

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Felton Institute Celebrates 50th Anniversary of the Foster Grandparent Program & Honors Senior Companions

Mayor Ed Lee declares January 14, 2016, Foster Grandparent Program Day

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (January 14, 2016) — Felton Institute: Family Service Agency of San Francisco's commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Foster Grandparent Program and 41st Anniversary of the Senior Companion Program was an inspirational celebration at the Gap Corporate Café on Folsom Street in San Francisco. On behalf of Mayor Ed Lee, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services Ashley Cheng presented Felton President and CEO Al Gilbert with a proclamation recognizing January 14, 2016, as Foster Grandparent Program Day in San Francisco. Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi sent greetings which were read by Michael N. Hofman, Felton's Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Felton's Foster Grandparent Program was one of 20 original national pilot projects. Limited-income, mobile seniors, ages 55 and older, receive small stipends for providing support services for 20 hours a week to children with special needs. Seniors serve in classrooms, pre-schools,

and children's units in hospitals. They develop one-to-one consistent relationships with the children, by tutoring, mentoring, and providing emotional support.

The Senior Companion Program, also founded in the late 60's, is a program through which limited-income, mobile seniors provide companionship services 15-30 hours per week to frail, isolated, and homebound seniors, age 55 and older. Participants serve in adult day health centers and senior centers, engaging at-risk seniors in on-site activities. Seniors companions are supervised by case managers. Felton President and CEO Al Gilbert, praised the volunteers, saying, "Your work inspires me. I am so appreciative of the commitment, energy, and love that our seniors share with individuals at both ends of the age spectrum. Thank you for continuing this legacy with your caring service."

More than 130 people braved heavy rains to attend the delicious celebration to the delight of Mistress of Ceremony Karen Garrison, the dedicated Program Director of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Program. Felton Senior Division Director Cathy Spensley introduced dignitaries, including Roy Earnest, Program Specialist for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) who presented Cathy and Karen Garrison with a formal recognition and then distributed treasured 50th Anniversary commemorative pins to all. The afternoon event was filled with warm remembrances like those of Ashley Cheng. Deputy Director Cheng shared, "When my daughters were in pre-school, they benefitted from the Foster Grandparents Program." Her daughters now nine and six years old, Cheng believes the lessons learned from Felton's Foster Grandparents have served them well: lessons of patience; how to talk to seniors; and the enjoyment of shared stories.

[\[Click here\]](#) to watch Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services Ashley Cheng's presentation.]

Amy Solliday, Felton Board Human Resources Committee Chair and Vice-President of Old Navy Store Operations thanked Felton staff and Felton board members and warmly commended the extraordinary individuals who serve in the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Volunteer programs. One participant is Silk Gaudin, a vibrant and joyful 71 year old Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion who swims regularly, practices yoga and Qigong and imparts the life lessons that she shares with her own grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Reflecting on the anniversary event, she smiled. "It was a beautiful celebration and being a foster grandparent is a wonderful opportunity to influence a child for the better. Thirty or forty years ago, you had the whole community to look out for your children. That's what we try to do with Foster Grandparents."

Felton Institute was founded in 1889 by Katharine "Kitty" Felton, with the mandate that children and families in crisis must have access to social services and resources in order to help them build upon their inherent strengths and develop self-sufficiency. For more than 126 years, it has been a leader in innovative mental health and social service programs for all. Felton has now expanded to an organization of national importance and statewide scope. For more information, please contact communications@felton.org or 415-474-7310 ext. 458. felton.org.

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