



FGP News!



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Meet MJ Perkins

Martha Jo Perkins was born in Burlington, VT and grew up in Brattleboro. She attended Castleton State University and studied Theater Arts.

Her father was an educator and her mother was a secretary. She is the eldest child with one brother and one sister, who both live in Virginia. Her sister stays at home and her brother is a DOD contractor.

MJ worked in various offices in Fairfield County, Connecticut in Administration and Customer Service over the years.

MJ moved back to Rutland, Vermont in 2006 because she wanted to live a simpler life. "I was working five part time jobs in Connecticut to make ends meet. It was too much." she says.

She moved in with her parents who needed assistance, and while they sometimes traveled, she was their house sitter.

During this time MJ worked five years at an answering service and did some seasonal work at Vermont Country Store.

She retired when she was sixty-two to help her father who was living alone and needed the reassurance of having someone there to help him out.

MJ is a voracious reader, reading three to five books per week! She has a wonderful two year old female cat named Penniman. "She brings me great joy every day!" says MJ.

Theater is her first love and she has played many roles over the years. Some of her favorite roles include:

"Fanny" in Painting Churches; "Maggie" in Shadow Box; "Aunt Penniman" in The Heiress (thus the name of her cat!); "Ophelia" in Hamlet; "The Fool" in All's Well That Ends Well; and "Mrs Paroo" in the Music Man.



MJ Perkins

With COVID over the past year, the Vermont Actors Repertoire has not been able to put on live shows. However, MJ did participate in a Zoom seminar with them that was a lot of fun.



MAY 2021

"I know for sure that what we dwell on is who we become."
Oprah Winfrey

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MJ Perkins (cont. from page 1)

MJ volunteers at Northeast School reading to children and having them read to her. She has always loved working with children and the number one thing she loves about being a Volunteer Foster Grandparent is: THE KIDS! Her acting abilities have enabled her to use different voices when reading different characters to children and she is expressive and animated in her presentation. Teachers tell us that the children look forward to their "reading time" with MJ.

As a child she always wanted to be an actor and that theme has carried out through her life. Her loved playing "dress up" and her favorite teacher was her first drama teacher, Cindy Ray. She relates that she was also most influenced in her life by her theater professor, Byron G. Avery. Her love of theater has meant that she has played many roles over the years and is still involved in theater whenever she can be. One of her defining moments in life was when she did a show with 5 or 6 teenage girls and toward the end of the run, one of them remarked about how much she had learned from observing MJ's patient interactions with one of the other actors.

MJ's biggest lesson in life is to try to maintain "an attitude of gratitude." This is apparent in her positive outlook and high energy level as well as in her personal belief system and the role she plays with the children she serves at Northeast School. We love having MJ as a grandparent in our program and hope that she continues to utilize her talents with children. We look forward to seeing her in future roles in the theater world as well!

Hobbies: Active in theater for 52 years, reading

Likes: Dining out

Dislikes: Unkind people

Favorite Singer: Neil Diamond

Favorite Music: Jazz, Show, Classical

Favorite Author: Daniel Silva

Favorite Book Genre: Suspense, Mystery

Favorite Movie: 1974 Great Gatsby with Robert Redford

Favorite Actress & Actor: Meryl Streep and Anthony Hopkins



FGP Openings (on hold due to COVID)

Tapestry—After School Programs West Rutland 3:00 to 5:30 & Proctor Elementary 2:15 to 5:15

Sacred Heart School—Bennington, positions available in classrooms. Must complete safe environment protocol and background checks at the school

Grace Christian School—Bennington, Combined 3rd/4th Grade classroom needs grandparent to work with students

VAC — Red Room (2 year olds). Very active children need loving, consistent grandparent as role models and mentors. Patience, kindness and tolerance a plus.

RCPC—Brandon and Rutland sites need active grandparents willing to volunteer with pre-school, 2-3 year olds and younger children. Lots of play, action & up & down abilities involved! Patience and flexibility a plus.



Notes from Alix

It was a long winter for all of us, and I am sure you are all looking forward to spending more time outdoors in the warmer weather. I know I am looking forward to planting a new garden bed once it warms up a little more.



Deb and I are beginning to focus on the path forward. We are in talks with sites about resuming in-person service activities. Some sites have begun to allow volunteers to come back into the classrooms starting in May. We are hopeful that by this fall, all the sites will be open to volunteers. Sites are continuing to follow safety protocols such as masking and distancing when possible. We will continue to keep you informed as policies are updated.

As you may know, Vermont has expanded the COVID-19 vaccine registration to individuals age 16+. This is exciting news for our communities and will certainly help lower community COVID numbers. If you would like to stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation visit the Vermont Department of Health website (www.healthvermont.gov) for the latest information.

Each May, the Administration for Community Living leads the celebration of Older Americans Month. This year's theme is *Communities of Strength*, recognizing the important role older adults play in fostering the connection and engagement that build strong, resilient communities. When people of different ages share experiences, like you do in your Foster Grandparent service, we help build strong communities.

Deb and I look forward to celebrating you at the drive through recognition on May 27th. We are hoping that we can gather again in person again next fall!

All the best, Alix



AmeriCorps
Seniors

COVID Vaccinations



The Green Mountain Foster Grandparent Program is not requiring that grandparents be vaccinated before being able to return to school in the Fall. However, we do not yet know what schools are going to require in order for all their volunteers to return to in-person service. If you have had your vaccination, please remember to send in a copy of your vaccination card (just the front) to our office as soon as you have had both shots. That way we can inform schools what percent of our grandparents have been vaccinated. We understand that for some individuals there may be contra-indications to getting the vaccine, as well as personal or religious reasons. Please let us know if that is the case for you. Thank you and stay healthy!

