

San Francisco Mission Corps successful with ‘Grandparents Who Care’

Last autumn the San Francisco Mission Corps, under the leadership of Envoys Mario and Maria Ruiz, initiated a program called Grandparents Who Care. The program is designed to help grandparents who are caregivers to their grandchildren.

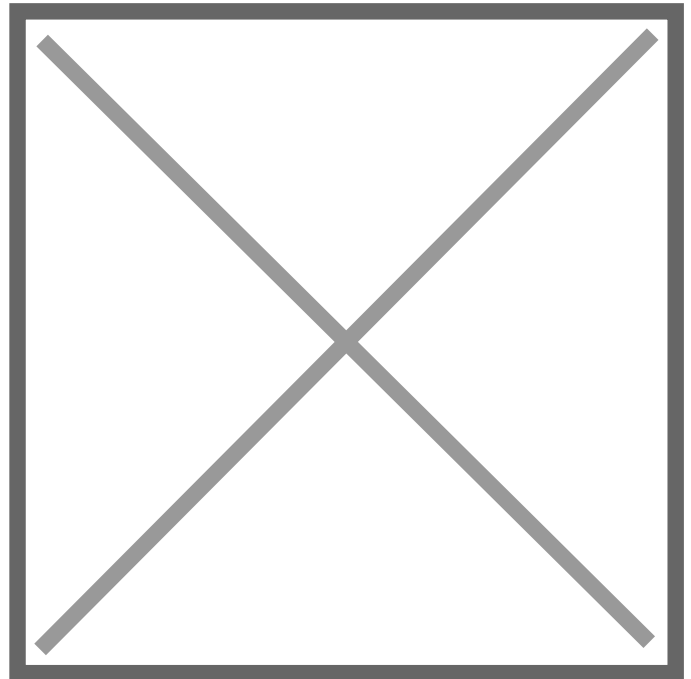
The community served by the corps is mainly Hispanic, but Envoy Maria says, “We want to accommodate all who wish to attend, so the meetings are bilingual.”

Every Thursday, from noon until 2 p.m., workers come to the corps to teach the grandparents the fine points of caring for their grandchildren. The program emphasizes three areas of knowledge: 1) basic care of children, playing with them, and dealing with emergencies; 2) helping them with homework; and 3) networking with others—consulting, advising and exchanging knowledge. Participants receive videos reviewing the information that they can watch at home.

The workers also provide information about a government program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which provides financial assistance to those grandparents in need who are caring for their grandchildren. The funds come from the federal government, but the program is administered by the state. The website www.aarp.org/grandparents provides more information about this opportunity.

The Grandparents Who Care workers are planning a group for teenage caregivers who are also eligible for assistance under the TANF program.

Currently the San Francisco Mission Corps has two groups of Grandparents Who Care. Only twelve are admitted to a group, so the groups are split depending on the age of the grandchildren: one group for ages 4-7 and another for ages 7-16. All involved have been impressed with the dedication of the women who lead these classes—they show love, patience and professionalism to the children and shower information and enthusiasm on all.



The program has met with great success and people in other areas are interested in forming groups. Many in Chinatown want to join but the distance to the Mission Corps is too great, so people there hope to start their own group.

Through Grandparents Who Care, the corps is able to fulfill many goals: helping the community, providing a social treat for the families, and giving them practical information on the TANF program. It encourages the grandparents when the government acknowledges their work and pays them with federal money, which is directed to the children. Because TANF is a federal program, it is available in all states. Other corps and churches can start an educational group for grandparents that teaches them not only how to care for their grandchildren but also how to benefit from TANF.