

Robert Frost Middle School
Student Government Association
Mrs. Ellen Gagnon
Number in Group: 30
Number of Students that Participated in the Activity: 65
February 2004

Valentine's Day: Adopt-a-Grandparent



1. The Adopt-a-Grandparent program is an activity created to brighten the lives of the elderly members residing in the National Lutheran Home. Many of the residents at the home do not have family near, and do not usually receive visitors. By and by, few will come by, but this time, multitudinous students dropped by to give them warm greetings and something that everyone wants: a present. A present to show the elderly that people do care about them. Our program starts out with an adoption. Large sheets of paper containing the lists names of the residents are taken out, and students come to

adopt a grandparent. After the adoption is made and confirmed, the adoptee is expected to purchase or make a gift for their new grandparent. The choice is up to them if they would like to deliver the gift to their grandparent or drop it off in the classroom, giving another a chance to meet a new face. The delivery was a delightful experience for both student and grandparent. While the grandparents knew that the students were coming, they were ecstatic, like little children gathering around a Christmas tree stacked with hundreds of gifts. Once arriving and delivering the gifts, grandparents could be seen boasting about even a simple bottle of lotion or a picture frame. Their eyes lit up brilliantly, filling the air with jovial laughter while swapping stories with other students. Both student and grandparent were exultant, and the Frost students received pleasant feelings after taking the trip to the Lutheran home.

2. Our project was designed for comfort. These days, the old at the Lutheran home may not have but a few days left, and to see that all of these young, vibrant students, just like they once were, still care, is the best gift that we can offer. The SGA hoped to enlighten the residents with their effervescent energy, as well as brightening up their Valentine's Day. Most of the residents at the Lutheran home have deceased spouses, and they like to see young people. They have visitors during Christmas, Hanukkah, and other holidays, but usually not during Valentine's Day. Seeing the young interact, just like they did, gives them thoughtful memories as well as an additional gift. Residents enjoyed sharing their thoughts over an ice cream sundae while discussing different topics with the students.



3. In the Adopt-a-Grandparent program, several steps were

taken precariously to ensure that every grandparent had a grandchild. In the beginning, there was an initial list of one hundred and fifteen residents, and a month prior to the visit, we began to take signatures of students vying for a grandparent. The list could include any student at Frost, so we did limit the project to only members within the SGA. We provided a suggested gift list for the kids, and asked the Frost staff to chip in with donations and wrapping supplies. Students united together to give each other suggestions on what to give their grandparents, and quite a few put thought into their gifts, asking their own biological grandparents what they would like and the type of music or dance they liked. Soon after, we followed through on the list and contacted the Lutheran home, dropping the gifts prior to the distribution. In the end, thirty students participated in walking up to the Lutheran home and delivering the gifts to the awaiting grandparents.

Evaluation wise, the students that participated and donated the gifts did their job smoothly. However, the kids who distributed the gifts need to work on their delivery. Most students did not interact with the residents, only handing them their presents, smiling a bit, and walking back to their original position. In order to prevent this from happening again, we need to have a discussion before visiting the residents to ensure a livelier conversation. Few students actually interacted with the residents, unsure of what to say or where to prod. Some were embarrassed about asking about family or spouse, in fear of provoking strong emotions such as loss of family or a hated family. However, this could work as a plus, to invoke emotion and connect, discussing real topics with wiser people. Conversation is the key point in the activity, to intertwine as one with the grandparents, and to make their life just a tad bit happier. In addition, we could have poetry readings and entertainment, such as dance, singing, or an instrumental performance. Lastly, we should include a list of the students walking to the Lutheran home, for walking there was quite jumbled and unorganized. Ultimately, the students did a fair job, as all of the residents were satisfied with their gifts, and the big picture was accomplished: making them happy.

4. Members of the SGA put time and effort into contributing to this project. The sponsor of the SGA, Mrs. Gagnon, went to great troubles to make this program function. The President of the SGA, Lara Kusnezov, represented true leadership. She made important phone calls, separated and wrapped the gifts, and made her own donation for her two adopted grandparents. All of the SGA members purchased a gift and adopted a grandparent, and many of them also helped to separate and wrap the presents. Many students motivated others with rhetorical questions. "How would you feel if you had no one visiting you when you are ninety? Wouldn't you like a gift to brighten up your day?" Several problems were encountered during the course of the project, pertaining to date and the donations, tracking down the people that had forgotten to bring their gifts, and ensuring that all of the grandparents were adopted with their own individual gifts. A resource that was utilized was the National Lutheran Home. The SGA collaborated with the Lutheran home by agreeing to do this project, and also collaborating with other students and their friends. Friends encouraged friends to adopt grandparents; friends encouraged friends to distribute the gifts. Student leaders motivated others to get involved with the program because of the benefit. The benefit is the joy of seeing someone happy, specifically someone who is old and tired. Getting students to walk up to the Lutheran home was also quite a job, since other activities interfered with the date and time of walking to the Lutheran home. However, we managed to



pull it off, with each student becoming a leader. Each student motivated others. Each student demonstrated that they could make a difference.

5. While the impact on the community may only have been small and subtle, the entire experience was rewarding for the people involved, including the students at Robert Frost and the grandparents at the Lutheran home. At old, tender ages, the elderly often do not feel appreciated for all that they have contributed. Many of those residents were veterans, or strong, courageous women helping out in World War II. They experienced everything firsthand, from Pearl Harbor to September 11th. What most people do not realize is their profound knowledge, and what we can learn from them. With this program, and young students coming to visit them, the old feel appreciated. They feel good, and that is reaching the objective. When giving a simplistic picture frame to one grandparent, her eyes lit up in joy. Minutes after, she immediately began boasting about her lovely gift with splendor and pride. She would tap everybody, saying, “Look, I got a picture frame!” After the experience, students’ really had an attitude change. Coming out of the Lutheran home, many had said, “They were so nice. They got excited over the things we take for granted.” All of it gives the students a new perspective on what they should be grateful for, as well as giving the grandparents a feeling of ecstasy. The obvious change was the looks on everyone’s faces – their elation of the experience.

