



CONNECTIONS

Newsletter of the Rock Valley Rotary Foster Grandparent & Senior Companion Programs

Giving is Living— And it's our local way of life.

Giving is a way of life in north-west Iowa. We are raised to give, and know that it's how we share life. Living our lives that way, we receive far more than we could ever give. And because we're blessed, we give some more. And we receive more again.



**From
Denise's Desk**
- by Denise Nelsen
Director of the
Foster Grandparent &
Senior Companion
Programs

It's a wonderful cycle of life... giving is living, and living is giving. And it all takes place in our communities every day as part of who we are in Iowa.

The Senior Companion Program is focused on our local way of life: local solutions for our local residents, led by local people, funded by local donors. We give locally, we live locally. And when we do, we make a difference in lives every day. That's our way of life!

"I get satisfaction in knowing I am helping someone," states a Senior Companion. "I feel more worthwhile. I like feeling needed and useful again."

Giving is living means helping to solve the problems faced by our senior population right here in Sioux County.

More Iowans live a longer life, and many need help living as long as possible in their homes. Seniors in Sioux County who need help are our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. Now it's our time to give to them.

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Foster Grandparent Delores Swanson says, "I work one-on-one with the students, and so you get to know them pretty good. Each one is special and unique."

Foster Grandparents keep up-to-date while keeping up with the students

Foster Grandparent **Delores Swanson** has lived and worked in the Hartley area her whole life. She attended a one-room country school, and then helped kids in the lower grades when she was an older student to assist a very busy teacher. Delores became a teacher herself after attending college for one period. She then got married and was kept busy raising her family in the Hartley community.

Today Delores is back in the classroom, assisting very busy students and teachers. "Everyday there is an experience that lightens your day," Delores says. "I've been a Foster Grandparent for seven

years now and each day is special with something that warms my heart.

Grandma Delores volunteers at Hartley Elementary and helps students in 1st grade through grade 4 with reading and math. "Many of the subjects have changed in some way since I went to school, so sometimes I'm learning with the kids. Going to school keeps this grandma up to date and with it," she chuckles.

"I also go in to help with the breakfast each morning and the after school tutoring. That's my biggest challenge. Some of the

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A Look Inside.....

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Welcome to new volunteers for both programs

Wilmina "Willy" Dekkers

As a former teacher for the hearing impaired, Willie couldn't stay out of the classroom. "I tried retirement - it just wasn't for me. I missed the students too much." Willie is back in the classroom as she volunteers at Rock Valley High School.



Willy Dekkers

Club in Rock Rapids. "I just love helping those little kids. They are so much fun."

Mina Kaskie

Mina is not new to the FGP. She was a grandma for several years until an opportunity came for her to work. Mina left the program for awhile, but now she is back. She is working in the ESL classroom at the West Sioux – Hawarden Elementary School. "It's really great to be back."



Mina Kaskie

the program in August when he decided he wanted to help others. "I knew people who needed help and thought this is something I could do. I was right, but I didn't know I'd enjoy it as much as I do."

Hermina Rozeboom

Hermina joined the FGP in August after other Foster Grandparents at Netherlands Christian Reformed School



Hermina Rozeboom

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Velma Garvin

Velma joined the program in September after meeting a FG staff member on the street. "I thought it was a little strange that Barb talked me. But after, the counselor at St. Mary's-Remsen called me to see if I'd be willing to come to their school, I signed up." Velma is the first Foster Grandparent at St. Mary's School in Remsen.



Velma Garvin

Shirley Letner

Shirley joined the FGP in August after a career in the home health care field. She has been able to travel all over doing mission trips. "I wanted something to do, I still needed to feel I was doing something good. I love working with the children." Shirley serves at Sheldon Head Start.



Shirley Letner

Harriet Hoff

Harriet joins the FG program in May after seeing information at one of the local home shows. "I just needed something to do. I was getting tired of my four walls," says Harriet. She volunteers at Kids



Harriet Hoff

Peter "Pete" Netten

Pete is serving the clients at Parkview Industries as a Foster Grandparent. Pete joined



Pete Netten

The Connections Newsletter

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Volunteers want to help others in their communities

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urged her to join when a former grandparent retired.

