



SENIORS IN SERVICE  
OF TAMPA BAY, INC.

## Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay, Inc. Foster Grandparent Program 2009 Impact Report

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In the State of Florida, there is a growing crisis in the schools due to reductions in funding and in the numbers of classrooms. Overcrowded classrooms mean overworked teachers and less time available to spend with each individual student. The service gap this has created means that there are thousands of vulnerable children in need of individualized attention who lack the “public safety net” required to develop the educational foundations they need to overcome their challenges. Sadly, despite voters and educators who care, children are failing in full view of “the system”. The Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) helps to narrow the gap by engaging, mobilizing and integrating eager and caring senior volunteers into educational settings throughout Hillsborough, Pinellas and Polk Counties.

During this evaluation period, 155+ Foster Grandparents empowered children considered to be at-risk or with special needs to strive for their highest level of academic achievement by providing them with individualized mentoring and tutoring, *at no charge*. Also, the grandparents offered emotional support, encouragement for learning. The relationship between the child and the foster grandparent may be the only experience the child has with an older adult.

There are many reasons for children to be deemed at risk of under performing at school including living in a single parent home, high crime area, in poverty, lack of motivation to do well, poor work habits/ study skills, emotional/behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and other medical problems. The commonality of the children served by FGP is that they have been identified by their teachers as having risk factors indicating the likelihood that without intervention, they will fail to learn sufficiently to graduate from high school and become productive/employable adults. Foster Grandparents helped the children they served to strengthen academic and social skills as well as develop character and learn what it takes to succeed in the classroom and in life. The Foster Grandparents consistently report that they experience tremendous personal satisfaction as they see the impact of their efforts to help children to achieve their full potential.

Foster Grandparents services are made available at more than 90 stations/sites that include: public school classrooms in low performing elementary schools, pre-elementary settings such as Early Head Start and Head Start centers, non-profit day care centers and shelters, and after school/out of school time programs such as the Boys & Girls Clubs, School Age Child Care, and R'Clubs. Volunteers serve between fifteen and forty hours per week Monday- Friday. Each provides daily, individualized, tutoring to 3-5 children selected by their teachers. They also work with groups of children who need more one-to-one attention than the teachers are able to provide. The enhanced support offered by the Foster Grandparents helps the children to successfully complete assignments, learn to work together as a team, and be accepting of each other's differences and/or special needs. Many of the volunteers serve on a year round basis. This makes Foster Grandparents available in additional “summer only” sites such as Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK), and summer reading camps among others.

The effectiveness of the Foster Grandparent Program is measured annually by feedback from the volunteers, their teachers or supervisors. Each year, using a standard survey, volunteers are individually interviewed by Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay Inc. Board of Directors and people from the community. This year one-to-one interviews were conducted with 100% of the volunteers in attendance at their in-service meeting during June.

Volunteers were asked about their satisfaction with the program, their experiences as a volunteer, their relationships with the program staff and what they enjoy and do not enjoy about the program.

Teachers were given a similar survey asking them to evaluate the impact of the Foster Grandparent Program. They reviewed volunteer performance and rated the achievements and successes of the children served. Student performance is measured through pre-post tests completed at the beginning and end of each school year.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Care Plan Evaluations reveal that the Foster Grandparents are making a tangible difference in the education of the children they serve.

- 100% (285/285) of the children made at least some improvement in their areas of challenge,
- 96.7% (270/279) of the children reached one or more of their individual goals,
- 93.8% (259/276) of the teachers indicated on childcare plan evaluations that Foster Grandparent volunteers provided literacy tutoring to the children they served. (Up from 91.4% last year)

The grandparents are making an impact in more than just academics:

- 96.6% (281/291) of children served showed improved self-esteem,
- 96.2% (280/291) showed improvement in ability to articulate their feelings,
- 94.9% (279/294) showed improved ability to follow directions
- 92.2% (270/293) demonstrated improved attention span.

The teachers report that the Foster Grandparents are a tremendous asset in the classroom. Their opinion regarding the volunteer's impact is measured throughout the year. During this evaluation period, 98.58% (487/494) of teachers indicated that the Foster Grandparent was influential in their assigned children's improvement.

Their comments speak for themselves, and can be summed up by three quotes:

- "Swa knew no English at the beginning of the school year, but due to Grandma's assistance, he can now speak fluently and write well in English...."
- "Grandma has been an excellent contribution to our classroom. Classrooms which are afforded this luxury should be thankful for the extra support given through these volunteers."
- "The presence of a Foster Grandparent gives the youth a positive outlook about school and life in general. They know there is always someone in their life who is there when they are in need of a friend."

The volunteers that were surveyed overwhelmingly revealed that they are happy with their volunteer experience and that they enjoy both what they do and their overall volunteer experience. Working directly with the kids is what they enjoy most.

It is clear that the Foster Grandparent Program is truly making an impact on the lives of the students, the teachers, and the grandparents themselves.

## VOLUNTEER SELF EVALUATION

The opinions of 129 volunteers were gathered using a standard survey form in June of 2009: 37 volunteers individually completed survey forms, and members of the Board of Directors as well as members of the community interviewed 92 of them one-to-one. They were read a series of statements from the survey and were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The results are as follows:

- 100% (129/129) agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoy what they do as a volunteer.
- 100% (129/129) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering in the community makes them feel wanted and needed.
- 99.2% (122/123) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering gives them an increased sense of self-worth and accomplishment
- 98.4% (127/129) of the respondents rated their overall volunteer experience as good or excellent.
- 98.4% (126/128) agreed or strongly agreed that volunteering is an important part of their life.
- 97.6% (123/126) agreed or strongly agreed that they have felt an increased sense of independence since they began volunteering.
- 95.2% (119/125) agreed or strongly agreed that receipt of the stipend increased their economic opportunities.

