

Needle Arts Mentoring Program

a project of the Helping Hands Foundation, Inc.



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Free supplies for the needle arts are being sent all over the country to youngsters who are being taught the needle arts by adult volunteer mentors wishing to pass along their passion for crochet, cross-stitch, knitting and needlepoint. The Helping Hands Foundation (HHF) has worked since 1985 to develop Needle Arts Mentoring ProgramsSM (NAMP) in communities nationwide.

What is it?

The Helping Hands Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that coordinates programs to teach children the various needle arts, including crochet, cross-stitch, knitting and needlepoint. The group's Mission Statement is "The purpose of our organization is to create community partnerships, which promote and encourage relationships between adults and youth, fostering curiosity, creativity and a feeling of achievement through the teaching of needle arts."

The **FOUNDATION** is called **Helping Hands Foundation, Inc. (HHF)**. The **PROGRAM** is called the **Needle Arts Mentoring ProgramSM (NAMP)**.

How did HHF begin?

HHF was started by a yarn company sales representative, Bonnie Lively, in Oregon. She coordinated the program from her home, with the assistance of one part-time staff member, from its inception in 1999 through June 2004. In 2004, The National NeedleArts Association (TNNA), the trade association for the needle arts industry, agreed to oversee the management of the foundation.

How does the Needle Arts Mentoring Program work?

This is a volunteer-based program, in which volunteer adult mentors are connected with several children in grades one through 12 to teach them a needle art. NAMPs are available to school systems, after school programs, scout troops, library programs or any other places where children gather. Generally, mentors meet with the children one hour per week for a six to nine week session, although programs can be designed to suit a particular situation. Each program has a Volunteer Coordinator (VC) who communicates information to each volunteer and is the liaison with HHF. HHF provides the VC with training materials (a *Leadership*

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Guide and a training video) to help successfully guide mentors as they teach students. Each student is given enough supplies for their first project or two (for example, a knitting student will get knitting needles, about one ounce of yarn and a “How To Knit” book. The book and needles are theirs to keep at the end of the session). We suggest that the first two projects for knit and crochet programs be a bookmark (a simple first-time swatch), and a square to be incorporated into a blanket for charity. For needlepoint and cross-stitch, each child will have one kit for a small stitched picture.

How many NAMP programs are there?

As of October 12, 2011, there were 272 active programs in 42 states, representing over 6400 children learning needle arts around the country.

Where do the supplies come from?

The success of this program depends on the generosity of the needle arts industry suppliers. The manufacturers of needle arts products donate yarns, threads, needles, canvases, patterns, etc. to the programs. Since 1999, TNNA has also donated their “How To” books to each child in a program.

How are other expenses paid?

Like any program, there are expenses beyond the basic supplies – staff time, postage, phone, fax, Web site costs, etc. – and revenue must be generated to pay these expenses. TNNA underwrites management expenses while other expenses are funded through donations. Each NAMP is asked to send in a minimal donation to cover shipping and printing expenses, but no group is denied supplies if they don’t make a donation. The goal for HHF is to eventually be self-sustaining through grants and other donations. The Executive Director of HHF coordinates fundraising activities.

Is there a Board of Directors?

Yes, the 2011 Board of Directors includes Susanne Bergum (President), Jan Kahn (Secretary/Treasurer), Barbara Bergsten, Carol Gantz, Juli Mulcahy and Karin Strom.

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