

# Volunteer Grandparents Fill a Void



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[www.volunteerburnaby.ca](http://www.volunteerburnaby.ca)

By Jamal Dumas

Volunteer Grandparents is a non-profit organization located in Burnaby, operating in and around the Lower Mainland since 1973. Started by Marjorie Anderson, Volunteer Grandparents was meant to respond to what Anderson saw as a vital need in the community; bridging the gap between the old and the young by fostering relationships between generations. Currently Volunteer Grandparents offers two very successful programs which aim to strengthen intergenerational relationships.

The first is the Family Match program which matches children without easily accessible grandparents to volunteers over the age of 50 in the community. Volunteer Grandparents facilitates this match by pre-screening potential volunteers and initiating the first meetings between the families. From there the relationship begins to flourish as the volunteer grandparent spends time with the child on a weekly basis. Some of the most successful matches Volunteer Grandparents has made have lasted over several years.

Kathleen, and her daughter Xaria, have been involved in the program since 2011. Said Kathleen about her inspiration behind seeking a Volunteer Grandparent, "I was looking for family. So to fill that void, a Volunteer Grandparent was awesome."

Xaria was matched with Ruth Nyman and the two have been inseparable ever since. Xaria has biological grandparents however they live in Eastern Canada. Said Kathleen, "to have someone actually

in the same city that spends time with you on a weekly basis and is interested in what you're doing, is great."

Xaria does a number of activities with Ruth, as well as Ruth's husband Len, such as shopping, going to the park,

and pursue her dream of acting classes this upcoming Fall. Said Kathleen, "the opportunities Xaria has been given through Volunteer Grandparents are immeasurable."

The second program run by Volunteer



Volunteer Grandparents Ruth Nyman (right) with husband Len and Xaria.

gardening, and baking. In addition through Volunteer Grandparent's partnership with Kids Up Front, Xaria has been able to attend ballet performances, The Children's Festival, and most recently a soccer camp run by the Vancouver Whitecaps.

The Florio Bursary which is distributed every year through Volunteer Grandparents, has enabled Xaria to participate in circus school, pony camp

Grandparents is the School Grandparent program. In this program volunteers over 50 are connected with their local elementary school and visit on a weekly basis. During their visits, volunteers spend time with the children, sometimes in a 1-on-1 setting and sometimes in a group setting, to improve their literacy by reading together.

Burnaby resident Pat Thomas, a School Grandparent at Grandview Elementary,

said about the program, "It's so neat to see the light go on when you're reading with them or they get a word right." Thomas acknowledged that the students she helps come from a diverse set of backgrounds; "most of the kids I would say don't get read to at home. There's also a language barrier. Some children come from families that don't speak English at home. So it's harder for them; there are words they don't know." Thomas has found volunteering so rewarding that she now helps out with marketing and promotion of the organization. Said Thomas, "I can sell it easily because I believe in it and I don't think you can volunteer if you don't."

For anyone interested in Volunteer Grandparents, the organization is accepting applications for volunteers and families on an ongoing basis. Visit <http://www.volunteergrandparents.ca/> or call our office at (604) 736 - 8271 to find out more. And a reminder, if you have a special senior filling a void in your child's life, don't forget to celebrate Grandparents Day on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>!



Florio Bursary recipient Xaria at pony camp



Volunteer School Grandparent Pat Thomas

**SFU FAIRS WEEK 2015  
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Campus**

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**VOLUNTEER FAIR  
Tuesday September 22nd  
10 AM - 3 PM  
East and South AQ  
SFU Burnaby**

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**VOLUNTEER BURNABY**

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