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CONTACT: Andria Cimino  
212-442-1111  
[acimino@aging.nyc.gov](mailto:acimino@aging.nyc.gov)

## New York City Department for the Aging Honors Foster Grandparents at 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration



Foster Grandparents who have served for 10-25 years (front row): Emelina Tirado, Tiburcio Roldan, Octavio Diaz, Georgie Campbell, and Genoveva Cruz; (second row): Erma Garnett, Winifred Hardaway, Grace Bethea, Mattie Cook, Praxedes Ruiz, Josephine Ozechowski, and Geraldine Rhodes. Also pictured (back row): J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. Vice President of Community Relations Vinny Mentar, DFTA Assistant Commissioner Karen Shaffer, Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago, and Deputy Commissioner Caryn Resnick.

**NEW YORK – June 15, 2004** –A senior with nine children, 24 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren of his own, Mr. Tiburcio Rodriguez (bottom row, second from left) would seem unlikely to have any energy left over for new children in his life. But today, Mr. Rodriguez received an award for 20 years of service as a Foster Grandparent at the North Central Bronx Hospital, where he is known as “Granpa” to dozens of children in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. He was joined by more than 300 exceptional seniors being honored at the Department for the Aging’s (DFTA) 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Foster Grandparent Program Recognition Celebration.

“Foster Grandparents are trained volunteers who devote five days a week to caring for children. With their love, attention, and wisdom, they give these children a sense of belonging and self-worth. Working in a variety of settings across the City, they provide an invaluable



Site Awards were accepted by (l to r): Vashti Calvert (Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center, 30 years); Nancy Glass (Queens Center for Progress, 30 years); Joan DeMarco (Sisters of Charity Health Care System, 20 years); Irene Torres (Woodhull Medical & Mental Health Center, 15 years); and Nuesa Alshuk (Metropolitan Hospital Center, 15 years). Also pictured is DFTA Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago.

service to their communities,” said DFTA Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago. The Commissioner noted with pride that the program had expanded this year to the Bronx, “so we now offer Foster Grandparent sites in all five boroughs of New York City.”

Awards for 25, 20, 15, and 10 years of service were presented. Foster Grandparents with five years of service received certificates, and those with one year received pins. The Department also presented awards to outstanding Foster Grandparent sites and site supervisors. After the awards luncheon, the Foster Grandparents enjoyed dancing to the sounds of the John Johnson band. J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., a longtime supporter of the Foster Grandparent Program, helped sponsor the celebration, held at the New York Marriott at Brooklyn Bridge.

The Department’s celebration coincided with the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national Foster Grandparent Program, which is sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. More than 34,000 older adults provide care and support to more than 220,000 special needs children annually.

For more information regarding the Department for the Aging’s Foster Grandparent Program, please call 311 or visit our website at <http://www.nyc.gov/aging>.

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