Word Search Puzzle

Sweets!

S L E M A R A C R T U G X E U P I M Y P S J D C A
 M H K H E P A D B A L E V X U J K O U M K P W B U
 Q I E D C F E U Y S B O M C V Y J U V L L E Y U L
 K Q L R A N K A M L D K O S X E U N F F L O Y T R
 A U Y K S D U F N U G L R C L M N D C A J F O T S
 C J I K Y H J R I U L Q A A R Y I S M D F D T E O
 D N P V K W E V C A T D X G L C O E N A O G I R I
 P A Y D A Y A Y M E B M O U F C R O T Y H C X F U
 W U H F H N Y Y B U L O M F P H M Z I G N Y P I B
 O C C E N B J W R A D T T U M L I K H G S W E N E
 E F N C T F G Y N B R T S O A O N R Z P Z J P G X
 S C H W O R E Z A F R Z L E T W T K E I J N P E Y
 Y R I D N D I R D D F F Q K N Y S Z F D U M E R D
 E X E R S P U C E S E E R T R C D A Z W H T R S D
 B I I K O M N B C E I H L N S Q R N L L B J M T A
 L I H Q C C V I C A I R E N K A V T F Y P L I O D
 I R T V Y I I P D S V H Q B O M Z D F M O E N O R
 C S R O W H N L O B O I W M K Z U C K W P I T T A
 Z Y S S H I U S X N E K G B A Z O O K A Y R P S G
 Z T B T N O I E D F K P M L O K G H D E L A A I U
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 X U Q D Y X H E S T A K T I K M A R S B O N T R W
 P E A U G D X S Y H E A T H B A R Y S D L O I O K
 D D T H R E E M U S K E T E E R S E R Y P N E L U
 N M P M O S A S Q W R T X M A L K F D V L G S L J

ALMONDJOY	BAZOOKA	BITOHONEY
BUTTERFINGERS	CADBURY	CARAMELS
CLARKBAR	DOTS	DOVE
HEATHBAR	HERSHEYBAR	JUNIORMINTS
KISSES	KITKAT	LICORICE
LOLLYPOP	MALLOPUP	MARS
MILKYWAY	MOUNDS	MRGOODBAR
NECCO	NESTLECRUNCH	NONPARIEL
OHENRY	PAYDAY	PEANUTMM
PEPPERMINTPATTIES	PEZ	REESECUPS
SNICKERS	SUGARDADDY	TAFFY
THREEMUSKETEERS	TOOTSIEROLL	TWIX
		ZERO

Chuckles, Chortles & Giggles: The Benefits of Laughter

For most people, sharing a laugh with friends can quickly improve your day. But did you know laughing can do much more than boost your mood? Research has found that when people come together through laughter, positive emotional and physical changes can result. Reduced pain levels, protection from the harmful effects of stress, and a stronger immune system are among the benefits of taking time to laugh. For older adults, the effects can be even more profound. What are some of the ways your body and mind can benefit, and how can you bring more laughter into your life?

Research has found that laughter can improve quality of life for older adults by increasing blood vessel function, relieving stress and tension, improving memory and boosting overall happiness. But even without formal laughter, experts say enjoying a good belly laugh can confer benefits for seniors' health. Along with providing a boost to the immune system, laughter can reduce blood pressure and cholesterol by increasing blood oxygenation and aiding circulation, which can positively impact seniors suffering from high cholesterol and heart disease. In addition, laughter can increase levels of endorphins, which help regulate pain in the body. Laughing also increases dopamine and other stress-reducing chemicals in the body, and it can help seniors with asthma and bronchitis by exercising the abdominal muscles and diaphragm.

Laughter is a great tool for improving the quality of interpersonal relationships — so much so, in fact, that some experts believe all the other health benefits flow from the improved social support laughter brings. Even when human beings speak different languages, they share the common social signal of laughter. By laughing together, people form bonds, and they become emotionally attuned to each other. Unfortunately, research has found that laughter declines in relationships as people get older, but there are steps you can take to make sure you — and your friends and loved ones — keep laughing!

How can you increase the role of humor and laughter in your life? Be sure to smile. By smiling at others, you signal you're open to social interaction. In most cases, people will smile back, and they may even strike up a conversation!

Volunteer Appreciation

As you may know, April 12-16 was National Volunteer Appreciation Week. We hope you saw the ad in the Rutland Herald noting how much we appreciate all our grandparents. We have not forgotten you! We are putting together special goodies for all of you which will be available on May 27. That will include a FGP Fleece Vest with the new Americorp logo on it. You will be coming to our office on that date either as a drive-by or in person visit. We will let you know the time frame as it gets closer. So mark your calendars! We especially appreciate you over the past year during this COVID pandemic and particularly those who were able to continue to volunteer either remotely or in person during this time. Your teachers, students and schools have all told us how much they miss having you in their classrooms! You are the best and we are very proud of our grandparents!





AmeriCorps
Seniors

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Seniors

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Our Sponsor:



Community Care Network
Rutland Community Programs

Green Mountain Foster Grandparents are people age 55 or over who provide one to one and group assistance with children. Grandparents serve as mentors, tutors and role models to youth. Foster Grandparents provide 15–40 hours of volunteer service each week. They receive a modest stipend and other benefits. Foster Grandparents provide services in a variety of settings. These include daycare, elementary schools, high schools, Head Start Programs, libraries, after school programs and recreation centers. This program serves Rutland, Addison and Bennington Counties. It is the goal of the program to enable limited income persons 55 and over to remain physically and mentally active and to enhance their self-esteem through continued participation in needed community service. In addition, this will enable children to achieve improved physical, mental and social development, as well as assistance with their educational needs. The Foster Grandparent program is funded through the Corporation for National & Community Service.