Hermina already had been a volunteer at the school, working in the library. "I like that I can still be with the kids, but now I don't have to do all that lifting. I really enjoy helping the kids."

Phyllis Voss

As a former preschool teacher, Phyllis didn't think retirement would be for her. "I need to be kept busy."



Phyllis Voss

Phyllis became the seventh volunteer at Central Lyon Elementary School in Rock Rapids. "This way I can continue to work with children. I love not having to be the "in-charge" person."

Alyda Wassenaar

Alyda joins the other Foster Grandparents at East Elementary School in Sheldon. After working an extended career in retail, Alyda was looking for "something to do and I love children."



Alyda Wassenaar

Alyda joined the Foster Grandparent Program in August and is very excited to be helping the kids in Sheldon.

Conrad Haarthorn

Conrad joined the SCP in May and is seeing clients in the community of Orange City. "I came to the program looking for something to do; I wanted to help people who didn't have anyone to help them." "I think I found it, I really enjoy my clients. They sure need me."



Conrad Haarthorn

Lenora De Wit

Lenora is the newest volunteer to join the SCP. Lenora is seeing clients in Rock Valley. Lenora came to the program "wanting to do something." "I need to keep busy." Lenora hopes to make a difference in the lives of the clients she serves.



Lenora De Wit

Giving is living is a way of life

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Our Senior Companions visit them, provide transportation, and become their friend. Senior Companions are carefully trained to give compassionate service to our adult neighbors in need.

The Senior Companion Program is completely gift driven. Donor contributions fund the entire program, with 80% of all donations going directly to volunteer benefits. These benefits include a small financial stipend for volunteers who are income eligible, volunteer training, meals during service, and transportation reimbursement.

Donating to the Senior Companion Program is an investment in the community. With the goal of providing seniors the highest quality of life possible in the most affordable way, Senior Companion volunteers help seniors remain in their home as long as possible. Staying in homes is the most dignified and cost affordable option. Being a home bound senior, can also be very lonely.

Social isolation is something no one wants for their parents or grandparents.

The Senior Companion Program needs \$5,000 to support one volunteer. Each volunteer serves 8-10 clients. Each volunteer serves 1,040 hours per year. That means, on average, each client receives 130 hours per year of caring assistance.

That client could be your mother, your father, your grandparent, or your neighbor getting the companionship they need to feel connected, to be emotionally healthy and to have fun!

Your \$5,000 donation makes a yearlong difference in 9 lives:

- 1 volunteer, who "gets more than they give" for 12 months.
- 8 clients served by that volunteer for the entire year.

Please consider making a donation to the Senior Companion Program.

Giving _____
is Living _____

Foster Grandparents make a difference for the future

(Continued from page 1)

older kids just like to test me as they challenge the rules about wearing caps and coats in school." Delores says with a smile, "I just have to say a name and point at the cap and everything is good with the world again."

"The students are just wonderful. They show their concern for me and give me hugs when I leave their class. I work one-on-one with the students and so you get to know them pretty good. Each one is special and unique."

Delores was a recent nominee for an "Outstanding Older Worker" award for the state of Iowa. She doesn't want to think that she's someone special - she's just doing what she wants to do. "If you want to have meaning to your life, share it with a child. And that's why I do it."

The kids, teachers, and school benefit from Delores' volunteering; but so does Delores. "Volunteering with kids has given me goals in life. It keeps me active and feeling younger. I'm keeping up with life and it's not passing me by as I just sit at home all day."

Delores gives this piece of advice to other seniors. "If you have any love left in your heart, give it to a child. And it will be returned to you many times over."

Foster Grandparent **Jeri Welch** says that she's not a "all-morning coffee drinker." She says she "needed something to keep busy that meant something." Five years ago Jeri picked up a Foster Grandparent brochure at the pharmacy where she works part-time and she soon became a Foster Grandparent at Hartley Elementary School.

