

The Healing Hands Project

November 2004

Dear Friends of The Healing Hands Project,

It is hard to believe that we are well into our sixth year with Healing Hands. We feel especially proud to have somehow been able to continue our work through some of the most rugged economic challenges in modern times. The demands placed upon sources of funding by the tragedy of the 9/11 terrorist attacks have been enormous. We are a California based organization and hospitals are closing here at an alarming rate. Century City Hospital, which donated its hospital rooms as well as general support for many of our clients' surgeries, closed their doors earlier this year.

We are a very small organization with a huge mission and very limited resources. We provide reconstructive surgery and loving follow up care to needy adults whose lives have been shattered by catastrophic facial disfigurement. We have learned that follow up care that we provide is at least as important for our clients' healing as the surgeries themselves.

At this time, we are working with four wonderful, courageous women. Their sweetness, openheartedness and ability to carry on each day in spite of their immense emotional and physical challenges inspire us to push forward to generate the funds we need to help more people like these women. While the funding and logistical challenges of running a small non-profit with such huge goals may seem insurmountable, we know that there are so many others out there who live their lives in the shadows, ashamed of their disfigurement, unable to gain employment – waiting for our help and we are determined to make every effort to raise the funds needed.

Client Update

Carol

Carol was the inspiration to found Healing Hands. She had come to this country from her native Jamaica in search of medical help. Carol had been attacked, nearly blinded and horribly disfigured with battery acid when her hardware store was robbed.

We reached out to Carol and were able to obtain help for her, including several reconstructive surgeries. Thanks to the amazing skill and unparalleled generosity of our co-founder, Dr. Brian Kinney, Carol's face shows huge improvement.

Over the past six years, Healing Hands has provided thousands of dollars to help Carol make a life and raise her wonderful son Dale. Now that Dale is grown, we know that he will be able to contribute to his mother's support as well.

Carol participates in speaking engagements with various organizations, providing inspiration for others facing seemingly impossible challenges.

I do believe in people's best instinct, and I believe that what's best in humanity can triumph over what is worst, but first there needs to be awareness. Thanks for knowing that I have a need and supplying that need. God has made you a part of saving my life. I truly understand the depth of your financial sacrifice to me. Thanks for your love. I really want you to know what a wonderful organization you are. Thanks to you, I am now on the road to getting to that place where I can have a wonderful life. You gave me the confidence to take my life back.

~Carol

Saundra

Saundra is a source of inspiration to all of us who are involved with Healing Hands and to everyone else she comes in contact with in the world.

When we found Saundra, she was living in a "safe house" in Pasadena, California. She and her three small children shared one tiny room. She wore a surgical mask on her face whenever she was around people – too ashamed to have the world see her scars.

Her former husband had viciously beaten her and left her in the street to die. Saundra spent four months hospitalized, during which she endured a number of surgeries to have parts of her face removed as a flesh-eating bacteria took hold. When she was discharged, the police told Saundra that it was "too late" to prosecute her husband.

Saundra was referred to us by a nurse who worked at a clinic where she took her children for medical care. Dr. Kinney, with his usual "can do and will do" attitude and his tremendous skills, donated many surgeries – each one helping to bring more normalcy and symmetry to her face.

We were able to obtain psychological counseling, parent training and ultimately a grant from the "Change a Life" foundation to send Saundra to vocational school. The grant provided her with tuition, child care, transportation and a computer.

All of this really paid off – Saundra is now employed with an ambulance service in the Accounts Receivable department. She has moved with her two fabulous sons and lovely little daughter to a nice, sunny two bedroom apartment. A member of her church donated a car and the children are growing and thriving!

Our biggest thrill with Saundra was when she announced that she decided to remove her surgical mask for good. That "stepping out of the shadows and into the light" is what we wish for all of our dear clients.

My life was at a standstill. Then the Healing Hands Project stepped in and offered to help when no one else would. The surgeries have improved my outlook and people have given me care that cannot have come from anywhere but the heart.

~Saundra

Anya

Anya is 25 years old now. We believe that excerpts from the following letter, which Anya wrote to Senator Barbara Boxer in April of 2000, tells the story of what Anya went through before Healing Hands found her in 2001 better than we ever could.

