

# Earth Day 2012



## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

**Name:** Helping Hands  
**Location:** DEP Central Office  
**Years with DEP:** Nearly 2 Decades

For almost 2 decades, DEP has sponsored local charities through its Helping Hands program. This program provides an opportunity for DEP employees to give back to their local community during the holiday season.

Typically, DEP will select one or two charities to sponsor and collect donations, both goods and money, on behalf of the selected charity. There is usually around \$1,000 dollars and countless items collected to support these charities. Throughout the years, the program has sponsored many organizations including Big Brother/Big Sisters, The Humane Society of Harrisburg, Toys for Tots, Central PA Food Bank, Ronald McDonald House, SPCA, Bethesda Mission and Central PA Animal Alliance.

It is a special tradition for DEP to have a large conifer in the Rachel Carson lobby to celebrate to holidays. When DEP employees donate money or goods, they are given the opportunity to decorate the tree with a paper 'helping hand'. Each year, a check presentation ceremony is held in the lobby, complete with Christmas carols sung by DEP's own chorale group, the Earth Tones.

The generosity of DEP employees has made this a long-lasting a valued program within the department. Helping Hands looks forward to continuing this tradition long into the future.

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## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

**Name:** Movember

**Location:** Central Office, Southcentral Regional Office

**Years with DEP:** 5

Five years ago, a group of men who work in DEP's Central and South-central regional offices decided to take part in a worldwide fundraiser called Movember. The goal is to promote men's health awareness and raise money for the Prostate Cancer Foundation and LIVESTRONG.

The group calls itself the *Hairy Lipped Harrisburgians*. Each year, members grow a "Mo" or moustache for the month of Movember and solicit sponsorship for donations.

"We have found this to be a great opportunity not only to have fun and raise money, but also to spread the word about a very serious disease that is often uncomfortable for men to discuss," the Head of the Hairy Lipped Harrisburgians Marcus Kohl said.

At its end-of-the-month bash, the group recognizes outstanding achievement in several categories, including "Best Mo," "Worst Mo," the "Sam Elliot Mo," as well as the top earner, the "Mo with the Most."

Over the last five years, this distinguished group of men and their supporters have raised an impressive \$48,000 to fight cancer.

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## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

**Name:** Purposeful Acts of Kindness

**Location:** Southeast Regional Office

**Years with DEP:** 18

Eighteen years ago, employees of DEP's Southeast Regional Office decided that they could make an impact not only on the environment during work hours, but also on individual lives through volunteer giving.

In response, the region's Purposeful Acts of Kindness (PAK) initiative was begun by energetic employees who formed a committee, identified worthy causes and staged fundraisers to support their efforts – all on their own time.

Over the years, PAK has contributed time and money to many good causes, including ALS, American Cancer Society, Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundations, Special Olympics and Doctors without Borders, but their most remarkable body of good work has been the adoption of a North Philadelphia elementary School.

The John Welsh School, located in the West Kensington section of the city, is an oasis of learning in a crime-ridden neighborhood. Student achievement is high, and the DEP employees who have been involved with the school recognize the potential of these children to succeed – with encouragement and kindness.

What began as Christmas presents for a few children has grown into a festival of giving for the entire school. After reviewing touching, funny and often wrenching letters to Santa, DEP employees provide gifts to students in grades K-5, and handmade stockings filled with practical and fun goodies for students in grades 6 through 8. Using vacation time, a DEP 'Santa' and group of DEP 'elves' deliver presents to the entire school, along with instruments, outerwear and uniforms to children who might not otherwise have them. During Santa's visit, DEP employees also spend time in John Welsh classrooms, and share their love of environmental science with students.

Throughout the year, PAK raises funds by holding hot dog sales, bake sales, pretzel sales, chili cook offs and its largest fundraiser, a golf outing. The committee raises enough money annually to cover its expenses. Through the generosity of the region's employees, PAK has been able to distribute more than 6,243 presents and 2,685 stockings to John Welsh students since 1994.

PAK believes that kindness is learned by being a recipient of it, and that in return, the giver gets his or her own special reward. Hundreds of current and former employees of DEP's Southeast Regional Office have been rewarded through their kindness.



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## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

**Name:** Falcon Watch and Rescue

**Location:** DEP Central Office

**Years with DEP:** 12

Since the year 2000, as a happy irony, a pair of endangered peregrine falcons has successfully nested on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor ledge of the RCSOB.

Knowing the dangers that young fledgling peregrines could face on their first attempt at flight, DEP staff mobilized to safeguard the fledglings. When fledging time nears for the nestlings, teams of two watchers volunteer on two-hour shifts during office hours to report fledgling activities and assist with rescue efforts as necessary. After office hours, a team of dedicated volunteers vigilantly carries on the watch and rescue activities. Volunteer wildlife rehabilitators have treated injured birds for release from the RCSOB and another chance at survival.

As a result of the efforts of these caring wildlife stewards, 29 peregrine falcons have fledged,—13 males and 16 females, and had the opportunity to seek out their own nesting territory. Many of the fledglings were rescued from nearby streets and parking garages.

Several of the Rachel Carson's young falcons have reportedly been nesting in Ohio, Delaware and other locations in Pennsylvania. While their numbers are increasing, the Pennsylvania Game Commission still lists the peregrine falcons as an endangered species in the Commonwealth.

There is no greater reward for these volunteers than to find that they have had a direct and positive impact on the survival of an endangered raptor.