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Lotsa Helping Hands Launches New Nationwide Open Community Model *Service Enables All Citizens to Lend a Helping Hand*

Wellesley, Mass. (June 4, 2012) –In communities across our country, there are scores of people with critical needs – a very sick child, a parent with Alzheimer’s disease, a neighbor recovering from a stroke, a family coping with a tragic car accident – and caregivers are quietly and sometimes desperately trying to meet those needs while also running households and working 9 to 5. At the same time across our country, the desire to lend a helping hand to a relative, a friend, a stranger, has never been stronger, if only they knew how to help and what needed to be done. Lotsa Helping Hands’ new Open Community model arrives officially today as the new connector – between people who need help and those who want to lend a helping hand.

The newly launched Lotsa Helping Hands Open Communities is an organic result of the nationwide enthusiastic embrace of Lotsa Helping Hands’ traditional Private Communities. Lotsa Helping Hands is a no-cost resource that powers offline help online through the creation of Private and Open Community websites featuring a Help Calendar, automatic reminders, message boards, well wishes wall, a photo gallery, a vital information section, and more. Since 2005, Lotsa has powered the completion of 2.1 million tasks, all providing caregiver relief.

Open Communities help more than one individual or family – the number is unlimited – and the members of the Community may not know all, or any, of the people being helped. Open Communities are searchable using the Lotsa Helping Hands location-based search form and enable volunteers to lend a hand and caregivers to request help. In addition to meeting critical needs in towns and neighborhoods, Open Communities have been discovered as a perfect model for organizing service activities by schools, community groups, and religious organizations. Both Open and Private Communities can be uniquely customized to meet the needs of each specific caregiver, family, or community.

“As we’ve grown to more than one million members, we’ve seen Lotsa Communities helping more than one family. Oftentimes, after a Community helps support a family through a medical crisis that is positively resolved, community members will reach out to our Member Support Center and ask, ‘I’ve been helping my aunt in my Community and now Betty is better. Is there someone else I can help in my town?’ It’s both moving and gratifying to witness directly our vision about the power of community. Our members are the inspiration behind the creation of the Open Community model. We believe it taps into the spirit of our country, that need within all of us to do something for another,” said Hal Chapel, CEO and co-founder of Lotsa Helping Hands.

After experiencing the strength of her community when her Army husband was deployed, Jomarie O’Mahony created *Women of Wilmington* to support others in her Massachusetts town. Like Lotsa, Jomarie envisioned people coming together to help in their community. What started as a 15-member group is now 316 strong. Currently, *Women of Wilmington* is helping a family cope with cancer treatment and a man who lost his apartment to a fire by providing meals and rides. “We are the first group people come to when tragedy strikes our town. There are 22,000 Wilmington residents and we’ve always been a giving community,” said Michelle Bryan, Women of Wilmington’s vice president. “Lotsa Helping Hands helps us grow and raise awareness about what we can do for one another.”

Neighbor Brigade coordinates help through 24 Lotsa Helping Hands Open Communities in towns across Massachusetts. So far in 2012, 475 of their 3,000 plus members have volunteered to help 45 people and families in crisis, and the organization is expecting to grow to 30 Open Communities this year. *Wayland Neighbor Brigade*, for example, provides rides, dog walking services, friendly visits, prepares meals, and even completes light household tasks for neighbors in need. "Lotsa Helping Hands is fundamental to what we do – this service enables us to easily and efficiently coordinate help across an entire community to support our neighbors in crisis," said Pam Washek, executive director of Neighbor Brigade.

"We believe that Open Communities will have limitless potential – especially as the caregiver crisis in our nation continues and the willingness to help others grows," said Brooks Kenny, chief marketing officer, Lotsa Helping Hands. "We're very proud to launch the Open Community model and are excited to watch helping communities pop up across the country to support sick neighbors, military families, families who have lost their homes to natural disasters such as fires and tornados, and more."

For more than five years, 60,000 Lotsa Helping Hands Private Communities have been at work across the nation, providing real help and respite for caregivers. Tapping into an individual or family's "circles of community" – their relatives, neighbors, colleagues, and friends – Lotsa has served as an integral solution to the caregiver crisis our nation is facing by facilitating the easy coordination of care. Zahara Heckscher's sister created *Zahara's Helpers* in 2008, when the Washington, D.C. resident and young mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. Not only was it used to coordinate meals and friendly visits, providing Zahara's husband – her primary caregiver – much needed relief, but Lotsa created a way for the family to keep relatives and friends both near and far updated on Zahara's progress. The family thought Zahara had beaten cancer until a month ago when she received news the cancer was back. Zahara and her sister activated *Zahara's Helpers* once more. "Lotsa Helping Hands keeps me close with friends and helps keep my spirits high. Life is about living, and Lotsa Helping Hands helps me live," said Zahara.

More than 50 New York City residents have come together to support Patti, who suffers from an autoimmune disease. Member Amy Barone stresses the community Lotsa Helping Hands creates, saying, "Lotsa Helping Hands is a wonderful connector. *Patti's Helpers* is an easy platform that lets me sign up for the tasks I know I can accomplish – like going to Patti's house on Tuesdays and making lunch. But even more important, it's created a community from which Patti can draw strength and support. She knows she's not alone."

To learn more about Lotsa Helping Hands, to search for an Open Community, or to create a Lotsa Community, visit www.lotsahelpinghands.com.

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About Lotsa Helping Hands

Lotsa Helping Hands powers online caring communities that help restore health and balance to caregivers' lives. More than 65 million people serve as caregivers for aging loved ones and those with chronic disease or disability. The free service brings together caregivers and volunteers through online communities that organize daily life during times of medical crisis or caregiver exhaustion in neighborhoods and communities worldwide. Caregivers benefit from the gifts of much needed help, emotional support, and peace of mind, while volunteers find meaning in giving back to those in need. To date, nearly one million members have lent a hand through a Lotsa Helping Hands community and more than 50 national nonprofit organizations partner with Lotsa to support caregivers. For more information about Lotsa Helping Hands, visit www.lotsahelpinghands.com.