Dear Senator Boxer,

My name is Anya Gabova. I am originally from Russia. I arrived to the United States in 1994 when I was 15 years old for medical reasons. I was burned very badly when I was a baby. After my mom died when I was 12, I went to a Russian hospital to fix my burns. I had to stay in the hospital for three years and have eleven surgeries. My doctor said I had to come to America to complete surgeries that he couldn't do. Thanks to "Healing The Children" I was able to come here. I have since had fourteen more surgeries at Shriners Hospital in Los Angeles, and will continue to have more. When I first arrived here I was not able to speak English.

After about a month I went to junior high. The reason I didn't go to school for that first month was because I was so scared. I didn't know any English. My counselor told me that I should stay in junior high for one more year. I went to high school anyway. And I actually made it! I got good grades. Four years later I graduated from Hart High School with two scholarships. Now I go to a community college called College of the Canyons. My major is art. In my spare time I volunteer to help raise money for "Healing The Children," the organization that brought me here.

My main reason for writing you this letter is to ask if you can help me make a future out of my life. Soon my surgeries will be over and I will have to go back to Russia. In letters I receive from home, they tell me that there is no future for me there. I hope that I will be able to stay here and finish college and get a good job. Then I can start to pay back all the people who have helped me.

Anya is a brilliantly talented young graphic artist. Healing Hands has been thrilled to be able to provide some of the surgery Anya still needed once she was too old to be helped by "Healing The Children."

In addition, we were able to help with legal costs regarding extension of her medical visa, which enabled Anya to stay in this country. Healing Hands also paid for her school and art supplies, clothing and college tuition. Anya graduated College of the Canyons with a degree in Art. Although she cannot work in this country, Anya continues to paint and produce beautiful works of art.

The Healing Hands Project has been taking care of all of my medical, educational and many of my personal needs. I had two surgeries on my face and two surgeries on my legs where I had scars due to skin grafts. They have paid for all of my medicines and any expenses that were involved with my surgeries. I have recently graduated from College of the Canyons with an Associate in Arts Degree. Healing Hands Project has paid for all of my tuition, books and supplies. They have also financed much of my needs such as public transportation, clothing and personal needs.

I am hoping that Healing Hands Project will be able to continue to offer me financial help so I will be able to complete my many remaining surgeries. I have no one else to turn to for help since my mother died when I was 12 and I have no contact with my father.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

~Anya

Christina

Christina is from Pakistan. In 1992, a spurned suitor threw acid in her face. She suffered terrible disfiguring third degree burns to her face and her right eye was badly damaged. Christina had some reconstructive surgeries in Pakistan, but they were not in any way sufficient to restore her former appearance.

Christina has immigrated to the USA from her native Pakistan. Her loving sister, who works as a nurse in this country, spent all of her savings to bring Christina here in search of reconstructive surgery and a new life.

Healing Hands and Dr. Kinney have begun to provide reconstructive surgery for Christina and we have recently contacted the Northridge California Lion's Club, where they are working to find a corneal transplant for her.

In addition, we are pursuing a grant to help Christina with her schooling to pursue her dream of helping other needy people and working to save abused animals.

The Future of The Healing Hands Project

The Healing Hands Project is in the process of applying for various grants. Our resources are currently lower than they have ever been. The need for the work we do to help these courageous people, however, is higher than ever.

Carol has just informed us that she may be facing a serious new medical challenge; Anya is in need of a number of additional surgeries and help with her legal fees to save her from being deported to Russia, where she surely will have a terribly difficult, dangerous life; and Christina needs many further surgeries as well as a corneal transplant and vocational training to help get her on her feet. In addition to our current clients, there are hundreds of adults enduring the agony of facial disfigurement.

We are so grateful for all of your wonderful emotional and financial support now and in the past. Every success that we have at the Healing Hands Project is a direct result of the love, compassion and donations of people like you. We need and ask you for your help in any way you can – THE FUTURE OF THE HEALING HANDS PROJECT IS YOU.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts,

Jane Hunt
President

The Healing Hands Project
P.O. Box 1057
Burbank, CA 91507-998

Colleen Hunt
Executive Director