

Thoughts from the Preschool Director

In working at the program where I have been for the last 19 years, I have known and loved many "senior friends" that have come into my life and the lives of the children that we serve. Some have become like family and when they have passed the loss was just as great. I have learned from them, as well as have the children in our care. When they leave our program, many parents have come back to tell us that their children were asking about "Miss Betty" or "Miss Emily" or "Mr. Jack" and wondering how they were doing. They form a bond with them, and given that many of these young children either have very young grandparents, or grandparents that live out of the country, just having exposure to older individuals has, I think, added to their experience here in so many positive ways. They learn to be gentle with senior friends' bodies, they learn about walkers and canes and wheelchairs and approach them with curiosity rather than apprehension. They are exposed to individuals with white hair, glasses and wrinkles and learn to not be afraid, but to see them as a friend. I have seen the children give energy and smiles to those senior friends who may not have regular visitors or family nearby, And I see many seniors who feel good just having someone that needs them who they can help, whether it's to assist in opening containers and thermos' at lunch time, or showing them how to zip a sweater or jacket, as they enjoy feeling useful. Here, seniors are not put aside, or part of the background, the children can see them front and center every week. I can honestly say that all of us here benefit from the relationships that are made. I see first hand that seniors and children and young adults are meant to be together and they each have something valuable to offer one another. One group ignites that curiosity and wonder in the world while the other offers experience and guidance.

***Comments from Maria M, Director of The Marvin Children's Center
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