

Greetings from the Executive Director

Seals and Dogs and ROBOTS - OH MY!!!

What do you think of when you think of a robot? Do you think of R2-D2*? Maybe, if you are of a certain age, you think of the Jetsons*?

At Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers (HH) we are exploring the area of robotics and how it can assist those living with physical disabilities. You may be aware of Japanese made [Paro the robotic seal](#) or the robotic dogs and cats from the American company [Joy for All](#). These robots look like the real thing and bring comfort to older adults who cannot care for a pet, but need the comfort an animal can provide. We are going to the next level and exploring how robotics can actually assist someone with a mobility disability issue.



We are looking at the robotics world from three angles:

- Research and exploration
- The convening of an Advisory Committee of experts
- A pilot project with Northeastern University

To gain a better understanding of what is on the market, and what robotics can do for those living with disabilities we are researching a variety of companies and products. It is amazing the amount of work that is being done in the field. From robotic arms to exoskeletons – the future looks bright. HH wants to make sure we are on the forefront of that activity and work with both the disability community and the companies to ensure that those living with disabilities have access to what is available.

We convened experts from our board, the robotics world, and someone living with spinal cord injury to discuss how to move forward with robotics. It was a fruitful and robust discussion that will help HH seek out the appropriate collaborators for its continuing work.

We are creating a robotics pilot project bringing together George, who has multiple sclerosis, and Deborah, his wife and primary caregiver, with a team from the Institute of Experiential Robotics at Northeastern University in Boston. The goal of the project is to ascertain what robotics help George in his daily living needs and also what Deborah finds useful. George's opinion will be paramount, but so will Deborah's. Often times companies don't ask the primary care giver for an opinion, and as we know at HH their needs are vital as well.

Our role as the developer and facilitator of this project is to connect the individual and university with the technology, and function as the primary liaison between entities. We are the critical piece to keep information flowing between all parties, raise money, and maintain the collaboration. Our goal is that together, HH, George and Deborah, and Northeastern, we continue to improve technology to best assist those living with physical disabilities.

We have been talking about our transition from service animal to innovative technology, and now in May this pilot project brings us to our first real step—it is very exciting for all of us. We hope you will follow us as we begin this endeavor. As always, these projects require lots of hard work and support. If innovative technology is something that energizes you, and you would be interested in learning how you can support this work, please reach out to me via [email](#). I would enjoy speaking with you directly.

Sincerely,

Diane S. Nahabedian
Executive Director

*R2-D2 - Artoo-Detoo is a fictional robot character in the Star Wars franchise created by George Lucas.

*The Jetsons was a cartoon show in the 1960s about a family that lived in the future that had elaborate robotic contraptions, aliens, holograms, and whimsical inventions.

Birthday Round-up at the Monkey Living Center!

April is a BIG month for Birthdays in Boston! Please join us in wishing our monkeys a very Happy Birthday!

Rebecca, Deeann, Rubin, Tommy, Betsy, Heidi, and Mango!

Did you know you can make a gift in honor of anyone's birthday? [Learn more.](#)



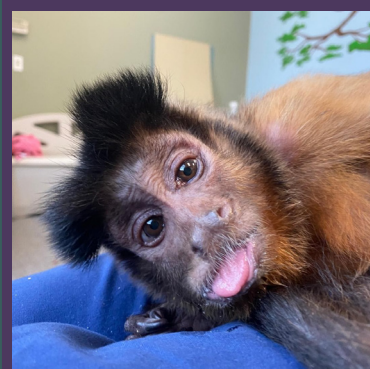
Rebecca



Deeann



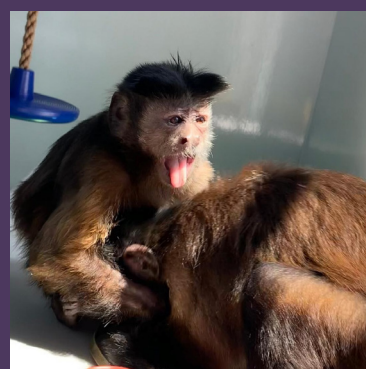
Rubin



Tommy



Betsy



Heidi

And a special Happy Birthday to our oldest monkey...Mango!



Mango has had an illustrious career as a service monkey and has one of the biggest personalities of any monkey in Boston! He is an easygoing, happy-go-lucky, monkey who loves to laugh, cuddle in the sunshine, and have his chest groomed by his friends.

Today happens to be Mango's 39th birthday and we have been celebrating him on social media all week. Be sure to hop over to Instagram to see Mango's story and join us in wishing him a very happy birthday!

Join the Helping Hands Development Committee!

Helping Hands is actively seeking candidates interested in fundraising to work alongside senior staff, volunteers, and board members on our Development Committee.

Specifically, we are looking for people who have fundraising, marketing, and/or event planning skills and are willing to reach out to introduce us to potential donors/funders.

For more information, please contact Julie Totten, Director of Development at juliet@monkeyhelpers.org, or call 617.787.4419 x.113.