UDC Honors Senior Companion and Respite Aide Volunteers

The Institute of Gerontology of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) honored its senior volunteers, thanking them for a year of service. The mission of the Senior Companion and the Respite Aide programs is seniors helping seniors through volunteerism. The 34th Annual Senior Volunteers Recognition Day Luncheon was held May 21, 2014, at Vermont Avenue Baptist Church.

The programs help to preserve the independence of residents of the District of Columbia, supporting low income and disable older persons 55 years and older with high quality and compassionate volunteer service. With the help of senior volunteers, the Senior Companion and the Respite Aide programs improves the lives of seniors who are in need of assistants in order to maintain living in their homes and communities, avoiding institutionalization. Volunteers work up to 20 hours per week, five days a week.

“You all are the testament,” stated John Thompson, Executive Director, D.C. Office of Aging. “You are active and physically engaged.”

The volunteers were honored for five years of service and up. The volunteer with the most served years, Erma Long, has been a Respite Aide volunteer for 20 years. The programs’ oldest volunteer, Lena Acty, being 89 years young.

“Just because you’re retired, it doesn’t mean you have nothing to do,” UDC President Dr. James Lyons addressed the volunteers in his keynote. “You’re doing good work; it’s important,” he said, after speaking about his mother who was also a senior companion.

“Volunteering also helps the person who is doing the volunteering,” explained Marian Williams, a volunteer with the Institute of Gerontology.

The Senior Companion program touches the lives of senior citizens who need extra assistance to live independently in their homes and communities. Senior Companions serve frail older adults with disabilities and those with terminal illnesses. They assist senior clients in essential ways: offering companionship and friendship to isolated older adults, assisting with chores and adding richness to their clients’ lives.

The Respite Aide program provides in-home assistance to seniors living alone and also provides support to the care-giving families. This service helps the individual and/or family deal with the challenges of independent living in older adulthood.

“Through your efforts, seniors have been given the opportunity to fully enjoy their golden years in a caring and supportive atmosphere,” said Dr. Sabine O’Hara, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) of the University of the District of Columbia.
The Institute of Gerontology is part of the Center for Nutrition, Diet and Health, a division of CAUSES. Visit www.udc.edu/causes for more information or contact Dr. Elgloria Harrison at XXXXXXXXX or eharrison@udc.edu.

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