



Thunderous Tribute: Tampa Bay Lightning Honors Classroom Grandmas

Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation is supporting struggling students! Our Classroom Grandparent Volunteers were honored as Tampa Bay Lightning Community Heroes for their dedication to helping the most challenged children overcome adversity and learn to read. Thank you to the Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation for donating \$50,000 to support our Classroom Grandparent Program and creating a brighter future for even more challenged students.

Two of our most dedicated "Grandmas," Edith Shepherd and Rebecca Bray, proudly represented our volunteers at the game! Edith Shepherd has been a volunteer for over 9 years and serves in Ms. Chavis' Kindergarten classroom at Potter Elementary in Hillsborough County Public Schools.

When asked why she volunteers, Edith Shepherd shares, "I enjoy the opportunity to work with our kids. There are so many smiles and so many hugs, and I like to see that. My greatest strength is patience and being able to keep the classroom calm so the students can focus on learning."

Rebecca Bray has been a volunteer for over 6 years and serves in Ms. Hale's 2nd grade classroom at Perkins Elementary in Pinellas County Schools. When asked about her volunteering experience Rebecca Bray shares, "I work with an amazing teacher, Ms. Hale. If she's having a problem with one of the students not grasping the material, I'm able to jump in and work one-on-one with that student. I'm her right hand and she's my left."

A heartfelt thank you to each and every one of our Classroom Grandparents who are nurturing a love for learning in our youngest generation. The dedication you show your students is so appreciated by the whole community.



Scan Here to Watch Our
Community Hero Video

Shoutout to Jabil and The Tampa Bay Lightning for hosting an amazing celebration in the Jabil Community Hero Suite. It was such a special experience for our volunteers and team to celebrate the important work they accomplish together and feel the energy of the arena cheering them on.



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At Seniors in Service, we're following the lead of US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy to make 2024 the "Year of Connection!" We live in a fast-paced, digitally dominated world, and it's easy to overlook the profound importance of personal human connection. Humans are "wired" to need each other. Without this basic human need, our mental AND physical health can quickly decline.

If you're reading this and thinking, "I need more connection in my life," you're not alone. Chances are the people around you are feeling the same way. Be brave, reach out, and start a conversation.

Here's the GOOD NEWS! Loneliness is easy to reverse. Start with the Surgeon General's 5-for-5 Challenge. Pick 5 actions that build connection. These can be simple actions such as expressing gratitude to a friend, engaging your neighbor in conversation, or volunteering in your community (that's my favorite). Then, commit to using these actions to connect with others each day for 5 days. After each action, reflect on how it made YOU feel. We're confident that one of those feelings will be happiness.

Are you looking for more? Right now, we urgently need volunteers to serve as TelePals and Health Buddies. Anyone who is age 18 or older can help. As a volunteer you'll provide regularly scheduled phone calls to an isolated senior, reducing their feelings of loneliness, while also building connection in your own life. Everyone benefits!

Join us and make this YOUR "Year of Connection!" Visit our website to learn how you can be a TelePal, Health Buddy, or serve alongside a vibrant community of volunteers in many other ways. www.SeniorsInService.org

-Robin Ingles, CEO



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF
ST. PETERSBURG

Junior League of St. Pete is Helping Children Develop Confidence in the Classroom

The Junior League of St. Petersburg is helping set students up for success! They donated \$1,000 to support Emotional Intelligence training for our Classroom Grandparent Volunteers in St. Pete. Providing our volunteers with another set of skills they can use in the classroom to help students feel safe, confident, and excited to learn is one of our top priorities to ensure academic achievement.

A Celebration of Literacy Heroes: “Kids Need Us More Than Ever” Dinner

We hosted the “Kids Need Us More Than Ever” Dinner on April 10 to shine light on how Classroom Grandparent volunteers are teaching struggling students to read every day. City of Tampa Mayor Jane Castor and Hillsborough County Public Schools Superintendent Van Ayres were honored for their partnership with Seniors in Service to help children in Hillsborough County love learning. Powerful testimonials were shared from Seniors in Service volunteers, teachers, and school leaders about the challenges they see every day as they continue to help children overcome the academic and social gap created by COVID.

The testimonials from Assistant Principal Brascom, Grandma Woody and 7th grader Harmoni captured everyone's heart. After nearly a decade these three reunited at the elementary school where they first met.

