

# Seniors Council Foster Grandparent Program

Serving Monterey, San Benito, Santa Cruz & Santa Clara Counties

## Highlights:

- **Over 200 Foster Grandparents serve in Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, Monterey and San Benito Counties**
- **Over 125,000 hours of Foster Grandparent Mentoring and Tutoring of Children in Need and At-Risk Youth.**
- **Program largest of its type in California and one of the largest in the nation.**
- **Community support demonstrated by high degree of collaboration with community organizations and voluntary donations for share of cost.**
- **Program has grown by 50% during economic down turn.**

**The Challenge:** There is a large number of pre-school and school age children in need of mentoring and tutoring to improve their academic performance. Many are learning English for the first time. Teachers are hard pressed to meet the overall demands of the classroom, let alone the special needs of individual students, as class sizes grow. And, paid classroom support personnel like Teacher's Aides are being laid off in schools due to the state budget crisis.

Foster Grandparent volunteers are one response to this challenge. They are very low-income seniors who serve 15 - 25 hours per week as individual mentors and tutors to children in need and at-risk youth. They are among the most productive volunteers in the area, and provide an essential unduplicated service to an array of short-staffed educational institutions: schools, Head Start Centers, libraries, shelters, etc.

The Seniors Council Foster Grandparent Program is an efficient organization, offering unique intergenerational services. It is exceptionally cost effective, providing reliable volunteers from a senior work force possessing the work ethic of the Greatest Generation. In addition, we are just beginning to recruit the first wave of Baby Boomers who are entering their early 60s. Volunteers range in age from 58 to 93, and the continuity of their work and their reliability and stability makes the Foster Grandparent Program a popular community resource.

**National Program with Strong Local Roots:** The Seniors Council Foster Grandparent Program is part of the National Senior Service Corps, a cluster of federally-funded senior volunteer programs with a strong emphasis on local community support. Federal funding is provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Program has been active in the Monterey

Bay Area since 1977 and Silicon Valley since 1972. It is sponsored by the Seniors Council which is a federally-mandated Area Agency on Aging.

**Qualifications & Benefits:** Foster Grandparent volunteers have a commitment to give back to their communities and a desire to work with the young. Only individuals with incomes of \$22,000/yr. or less (200% of the Federal Poverty Line) may serve. In fact, these hard-working volunteers are among the very poorest people in our community with an actual average annual income of \$15,000.

Foster Grandparents receive numerous benefits in return for their substantial community service. Under federal and state law they are considered volunteers who receive a \$2.65/hr non-taxable stipend as a cost reimbursement to very-low-income seniors when they have no cash cushion to personally support their substantial community service. They can accrue vacation time and sick leave. The Program reimburses Foster Grandparents for their transportation costs. Work sites provide them with a lunch if available for each day served or a \$2.00 per day subsidy if lunch is not available. They undergo training at a monthly in-service meeting held at a local all-you-can eat buffet restaurant. In addition, the Program provides liability, personal injury, and excess automobile accident insurance coverage.

Each year in October we celebrate Foster Grandparent achievements with an Annual Recognition Luncheon attended by hundreds of Foster Grandparents, teachers, relatives and friends at the Cocanut Grove Ballroom of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. This is an event with live entertainment and a banquet cuisine that these low-income seniors rarely enjoy. They also receive substantial personal gifts in recognition of their outstanding community service from merchants.

**Foster Grandparent Program Advantages:**

- Encourages volunteer work from a neglected portion of the community: low-income seniors.
- Measurably improves the academic performance of children and youth who are tutored and mentored.
- Exposes children and youth to the companionship, emotional stability, and expertise of seniors.
- Brings senior volunteers into direct one-on-one contact with children and youth with special needs.
- Non-taxable stipend increases monthly income of senior volunteers by 15%.
- Gives status and meaning to the life of seniors who might otherwise spend all their time at home.

**Foster Grandparents Work With:**

- Children who are learning English as a second language;
- Children with little or no contact with grandparents;
- Children raised by a single parent;
- Children exposed to drug and alcohol abuse;
- Children raised in violent homes;
- Children with physical disabilities;
- Children with learning disabilities;
- Underachieving children;
- Gang wannabes.

Given the volume of requests received by the Foster Grandparent Program there is a clear need for additional senior volunteers to work with children and youth in our 4-county service area..

- Program routinely receives requests from schools and social service agencies for additional Foster Grandparents.
- Program routinely receives requests from new organizations seeking Foster Grandparent volunteers for the first time.
- Organizations recognize the value of senior volunteers who work 15 - 25 hours per week - a more substantial period of time than most community volunteers will make available.
  - Program regularly receives requests for applications from low-income seniors seeking volunteer service opportunities.

At the end of each school year in May the Program conducts an annual survey of teachers about the work performance and the impact of Foster Grandparents on their clients. This includes a Performance Evaluation; Questionnaire; and Client Care Plans.

The Performance Goals for Foster Grandparents serving in classrooms for the 2010/2011 school year are:

**Performance Evaluations** will document that:

On a scale of 1 = poor to 4 = excellent the Foster Grandparent work performance will average 3.5 or better.

**Teacher Questionnaires** will document that:

- The presence of Foster Grandparents in the classroom will enhance overall class management by an average of 50% or more.
- Foster Grandparents will improve the preparation of assigned children for academic advancement to the next grade level by an average of 50% or more.
- Foster Grandparents will free teachers to work more effectively with the class as a whole by 50% or more. This will be accomplished because Foster

Grandparents work with those students needing the most one-on-one intensive mentoring and tutoring.

- Active mentoring by Foster Grandparents will improve the self-esteem of their child clients by an average of 50% or more

**Client Care Plans** will document that Foster Grandparent mentoring and tutoring of children in need and at risk youth improved one or more of the following:

- Language & Literacy skills
- Logic & Math skills
- Social Interaction skills
- Creative Thinking skills
- Motor skills