

Marcella Walter
Communications Coordinator
Rocky Mountain Development Council
P.O. Box 1717
Helena, MT 59624-1717
wk: 406-457-7354
cell: 406-431-7963



improving lives, strengthening communities

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The Power of Personal Attention
Celebrating 45 years of Foster Grandparent Volunteer Service

Helena MT Rocky Mountain Development Council's (RMDC) Foster Grandparent Volunteer Program celebrates its 45th year of service to Butte children this April. On Friday, April 23, in a special luncheon, catered by Gamers, in the Holiday Inn Express Conference Room, the program will honor all Foster Grandparent volunteers. Volunteers who have contributed ten years of service or more will receive a special plaque. Everyone will toast the program's contributions to the well-being of children for almost half a century.

45 Butte area volunteers work in elementary schools, Head Start classrooms and not-for-profit day cares. Under a teacher's direction, they provide one-on-one acceptance, patience, and encouragement. "Children thrive when a caring adult slows down, takes time, asks questions, and listens," say Linda Nolan, RMDC's Foster Grandparent Program Manager. "The busier our world becomes, the more valuable a volunteer's attention becomes to a young person."

RMDC's Foster Grandparent Program is one of many around the Nation that operates under the direction of the Corporation for National and Community Service. RMDC adopted this intergenerational strategy the first year Congress authorized it and during RMDC's formation. Income-eligible adults 55 and older, Foster Grandparents receive a small tax-free stipend, mileage assistance, and ongoing training. On average each Foster Grandparent contributes over 1,000 hours to their school or preschool assignment every year. "Our volunteers describe gaining as much from their volunteer service as they give to students," says Nolan. "It's a win-win program."

April is also National Volunteer Month. "The theme this year is "Celebrating People in Action," Nolan noted. "And when you see a Foster Grandparent sitting in child-sized chair listening to a first-grader read, you witness action that matters—keeping seniors young, keeping students engaged, and keeping our communities healthy."

In a proclamation to celebrate this anniversary, Chief Executive Officer Paul Babb thanked Foster Grandparents for sharing "their experience, wisdom and skills" with our youngsters.

For more information about the Foster Grandparent Program or to investigate volunteering, contact Linda Nolan, FGP Program Manager at RMDC at lnolan@rmdc.net or 457-7362. ###