Harmoni was once an overwhelmed child in Ms. Brascom's Kindergarten classroom and sitting next to Grandma Woody was the only thing that made her feel safe. Ms. Brascom, who is now the Vice Principal at BT Washington Elementary, shared, "Grandma Woody noticed Harmoni struggling in class and being reserved in groups. She worked with her one-on-one so Harmoni could open up and feel safe. Once that took place, Harmoni just soared." Day after day Grandma Woody would help Harmoni learn letters, sounds, and sight words. As Harmoni learned to read, she began to enjoy coming to school. This special bond and encouragement from "Grandma" Woody helped Harmoni blossom into a vibrant, social, and successful student.

“It was not shortly after meeting Grandma Woody that she became my hero. I didn't like doing my schoolwork in kindergarten, but Grandma Woody helped instill confidence in me, I know I can do the work now and I enjoy it.” -Harmoni, 7th grade student

Grandma Woody moved the whole room when she looked directly at Harmoni and said, **“Thank YOU, Harmoni, for giving ME purpose. Seniors in Service has always been more than volunteer work to me. It has been a guiding force that allows me to give back to the children and community in which I live. This is my calling. I saw in Harmoni, not just a student but a leader in the making, a young girl with the potential to change the world. “**

Pictured to the right: Grandma Woody shown with one of her current students from this school year. She continues to shape minds every year as a Classroom Grandma. This past school year alone she served over 1100 hours of tutoring and mentoring 3rd grade students at BT Washington Elementary.



Shown below: Assistant Principal Sa'Tonya Brascom, Grandma Woody, and 7th grader Harmoni who still asks her mom to drive her to Grandma Woody's house, so she can say hi and get a hug from her “Grandma”!



Scan the QR Code to hear Harmoni and Grandma Woody's full remarks:



Classroom Grandparents Help Solve One of the Biggest Civil Rights Issues of Our Time: “The Right to Read”

“Imagine you’re in the Stone Age and you don’t have a stone. Imagine you’re in the Bronze Age and you don’t have any bronze. Now, imagine you’re living in the Information Age and you can’t read.” With only one-third of American fourth graders reading well enough to qualify as proficient, illiteracy is an issue that affects the whole community. Research shows illiteracy is a pipeline to prison, homelessness, unemployment, and depression.

On April 25 we hosted the “Right to Read” Film Screening to open a discussion with the community on how Classroom Grandparent volunteers are one solution to children’s rising illiteracy rates.



The “Right to Read” Film shares the stories of an activist, a teacher, and two American families who fight to provide our youngest generation with the most foundational indicator of life-long success: the ability to read. Following the film, Seniors in Service Classroom Grandparents who are on the front lines, helping children learn to read in Pinellas County’s most high-need classrooms shared the challenges they see in the classroom AND how the one-on-one tutoring they provide is making a difference. Seniors in Service Board Member Traci Bergman, who is a literacy expert and advocate, shared how the science of reading is setting students on a path toward success to be lifelong learners.

Thank you to Pinellas County School Board Chairperson Laura Hine for shining light on how hard our community works to instill exceptional education for all students. A big shout out to the Center for Health Equity’s amazing staff who helped make the event run smoothly and contributed to a very successful evening!

100 Good Guys St. Pete Help Classroom Grandparents Expand to New Schools



A huge thank you to 100 Good Guys - St. Pete for donating \$10,000 to Seniors in Service at their third-ever meeting! This donation will help place two new volunteer grandparents in classrooms at Mount Vernon Elementary and New Heights Elementary in St. Pete. A volunteer in each classroom, means more struggling students will learn to read and feel confident at school! How cool is that?

Walmart Invests in Student Achievement

Walmart Tampa Market on Florida Avenue didn’t just invest in creating a better store; they invested in creating a better community! On April 26, we helped celebrate the Grand Re-Opening of their newly renovated store. At the event, they donated \$1,000 to support our Classroom Grandparent Program at Oak Grove Elementary and help struggling students learn to read! Congratulations on the renovated store, and thank you for the donation!



Health Buddy Honored as “Champion of Compassion”



Congratulations to our Health Buddy Volunteer, Pamela Roberts, who was honored as a 2024 Heroes Among Us Congressional Award Winner, which recognizes the men and women who positively impact Florida’s 12th District through volunteerism, good deeds, and going above and beyond to serve others.

Pamela was a nurse for many years. Once she retired, she continued to be extremely active as a volunteer. However, she began to lose her vision and her options of volunteering in the community became limited. That’s when she found Health Buddies. Now, she uses the compassion and health knowledge she gained as a nurse to help isolated seniors who have a chronic condition. Through weekly telephone calls, Pamela provides encouragement and health coaching to empower her clients to improve their well-being.

