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Retired & Senior Volunteer Programs of Ingham, Eaton & Clinton Counties  
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To: Representative Mary Whiteford, Chair of Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services and Members

Retired & Senior Volunteer Programs of Ingham, Eaton & Clinton Counties has been in existences for forty-six (46) years. We serve our community in more than twenty-two (22) schools, seventeen (17) senior facilities, and with over fifty (50) nonprofit organizations.

In our Foster Grandparent Program, we have forty-nine (49) volunteers working with two hundred and ninety-four (294) students. We have forty-nine (49) Senior Companions volunteers serving three hundred and forty-three (343) seniors. In our Senior Corp (RSVP) Program we have over four hundred (400) volunteers touching the lives of over five thousand (5,000) people. It is hard to truly calculate the true number of people that are impacted by our volunteers in our programs. With RSVP we welcome visitors at the Capital Region International Airport, patrol the River Trail, greet guest and patients at our two-local hospitals in their four locations, make toys for children who are disadvantaged, homeless, needy, or in crisis. Our volunteers knit, crochet, and sew blankets and lap blankets for elderly, newborns, and those in hospice; knit hats, gloves, and scarves for children and the homeless. We teach children how to fish, drive seniors to medical appointments, and deliver Meals-on-Wheels. These are a few more examples of the programs our volunteers participate in.

Volunteers share stories with our staff that bring us to tears:

Dorothy is a Foster Grandparent who turned 95 years old in December and volunteer's three days/week at her site in a kindergarten classroom. Dorothy was a trained kindergarten teacher who taught briefly before staying home with her own family. Dorothy has been volunteering for over twenty-five (25) years. Dorothy excels as a volunteer because she finds the students who are struggling and gives them individual attention and praise.

Molly, the teacher in the classroom, states that her students love the intergenerational presence.

Dorothy uses a walker in the classroom and the children go out of their way to make sure she can get around the room. Last fall Dorothy joined 93 kindergarteners and their teachers for a field trip ON A SCHOOL BUS to an apple orchard. The students were in awe of Grandma Dorothy because she was able to go on the bus with them.

Eva, a student, said Grandma Dorothy is such a good teacher. I don't know what my class would do without her. She is kind and helps everyone. She remembers when she was in kindergarten and that was a long time ago.

Grandma Geneva is a volunteer at one of our Head Start sites. Volunteers at these sites try to stay with the students as they move up in the program. Geneva was at a local grocery store and a young child ran-up and grabbed her and said, "Grandma I love you!". The child was with his

real Grandmother and she asked who this was. They explained this was Grandma Geneva from his school and how important she was to him.

Gerald is Senior Companion at a senior facility. We have very few men involved with this program and when Gerald began, he was asked to spend time with a gentleman who had not responded to a female volunteer. Gerald would go to his room and talk with him, the staff asked him to encourage the client to get up and start by walking around his room, and when stronger, down the hall. With time and encouragement Gerald was able to do that, his client is now walking the halls daily with a better outlook on life. Gerald said it was just as good for him because he saw his health getting better along with his client.

Another Senior Companion volunteer is Bea who had been working with clients at a daycare drop-in center when the center had to close, and the clients were moved to another facility. It was important to Bea to move with the clients to the new facility because the clients had various health issues and each one was so special to her. The transition for the clients and their happiness was essential to Bea. Clients become friends and Senior Companions change lives.

William and Maggie are more than Medical Drivers for Senior Corp (RSVP) program. They do more than just pick-up a senior client and drop them off at doctor's appointment or procedure at a hospital and take them home. Maggie sat for eight (8) hours with one of her clients who has cancer. She has taken her client to chemo treatments for several months and her client had no family members to sit with him. Maggie became his rock. William got up at 5:30 am in the morning to take one of his clients to the hospital for a procedure that was scheduled for 7:00 am. Would you do that for someone who was not family?

Maggie sent us an email this morning (March 9, 2020) with the following message: "Stanley lost his battle with cancer today, one week short of his 71st birthday. He was such a lovely, upbeat person and we enjoyed the friendship we shared. I would never have even met him if I hadn't volunteered with RSVP and become his driver to get him to his appointments during the past two years. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to know Stanley and share a friendship that I will remember and treasure forever."

Patrick volunteer's at Sparrow Health Systems. He shadows doctors from foreign countries as they interact with patients in the hospital. After the interaction, Patrick talks with the doctor on how they can better communicate with their patients. This helps the doctor, the hospital, and the future patients.

Al is 89 years old and serves as a greeter at Capital Region International Airport, he helps to serve meals at the Salvation Army kitchen and patrols the River Trail in a golf cart from spring into the fall. He told us his family wants him to cut back and he told us "Volunteering gives me the purpose to get up morning. I am not sure what I would do if I didn't have this in my life."

Eighty percent of our funding goes directly to serve our volunteers and clients. Funding that we receive from CNCS and AASA allow us to make a difference each and every day. We are just one agency with examples of how our volunteers have touched people in our community, multiply that across the state, and imagine the impact those dollars have.

Submitted by:

Carol Wood

Executive Director