job!

*Chelsea Wilkinson*

- Helping Hands' client and MomTime attendee