Thank you to U.S. Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL-12) for bringing this event to Pasco County and giving us a chance to honor volunteers like Pamela, who is a shining light for isolated seniors in Pasco County.

The City of St. Pete Honors the Exceptional Service of Senior Volunteers



Every year, the Senior Hall of Fame celebrates exceptional St. Petersburg volunteers, recognizing their valuable contributions to enriching lives. The Senior Hall of Fame's legacy is to uphold and cultivate appreciation for these extraordinary individuals. Seniors in Service volunteers Wiloan Leaks, Violet Prepost, and Gerald Munger were honored as nominees for this prestigious award.



Wiloan Leaks or “Ms. Peaches” as our volunteer family refers to her, is a selfless and endearing member of the St. Pete community who is never seen without a smile. Ms. Leaks has been volunteering at Mercy Keepers since 2012 and her smiling face is the first thing guests see when entering the pantry. Ms. Leaks shines as a community expert helping those in need to feel safe and comfortable when receiving services. When people stop in, looking for help, she's ready to answer and lead the way, connecting them to the right resources.



Violet Prepost may be small in stature, but she is large in personality, and the impact she makes on the St. Pete community every day can only be described as marvelous. Ms. Prepost joined Seniors in Service in 2022 and serves at the Trinity Lutheran Church Food Pantry. Ms. Prepost volunteers her time to stock shelves, cook food, and make sure no stomach is left hungry and no back is left unclothed. Every week, for the past two years, she cooks 108 eggs and 96 hot dogs to make sure everyone hungry gets fed. Last year she dedicated 1,192 hours to volunteering at the food pantry.



Gerald Munger is a leader and inspirational member of the St. Pete community. Mr. Munger has also been serving at Trinity Lutheran Church Food Pantry since 2022. As the Hot Lunch Program Coordinator, he helps lead other volunteers to keep the program running smoothly and make sure everyone who is hungry gets fed. Mr. Munger's motivation to bring the hot meals program to the church has inspired others in the community to do the same.

We Partied Like It's 1984 at Our Volunteer Celebration!

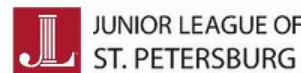
We turned back the clock to 1984 to celebrate our 40th Anniversary and the volunteers who have helped build Seniors in Service's legacy! That's four decades of impactful volunteerism, tutoring and mentoring children, providing companionship to seniors, feeding hungry families, supporting veterans, and so much more!

Dressed in colorful 80's attire we celebrated our successes and reflected on our journey of serving, connecting, and growing together. The party started with a video highlighting our legacy, impact, and growth over the past 40 years. Then we introduced "The Year of Connection," which you read about in the CEO Letter, and we took time to build connection through gratitude. Everyone wrote a thank you card to someone they appreciate as a way to build and strengthen their own relationships and inspire others to incorporate connection in their daily lives! Together, we enjoyed good food, music, 80's trivia, and 80's music bingo. But, most importantly, we celebrated how service to others fosters a vibrant community of belonging.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, from 1984 to present year, we appreciate your dedication to transforming lives!



Thank you to our funders!





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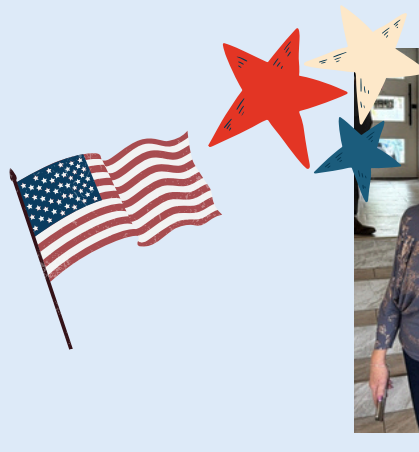
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Warm My Walls Campaign Helps Veterans Feel at Home



Our Operation: Veteran Connect team hosted their first "Warm My Wall" campaign to collect donated pictures, art, prints, and wall hangings for veterans who've recently moved into permanent housing. Getting veterans the necessities like furniture and clothing is always a top priority when moving into a new place but our team quickly realized something was still missing.

People were donating everyday essentials except the decorations on the wall that make a home feel like home. Our volunteers wanted to change that and make sure 25 veterans moving into permanent housing didn't have to look at bare walls.

With over 200 prints donated, the community showed up in full swing! Veterans were able to select from a wide selection of art and volunteers assisted with hanging the pictures on their walls. Thank you to the incredible outpouring of donations from the community.

Scan Here to see how the Warm My Walls Campaign brought a veteran to tears.

