

# Loving Hands empowers people to live a full life with innovative programming

## In the Spotlight

**B**oth young and the young-at-heart are receiving the support they need in a nurturing environment from The Loving Hands Group.



Linda Chojnacki

"Loving Hands is a group of professional artists and alternative healthcare practitioners who do classes and activities with seniors and individuals with physical and cognitive challenges. We go all over northeast Ohio. We visit people individually in their homes and work with groups in assisted living communities, senior centers, group homes, skilled nursing facilities, adult day cares, hospitals, and more," said Judith Eugene, founder of The Loving Hands Group.

"With physically- and cognitively-challenged people, the focus is typically on their physical or cognitive needs. We focus on the other aspects of their lives through arts and alternative health care. They still have stories to tell, so the writing brings that out. They have creativity inside of them, so the art classes bring that out. So many people have dreamed about being an architect, so we bring that skill out by teaching them drafting and more," she said.

### Why she established Loving Hands

Judith started The Loving Hands Group in response to her own personal crisis.

"I had a number of major life changes happen about two years ago. My mother passed away, my marriage ended, my 16-year-old cat died, I lost my job, and I lost my home. My whole world was turned upside down.

"My mother was an amazingly wonderful, loving and giving person. She spent all of her time helping and listening to people. She gave them whatever they needed. She was a wonderful role model. She was also a Montessori teacher, so she impacted countless children's lives in a positive way.

"When she died and I saw the number of people who came to commemorate her, it touched me. I realized what a difference that taking

time for people, being nice, and being kind could make. I started thinking, 'Wow, is there a way to make a living out of this?' I got the idea of working with people who needed extra support and started the group," indicated Judith.

### Programming

The Loving Hands Group's programming is conducted by a team of licensed and trained professionals who have many years of experience in their respective fields. Many own their own businesses. The professional level classes are designed to teach individuals life skills.

Judith has been an architect and interior decorator for 25 years. She teaches classes in Feng shui, decorating on a budget, how to redesign what you have in your home, how to modify your home for aging in place, and more. She's also a writer, musician and motivational speaker.

Another member of The Loving Hands Group is an artist. She does arts and crafts programming on cooking, sewing, lace making, quilting, gardening, and more.

"On the alternative healthcare side, programs are available on yoga, Reiki energy therapy,

Tai chi, meditation, and dream interpretation.

A massage therapist is a part of The Loving Hands Group. "She does personal massage, but we have done a group event for a law firm that had a lot of senior adult clients. We did a stress-relief event for the caregivers."

Pet Connections is an effort to bring rescue animals to individuals to give them an hour of attention and love.

"We predominantly use dogs, but we have used exotic animals. We have volunteers from the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo bring some of their animals, such as a hedgehog, frog and a snake to an assisted living community. The residents loved it because it was something that they had never seen before," she said.

Classes are affordably priced and listed in detail online.

### A positive story of change

Last winter, Judith worked with a couple that wanted to do Yoga in their home.

"They were 93 years old. We

talked for a long time on the phone and they said, 'We really don't know if it's worth doing anything new at our age. What if we can't do it? What if we don't understand? Is it really worth trying something new?' I said, 'What all of our classes do is meet you where you're at. We don't have predetermined outcomes on the way a class should go.' We design classes to meet the individual needs of the person and his or her ability. That way they feel empowered by doing their best, and their best is good enough no matter what that is," said Judith.

The couple tried one yoga class and they loved it. They said, "Thank you for treating us like people, not like old people."

"That made me so happy and that's why I do this. We give people the ability to do something new and something that they can really be proud of in their lives."

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Judith Eugene speaks to a group of senior caregivers.



Judith Eugene (center) with her memoir writing class students.