Friends Foster Grandparent Program

Volunteer Partner of the Year

Belmont Elementary School

Good evening everyone and thanks again for joining us as we recognize the amazing efforts and contributions made by these community volunteers and organizations. My name is Anne Sanuth. During my 7 year tenure as volunteer coordinator for the Friends Foster Grandparent Program, I had the opportunity to work and partner with a number of Elementary and Middle schools, Head Start programs, and Child Care Centers throughout New Hampshire. In that time, I had many positive interactions with teachers and administration. There was one particular entity that stood out and consistently went above and beyond in its collaboration and support of our program and our volunteers.

It gives me great pleasure tonight to present this year’s Volunteer Partner of the Year award to Belmont Elementary School. The administration, faculty and staff of Belmont have been strong supporters of the Friends Foster Grandparent Program for over 20 years, recognizing the value and importance of intergenerational relationships to the success of children. We currently have 9 foster grandparents volunteering in the pre-k through third grade at Belmont Elementary.

I’m always amazed by how well the teachers integrate the volunteers into their classroom structure and make the volunteers feel like they are a part of the school family. Many of the staff have formed friendships with our volunteers outside of school, which is heartwarming to see. Principal Ben Hill, like other administrations during this partnership, always takes the time to talk and share an update on how our program and our volunteers are operating at Belmont Elementary despite his busy schedule. The office staff provides weekly support to the Foster Grandparents in processing paperwork related to their service. Belmont has been a huge advocate of the Friends Foster Grandparent Program and included our program in school events, such as the annual holiday craft event where I was able to promote the Foster Grandparent Program and share information with community members and staff.

Belmont Elementary consistently shows its appreciation for Friends Foster Grandparent volunteers throughout the school year. Our Foster Grandparents often receive appreciation from their teachers and the students they work with, expressing how important they are and how much they are loved. At the end of last year, they received their own trophies as a tribute to the wonderful service they provide to the students and teachers they support. Belmont Elementary and the School Administrative Unit chose to nominate one of our Foster Grandparent Volunteers, Fran Anderson, who then received the NH Partners in Education Award for Senior Volunteer of the Year. It was a truly remarkable event which spoke of the pride and respect Belmont has for our volunteers.

Most recently, Principal Ben Hill reached out to talk about meeting with myself and all 9 of our Belmont volunteers before the beginning of this school year. He and Vice Principal Erin Pugg took everyone out...
for lunch. They showed a genuine interest in getting to know each of the volunteers and to see how they could best support them going into the new school year. I feel very fortunate and very proud that Belmont thinks so highly of us and made us a priority when they have so many demands on their time.

Belmont Elementary understands that older adult volunteers have gifts to share with the children of their school. They demonstrate this in every interaction with our volunteers. They make it possible for these volunteers to serve with children who need extra attention. The intergenerational relationships formed during service enrich the lives of our volunteers beyond measure. We know that they also help the children who are served by providing them with a stable, supportive presence outside of the staff, someone who can lend a listening ear and a warm smile to a child struggling through a tough day.

For all the good you do for our volunteers and the students and families in your community, I present to Belmont Elementary School our 2017 Friends Foster Grandparent Program Volunteer Partner of the Year Award.