Foster Grandparent Program Overview

The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) is a Federal intergenerational program created in 1965 for older adults and children or youth to build relationships beneficial to both. Adults age 55+ provide supportive volunteer service to children to help them learn and set them on a path to a successful future. Foster Grandparents benefit from a sense of satisfaction and renewed purpose in life. Foster Grandparents tutor, mentor, encourage and support infants, children and youth.

Volunteers are required to serve a minimum of 15 hours per week, and may serve up to 40 hours per week. This ensures consistent, reliable relationships and service, resulting in knowledgeable, well-trained volunteers and excellent outcomes with children. Foster Grandparents nurture, tutor, mentor and help children stay on task.

The Friends Program, a human services organization, sponsors the program throughout the State (since 1984). Federal funding and oversight is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

Foster Grandparent 2016 Volunteer of the Year Nomination: Linda White
Submitted by Dee Lapierre

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Linda White as the recipient of the 2016 Foster Grandparent Program Volunteer of the Year Award. For the past six years, Linda has been serving at Nashua’s Dr. Crisp Elementary School as a Foster Grandparent. She exemplifies the mission and values of Friends Foster Grandparents through her dedication to helping children feel valued, supported, and successful.

Linda’s first two years were spent in third and fifth grade classrooms, where she supported, guided, and encouraged students who were struggling academically. She is passionate about instilling the love of reading and was able to devote time to special reading groups, often bringing her own material to share.

For the past four years she has served in the library and supports students from Kindergarten through fifth grade. She understands the value of establishing positive relationships with students and makes it a priority. She spends time getting to know them, learning what interests them, and creates meaningful connections which increases their comfort and ability to learn. The school’s media specialist, Danno Hynes writes: “Through her work as a Foster Grandparent, Nana Linda has become a comforting presence in the Dr. Norman W. Crisp Elementary School library. Whether reading to students, helping them to select books to read, or helping maintain the library’s collection, Linda brings that combination of caring and candor that only a grandparent can deliver! Her work is appreciated and valued by staff and students alike!”

During the summer months these past six years, Linda has continued to serve in child care centers, the district’s special education summer program, and most recently at Nashua Police Athletic League (PAL). She began her service at PAL last summer devoting her time in their library and immediately made a difference! In a recent article for a PAL newsletter Linda wrote:
“My goal is to give all children every opportunity to be the best readers they can be and to love to read! My heart yearns to engage these kids and show them that reading can be fun.”

She worked to engage the children by creating “word-a-day”, where children would choose one word each day to learn and upon doing so, they would earn PAL dollars to spend at their PAL store – this was a big success. In addition, she began reading groups to encourage participation. Keeping these children interested in reading proves to be a challenge, as their attendance at PAL is optional, and can be sporadic. Additionally, most of these children have not experienced much academic success, and when given a choice, aren’t always eager to explore reading. This does not deter Linda, but rather strengthens her commitment and dedication to her efforts to instill a love of reading. As she prepares for this summer program, she has been working to learn more ways to spark and maintain the interest in reading. She sees it as a challenge – not a roadblock. Shaun Nelson, the PAL director, says “Linda has gone above and beyond in every aspect of her role at Nashua PAL. She has implemented a number of incentive programs that have gotten books into more hands – she is great!”

Linda embodies all of the qualities of an excellent Foster Grandparent. She truly cares about children and engaging them in learning, but her service does not end when she leaves the site. She continually seeks learning experiences to improve her ability to support students including teacher workshops, individual research, and reading. In addition to devoting her efforts to helping the students, she is also very committed to the program itself. She is an active participant in our required monthly workshops, and continually reaches out to encourage other volunteers to participate in outside activities such as knitting or craft groups. Linda is a strong advocate for our program and shares her experience with others. She appreciates this opportunity to contribute in significant, meaningful ways.

Linda White is a thoughtful, kind, deeply committed Foster Grandparent volunteer who deserves this recognition not only for her exceptional service to the children in the Nashua community, but for continually representing the Friends Program with such positivity and integrity.