Important Updates on the Foster Grandparent Program

Federal Budget

As many of you are aware, the budget proposal that the White House sent to Congress for the federal fiscal year starting October 1 does include a recommendation to eliminate the Corporation for National and Community Service, which is the federal agency that provides the grants that make the Foster Grandparent and RSVP programs possible. All of us at the Friends Program are watching this closely. The budget proposal is just that – a proposal. Congress is responsible for passing the budget. They will make the decisions and pass a budget at some point between now and October. When they do, we will communicate with you what decisions are made and how it affects our program.

What does this mean?

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We do know that the Foster Grandparent Program has had strong bipartisan support when these budget discussions arose in the past.

What to Expect

You may hear from the Friends Program or the Foster Grandparent Advisory Committee directly with additional information. Keep an eye on the mail and on your newsletters. Your Program Coordinators and the Program Director are not allowed to influence legislation. We can educate you about what is proposed and educate the public about who we are and what we do, but that is the limit of our activity.

Everyone is allowed to give their personal opinion to legislators on their own time. You are not allowed to do that on your stipended service time, nor are we allowed to do it on our paid time. You may do it on your own, unpaid time if you wish.

We will update you as we hear more. Until then, keep doing the great work that you do.

We are proving how important you are with the service that you give every day.

Contact me or your Program Coordinator at any time with questions or for an update.

Nancy Paul, npaul@friendsprogram.org, 603-228-7606.

The Star Fish Story

‘It made a difference for that one’

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up. As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out ‘Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?’ The young man paused, looked up, and replied ‘Throwing starfish into the ocean.’ ‘I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?’ asked the somewhat startled wise man. ‘The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them in, they’ll die.’ Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, ‘But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can’t possibly make a difference!’

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, ‘It made a difference for that one.’ So, can I encourage you to take the time to do something that will make a difference to someone else’s life … and it doesn’t have to be much and they don’t need to know.

Just take a moment, do something special … the universe will know and that’s enough.

Adapted from The Star Thrower by Loren Eiseley (1907-1977)
April 1 is the start of our new Corporation for National and Community Service Foster Grandparents grant year. The start of a new year always means some changes. This year, we have a number of important changes to share.

**Service is the Gold Standard**
Foster Grandparents are required to serve between 15 and 40 hours per week. Every hour you spend in service at your site allows you to have a positive impact on the children with whom you work. We encourage you to serve as many hours as you and your site choose.

**Holiday Time**
We will continue offering Holiday time for the same Holidays that our agency observes. This is offered ONLY to those volunteers who regularly serve on the day that the holiday is observed and only in the number of hours that the volunteer typically serves. No Holiday time is available if a volunteer typically does not serve on that day. For example, if New Year’s Day falls on a Monday and a volunteer usually serves 5 hours on Mondays, that volunteer will be eligible for 5 hours of Holiday time. If a volunteer usually serves on Tuesdays through Friday, then that volunteer will not be eligible for that time.

**Vacation Time**
Volunteers will be eligible for Vacation coverage for the February and April vacation weeks. This is offered ONLY in the number of hours that the volunteer typically serves.

**Weather Closings**
In the event that a volunteer’s site is closed due to weather, the volunteer is eligible for Weather time covering the period regularly worked. If the volunteer typically serves 3 hours, then the volunteer may submit for 3 hours of Weather closure time. If the site opens on a 90-minute or 2-hour delay, the volunteer is eligible for 90 minutes or 2 hours of Weather closure. If a volunteer chooses not to go into a site that is open, Benefit Time must be used instead.

**Mileage Reimbursement Increase**
For those Foster Grandparent volunteers receiving payment from the program, the mileage rate is increasing to $0.535 per mile from $0.26 per mile.

**Meal Reimbursement for Sites Not Offering Meals**
This change applies ONLY to those volunteers serving at sites who do not offer meals now. Foster Grandparents who must bring their own meal to a site AND serve during a meal period may now request a $2.00 reimbursement for those costs incurred.

**Summary**
There are many changes noted here. These changes require a new timesheet, which was reviewed at our March workshops and is also included in this newsletter. You will receive a final version with instructions in the mail for use beginning April 21st. We will also be reviewing the instructions and answering questions at our April workshops. **Please make every effort to attend as we review these very important changes.**

The new timesheet will be used when submitting hours on April 21st (Pay Period 4/10 – 4/21) Please be advised that as of April 21st we will no longer be able to process hours submitted using any previous timesheet versions. This will be the only version accepted.

Benefit Time balances for the new grant year will be available to use beginning Monday, April 10th and will be reflected on the April 28th pay statement. (The hours are calculated as of April 1st, but will be shown on the pay statement covering the first full two weeks in the new grant year.)
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