



## History

Locally, Hands of Hope was organized as Greater San Marcos Christian Women's Job Corps. Aurelia Newton, a member of the Hands of Hope Advisory Council, was instrumental in starting the pilot program for Christian Women's Job Corps in San Antonio. In 2004 Aurelia and likeminded friends saw a need for such a ministry to women here in San Marcos.

Our first session was in January 2005 and the twelfth session was completed in November 2011. Two sessions of ten weeks each are held each year, presenting a broad curriculum. Daily Bible study is emphasized and each participant is assigned a mentor who encourages her throughout the program. Classes are held at First Baptist Church San Marcos Monday thru Thursday mornings until early afternoon. There are 215 Christian Women's Job Corps sites in the nation with 68 in the state of Texas. We changed our name to Hands of Hope in 2008 to minimize confusion with Gary Job Corps.

Hands of Hope is sponsored by First Baptist Church and supported by churches around our community and individuals locally and throughout the state. We have one main fundraiser each year, the spring "Tea 'N More." We are also beneficiaries of the Alternative Christmas Market.

Each site is autonomous. We are governed by a ten-member advisory council representing seven churches from five denominations. The ministry is conducted entirely by volunteers; there are no paid positions in Hands of Hope.

We have five certified site coordinators, one of whom is on the site each day, conducting the day to day operation. Known as co-site coordinators, these women have a wealth of experience. Nova Festervan's career was as a bank officer. Pat Hardesty was a hospital dietitian and also taught school. Bonnie Salles is retired from a corporate position as a benefits administrator. Lena Tolbert has a background in social work and is owner of a local day care facility. Carol Iacona is a retired medical secretary and health technician. The Hands of Hope faculty consists of certified teachers or people with professional experience in the subject they teach.

Fifty-seven women have completed Hands of Hope. Seven have moved from this area and we are not in touch with them. We know that 12 are presently employed and others have attained or plan to attain CNA or Teacher's Aide certification. Three are pursuing further training and education.

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