"I really enjoy working with the kids. I start the morning off by reading with fourth grade students, and then move on to help with language



"I like knowing that I'm helping students succeed in school," says Foster Grandparent Jeri Welch. "I'm making a difference for the future."

with the third graders. I help reading with the first graders and also get some math time with the students too. The teachers keep me busy, and that's just great. I like knowing that I'm helping students succeed in school.

Jeri also tutors first through sixth grade students in an after-school mentoring program. "When I see smiles on kid's faces because now they can do the assignment because I helped them; it feels good. I was a stay at home mom and helped my own kids with doing their homework, so this comes pretty natural to me."

"I now get out and meet more people. I'm more social with all ages and am more comfortable as I talk with groups of people. I guess you just take your life experiences and use them; whether it's one-on-one with a child or meeting with group of adults."

"It really feels good to know that you can make a difference. I've seen children struggling with an assignment and together we worked on it until we understood the problem. Later when students come back to show me a good test score, I can see how proud they are. I feel good

because I know that I have helped. I'm making a difference for the future.

Grandma Jeri admits that being a Foster Grandparent is a time commitment. "But what better way to spend those hours? You just have to set your priorities. If you can get out to drink coffee each day, can you also help a child? The time just flies and you know that you've done some good that day."

Both Foster Grandmas agree, "Kids need a grandparent and the special relationship that goes with being with an older person. It's kind of a loving respect. In the classroom, it's a role that Foster Grandparents can fill."

Hartley Elementary School would like to have more Foster Grandparents volunteering in their classrooms.

Both Delores and Jeri agree that "the teachers are really superb and very helpful. The whole school system makes you feel like you belong. Being a Foster Grandparent is just something you have to try."

For more information about volunteering in your community, call the Foster Grandparent Program office at 712-476-2628.

Senior Companion brings "life" back into the lives of others

A women's study group session inspired Senior Companion **Betty Vande Griend** to become a volunteer in her community of Sioux Center. "The lesson was about how important it is to serve others. I asked myself, 'Am I really serving? What can I do to help others?'"



Senior Companion Betty Vander Griend helps a client get groceries. "We enjoy our time out together as we do things that just need to get done."

Betty decided that becoming a Foster Grandparent was the answer to that question. She helped children as a Foster Grandma at AEA Preschool in Sioux Center for two years. When the Senior Companion Program was started in Sioux County, Betty switched to helping home-based adults. "This is what I'm suppose to be doing in life. I need to help others."

"I really enjoy helping others do so many different things." Betty is currently assisting six different people with a variety of needs. "I like the variety - I read with one; with another we take walks to town and then go for breakfast at the bakery. I help with grocery shopping and bring others to appointments."

Betty has challenged her clients to keep active as much as possible. "We go walking at Walmart for exercise. We clean house together to get the chores done. We get together to go to the travelogue or to concerts at Dordt College."

Betty has done some unique things with her clients. They have collected and delivered personal toiletry items for packets that are sent with wheelchairs in Hope Haven's International Wheelchair Program. Together clients and friends baked and frosted Christmas cookies. Betty has gone to special church services and spent time on holidays with her clients. "If I don't have other plans, I don't want them spending a holiday alone."

Betty admits, "The best part of helping someone is the bond you build with them. Each person is special in their own way. We laugh and tease each other. We play table games and talk about our children. I also have special spiritual bonds with some- some just really connect with my heart."

"This job gives me so much. You have to want to do it and your heart has to be in it. But what you get back in your own heart is so much more. I have self-worth and know that I am needed. This is my calling, . . . I need to help others."



"I really enjoying helping others do so many different things," says Betty. "My life is enriched by the special bond that I've made with each person I serve."



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Do you enjoy a good mystery?

All Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion volunteers

are encouraged to go on an all-day Mystery Trip to take place in June 2009. Cost will be approximately \$60 for each volunteer.

Family and Friends

 are encouraged to add to the mystery. . .

Give the gift of this trip for your favorite volunteer.

Monetary donations toward the cost of the trip can be made directly to the volunteer or by

contacting the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program office, 1510 14th St.

Rock Valley Iowa 51247

Phone: 712-476-2628

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rvrseniorvolunteerprograms.org



Rotary Club of Rock Valley Foundation

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