



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Op Ed Submission**

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## **HANCI HONORS VOLUNTEERS ON MAY 19<sup>TH</sup>**

### **Foster Grandparents & Senior Companions Recognized During Senior Corps Week**

**(PHOTO: Foster Grandma Martha Payton is pictured with Mrs. Feltz’s 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Class at Hyde Park Elementary School in Niagara Falls. As a Foster Grandparent, Martha is extremely important in the daily lives of each assigned child and provides a positive influence. Martha shares an immeasurable amount of love, understanding and compassion to the children she serves.)**

**NIAGARA FALLS, May 11, 2015** – At the Health Association of Niagara, Inc. (HANCI), we are busy planning for one of my favorite celebrations of the year – our Volunteer Recognition Luncheon honoring our Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion program volunteers. This year, the celebration is taking place on May 19<sup>th</sup> at the Four Points by Sheraton in Niagara Falls.

On that day, we will honor the many accomplishments of our volunteer Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents and celebrate the tremendous work they do in our community. We will be joined by many special guests, including Program Officer Taryn Vanaskie from the New York State office for the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNCS), Niagara County Legislative Chairman William Ross, and Director of the Niagara County Office for the Aging Ken Genewick.

This celebration will represent a milestone for us marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foster Grandparent Program nationally. Founded in 1965, the program was developed by Sargent Shriver as part of President B. Lyndon Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” In 1994, this program, along with the Senior Companion Program and the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), became part of Senior Corps under the CNCS.

Another important detail – our luncheon is taking place during **Senior Corps Week**, which is a great time to salute volunteers and recognize the extraordinary impact they make across our nation every day. The theme for 2015 is **SeniorCorpsWorks, and it does!!!**

I am extremely proud to say the Foster Grandparent Program and RSVP Senior Corps programs have been working in Niagara County and sponsored by HANCI for 43 years. The Senior Companion Program has been with HANCI for 35 years.

For those who don’t know, the Senior Companion Program provides home-support services to frail, elderly seniors and their caregivers. Companions provide friendship, transportation to medical appointments, essential shopping and more. Companions also serve at HANCI’s Complete Senior Care PACE Care Facility, DeGraff Adult Day Care Center and Mount St. Mary’s Hospital.



Last year 86 Senior Companions provided over 77,129 hours of service to a total of 212 individuals in the Niagara County community.

The Foster Grandparent Program provides intergenerational nurturing to countless children throughout our region. Volunteers, ages 55 and older, provide one-on-one social, emotional and academic support to at-risk or special needs students. You might ask how does this program help senior volunteers? They would answer it provides them with a sense of purpose and also with both mental and physical health benefits from volunteering.

Currently, we have Foster Grandparent volunteers serving at elementary schools in Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport; all five Niagara County Head Start centers, Madonna House, Happy Times Child Care Center, Mount St. Mary's Hospital Child Care Center, Boys & Girls Club of Niagara Falls summer camp program and before/after school programs for the Niagara Falls City School District. Last year 74 Foster Grandparents served over 68,184 hours at 23 different locations.

The gift of time is priceless in today's fast paced world. And yet each and every one of our volunteers gives back by mentoring our students as Foster Grandparents or sharing kindness and support as a Senior Companion. They truly are turning lives around.

On May 19th we at HANCI will celebrate the gift of our volunteers. For their service and the example they set, we are grateful. By volunteering, they give our community the most expensive, priceless gift anyone could give ~ kindness and love.

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***\* HANCI is a non-profit community organization offering diversified programs and services that promote independence, health and happy living for seniors across Niagara County through licensed home health care and other services.***

***\*\* CSC is a managed long-term care plan that is a non-profit Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.***