Other responses include the following:

- 99.2% (126/127) believe that the staff always gives clear instructions and answers their questions.
- 96.9% (125/129) feel comfortable talking to the staff about volunteer problems.
- 95.8% (114/119) are satisfied with the amount of recognition events and appreciation gifts that they receive.
- 95.2% (120/126) enjoy attending in-service meetings.

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding “What have you enjoyed the most?”

- “I need to work. It’s beneficial to my health and state of mind. I get totally absorbed in it: its therapeutic.”
- “This is my life: being needed, fulfilled and having a good feeling seeing the results. Seeing a child that I work with succeeding and growing.”
- “Helping the children to read and learn word sounds. Helping them to understand math, math problems and science projects.”

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding “What do you not enjoy?”

- “There is nothing I do not enjoy about the program, except taking two buses to get to the school.”
- “I feel badly for kids living in conditions that inhibit learning.”

### STATION EVALUATION OF VOLUNTEERS AND FGP IMPACT

Station staff completed 319 childcare plan evaluations. An additional 259 reviews of volunteer performance were completed as a part of FGP program staff site visits during this evaluation period. Foster Grandparents were rated on the frequency with which they exhibited each of the following behaviors. The percentages below indicate the number of valid responses/percentage of volunteers who received an “agree or strongly agree” rating.

#### The Foster Grandparent:

Treats children with respect and dignity	<u>100%</u>	(556 of 556)
Demonstrates a positive attitude	<u>100%</u>	(560 of 560)
Has a neat and clean appearance	<u>99.8%</u>	(554 of 555)
Accepts direction and supervision cooperatively	<u>99.1%</u>	(551 of 556)
Comes when scheduled and arrives on time	<u>99.1%</u>	(549 of 554)

During this evaluation period, the Foster Grandparent Program has been successful in providing children with more individualized attention than they would otherwise receive, helping them to achieve learning goals, and

had specific, direct impacts on both the children and sites they served. Overall, 99.46 % (554 of 557) of the teachers indicated they are pleased with the grandparents' performance.

Comments from staff at the sites served by the Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay Inc. Foster Grandparent Program best sum up the impact of its dedicated volunteers.

- "Without Grandma the students who don't receive any help at home would be floundering."
- "Grandma has been an outstanding contribution to our classroom. She works well with the children and understands the best practices needed to create a safe and healthy learning environment."
- "Grandma is wonderful. There so many good things to say about her that all would not fit here. All the children she has worked with are showing tremendous improvements. Of course, there is always some child that is not ready to absorb all that Grandma has to offer them, but she continues to pursue the goal set for the child. Grandma is so loved and needed. We do not know what we would do without her. 11 years working together speaks volumes."
- "We are glad to have Grandma in our Early Head Start Class. She has brought her great personality and her unique way of talking and interacting with our Head Start children. She assists as much as she is allowed, and she doesn't mind giving that extra hand when dealing with the child who needs that extra one-on-one attention. She continues to build on vocabulary, self-esteem and independence in each individual child. She sets them up for success. It's an honor to have her in the center. She brings a lot of knowledge and wisdom to the children and staff. Thank you for all you do for EHS."

#### STATION EVALUATION OF FGP PROGRAM IMPACT:

110 station supervisors completed the station evaluation survey form. They were given a series of statements and were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The results below are the percentages of supervisors who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements:

##### Foster Grandparent volunteers:

- Help children achieve learning goals 100% (100 of 100)
- Contribute to our purpose or mission 100% (97 of 97)
- Allow us to expand our services 100% (96of 96)
- Provide children with more individualized attention than they would otherwise receive 99% (99 of 100)
- I have more time to do my job as a result of utilizing FGP volunteers 98% (104 of 106)

The stations also responded to the following:

- I am pleased with the services provided by seniors in Service volunteers 100% (99of 99)
- I am satisfied with our relationship with Seniors in Service staff 100% (110 of 110)

The following is a sample of responses to the question regarding "How do our Foster Grandparents assist with your purpose or mission?"

- "Grandma gives my children more one on one time than I could offer. She helps with literacy, math and content areas."
- "Grandma provides one-on-one mentoring to those students who need the most. She allows the youth to reach their full potential as productive, caring responsible citizens."
- "Grandma worked one on one or with small groups with students who were not on level and helped them achieve their goals."
- "With the help of my Foster Grandparent, I have been able to achieve most of the goals I set for my class at the beginning of the school year."
- "Our Foster Grandparent maximizes the learning potential of each child and works diligently to provide a nurturing, safe and healthy environment."

The following is a sample of responses to the question "Have you experienced a situation where the presence of a Foster Grandparent had a specific, direct impact on an individual, a group or your agency?"

- "The presence of a Foster Grandparent has a deepening impact on all the youth, instilling self esteem, self respect, respect to others & good study habits."
- "Her work with below level students had a great impact on their learning."
- "Yes, I have a student with a learning disability. Grandma always helps her calm down when she is crying. She gets embarrassed when she does not know something. Grandma always makes her feel good about herself. Thank you for allowing Grandma to come into my room."
- "I have one student that began 1st grade as a monolingual student. This student was a child that had a care plan. Grandma spent countless hours with him, making him feel comfortable, translating, working in all academic areas w/him. He now speaks English very well."

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