Friends Foster Grandparent Program

Remarks as read by Youth Mentoring Program Coordinator, Maureen Desmond at the Friends’ annual recognition event on October 1.

Thank you so much for coming here tonight to recognize these outstanding volunteers. My name is Anne Sanuth, coordinator for the Foster Grandparent Program, which matches senior citizens across NH with educators to serve children with exceptional needs. Friends Foster Grandparent is one of two programs we operate that benefit citizens age 55 and up.

As a program coordinator, I work with nearly 40 of the 120 seniors who volunteer as Foster Grandparents.

Victoria Chaffee, Grammy Vickie as she’s affectionately known by her teachers and students, is in her third year of volunteering at Sanbornton Central Elementary School. I remember calling Vickie in August to confirm
that she’d be returning for another year. Her response was, “I can’t wait to get back to school. I miss the kids so much. I love what I do; being able to help them learn and watch them grow to be more confident.” I hung up the phone feeling thankful and inspired, and thought, “That is what it’s all about!” I next thought about all those kids who’d be lucky enough to have Grammy Vickie in their classroom - and how they’d find comfort, courage, and guidance through her genuine compassion and calming presence.

Vickie helps students feel safe and gets them excited to learn. She’s a constant source of help and support for her teacher as well. She goes to school every day and gives her all to help with daily lessons and classroom management duties. Vickie even plans ahead when certain class projects or school events are concerned. During one of my visits to her class she showed me all kinds of craft supplies and materials that she had brought from home to give to the students to use for puppet making for a play they were preparing for. Grammy also brought in pictures for ideas and even had one of herself all dressed up in a chicken costume which the kids really got a kick out of, as did I.

Vickie has an infections positive energy. I can’t recall a visit with her where I didn’t see a huge smile across her face while working with the students or even when she greets me at the door. Her teacher, Mrs. White, wrote to me about just how much of a difference Vickie makes by helping those children who really need it most. She wrote, “Grammy Vickie worked with one particular child who was struggling with math concepts and suffered from a low self-esteem. She spent time each day with this little girl encouraging her strengths and showing her that she believed in her. Over time this student developed a more positive attitude towards learning and made significant improvements in both math and reading fluency.” The teacher even went on to say how this child seemed to grow happier throughout the year after working with Grammy. “It made me think how much I would have loved to have a Grammy Vickie in my classroom as a child so that I could have experienced that same kind of encouragement.”

Vickie has also been a huge help to me personally. She is very passionate about the Foster Grandparent Program and its mission. She’s an amazing advocate who spreads the word among other seniors in her community. She has connected me with new potential volunteers, one of whom just started volunteering in another classroom at Sanbornton. Her Principal, Bonnie Jean Kuras, has expressed tremendous appreciation for the work Vickie does and continues to ask me for more volunteers like her.
In closing, I would just like to express my sincere gratitude to you, Vickie, and to tell you how honored I am to have you as one of my Foster Grandparents. You see the best in everyone and effortlessly nurture those qualities to make people feel special. So it is with great pleasure that I recognize your service here tonight.