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## 400 Foster Grandparents Honored for Mentoring City's At-risk Children and Young Adults

*90-year old Tiburcio Roldan—a 25 year Foster Grandparent  
Program veteran—is recognized for length of service*

**NEW YORK, NY – September 26, 2008** – Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW, honored DFTA's Foster Grandparent Program's 400 dedicated volunteers who work with the City's at-risk children in a variety of settings including: pediatric nurseries, schools, day care centers and head-start programs. The 34<sup>th</sup> *Annual Recognition Celebration* was held at Pier Sixty at Chelsea Piers. The Commissioner recognized Tiburcio Roldan for his 25 years of service in the Program. Mr. Roldan worked at Taft High School in the Bronx for 23 years before he retired in 1965. After several years in retirement he wanted to give back to his community. With 22 grandchildren, Mr. Roldan knew that he wanted to continue his work with children. He joined the Foster Grandparent Program in 1983 and currently volunteers at the Health and Hospital Corporation's North Central Bronx Hospital assisting children in the pediatric playroom.

"Today we honor and thank the 400 New York City Foster Grandparents for their selfless devotion to the thousands of children they mentor every year," said Commissioner Méndez-Santiago. "These older New Yorkers—like Tiburcio Roldan—have long led the way in serving not only as healthy aging role models in the community, but also reminding us all of the spirit of volunteer service."

In further recognition of the importance of Foster Grandparents, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today issued a proclamation declaring Friday, September 26, 2008 "Foster Grandparent Day" in New York City. The Mayor said, "Last year, Foster Grandparents volunteered a staggering 400,000 hours. On Behalf of all New Yorkers, I thank them for their important work, which gave 3,000 children and adults throughout the five boroughs the skills and self-confidence to excel. Their contributions will ensure a brighter future not only for their foster grandchildren, but for our whole City." Earlier this month, Mayor Bloomberg announced the launch of Service Nation in New York City, promoting volunteerism and civic engagement. The Department's Foster Grandparent programs is one such example of the city's long standing commitment to promoting the spirit of volunteerism at all ages.

At the ceremony Commissioner Méndez-Santiago was joined by Chief of the United Nations New York Office of Volunteers, Daphne Casey, in presenting the 2008 NYC Foster Grandparent *Length of Service Awards* and Presidential Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards for volunteer service.

- Bronx awardees, in addition to Mr. Rodan, included Lela Cadogan (Brooklyn Child & Family Services), Muriel Downer (East Harlem Council for Human Services), Thelma Jones (Safe Horizon) and Jaime Rodriguez (Fulton Day Care) for 10 years of Foster Grandparent service.

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- Manhattan awardees included Gloria Calderon (Bellevue Hospital) for 20 years, Geraldine Rhodes (West Intergenerational) , one of the original Cotton Club Dancers, for 15 years of Foster Grandparent service and Mary Frederick (Harlem Hospital) for 10 years.
- The awardee from Brooklyn was Clara Geiger (Our Childrens Center), for 10 years of Foster Grandparent service.
- Awardees from Queens were Elaine Cato (Police Athletic League’s After School Program) and Lula Williams (Queens Hospital Center), for ten years of Foster Grandparent Service.
- Five year certificates were presented to an additional 21 grandparent volunteers.
- Site awards for length of service went to the Queens Center for Progress Children’s Center (35 years); the New York Foundling Hospital (35 years); University Settlement (30 years); Jamaica Hospital (30 years); Brooklyn Children’s Center (25 years); Terence Cardinal Cooke Medical Center (25 years); and Community Parents Head Start Program, the Friends of Crown Heights Educational Center #2 and the Neighborhood Children’s Center for ten years.
- Outstanding Community Partnership plaques were presented to the Office of Family Visiting Visit Coach Program of the Administration for Children’s Services for training and placing Foster Grandparents as Visit Coaches; and to Helene Bradley of the Special Education Resource Center of the New York City Department of Education Department and Barbara Ellis, retired from the Special Education Resource Center and now a consultant, for the extensive training and tutorials they have provided Foster Grandparents.

The Foster Grandparent Program achieved a number of milestones this year, including the expansion of volunteer opportunities through collaborations with the NYC Department of Corrections – Rikers Island Visit Enhancement Project with the Osborne Association, Safe Horizon, Reach Out and Read, and the Brooklyn Public Library. The Program also expanded its volunteer base, doubling the number of Chinese speaking volunteers. As further recognition, the Foster Grandparent Program received two prestigious awards: One from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) and the MetLife Foundation for Older Volunteer Management and another from the Greater New York Reach Out and Read Pediatric Literacy Program for Volunteer Program of the Year. In addition, the United Nations has also recognized DFTA’s Foster Grandparent Program at its annual International Volunteer Day.

The Foster Grandparent Program, a federally administered program inaugurated in 1965, is a volunteer program that offers seniors age 60 and older an opportunity to serve as mentors, tutors and caregivers for children and youth with special needs. Foster Grandparents serve a minimum of 15 hours per week in community-based organizations such as elementary schools, hospitals, day care programs, after-school programs and Head Start programs.