

Rep. Kahle offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 226.

A resolution to declare January 2018 as Foster Grandparent Month in the state of Michigan.

Whereas, For decades both Congress and state legislatures across the country have recognized the value and importance of one of our nation's most valuable resources, our senior volunteers, which strengthen our communities by contributing their experience, knowledge, and accomplishments; and

Whereas, At a time of mounting social need and growing interest in service by older Americans, the United States has an unprecedented opportunity to harness the talents of volunteers over the age of 55 to address community challenges; and

Whereas, It is well-known that grandparents can play an important role in children's lives. By listening, caring, and simply being a part of a child's life, grandparents provide encouragement, support, stability, and connectedness that can have a profound and lasting impact. They also serve as excellent role models and sounding boards, which is especially important for children who come from at-risk backgrounds or who face physical or emotional challenges; and

Whereas, From this idea emerged the Foster Grandparent Program, which began in 1965 as a national demonstration effort to show how limited income persons over the age of 55 have the maturity and experience to establish a personal relationship with children who have exceptional or special needs; and

Whereas, Foster grandparents make this commitment for the benefit of children and youth facing mental or physical challenges, such as learning disabilities, and for those who have experienced poverty, neglect, abuse, or delinquency; and

Whereas, The Foster Grandparent Program offers continuing intergenerational nurturing relationships, resulting in the participating children's emotional and social growth, increased self-confidence, and breaking of negative stereotypes of old people; and

Whereas, The mission of the Foster Grandparent Program is to improve the overall quality of life for the older adult volunteer and to help provide enrichment opportunities for students with special needs by filling a specific place in children's hearts and serving as effective role models for future citizens; and

Whereas, Foster grandparents receive as many benefits as the children with whom they work, allowing the foster grandparent to become a healthier, happier person who is motivated, who has a sense of pride which comes from being wanted and useful, and who stays mentally and physically active; and

Whereas, These senior volunteers are able to provide an average of 20 hours of weekly support to children under the age of 21 with special or exceptional needs; although some volunteers dedicate up to 40 hours a week. This offers the foster grandparents an excellent opportunity to share their lifetime of experience in a supportive relationship, thereby, having a tremendously positive impact in their community; and

Whereas, In addition to the satisfaction of helping their assigned children develop, the Foster Grandparent Program provides volunteers, who are older individuals on limited incomes, with tax-free stipends, one meal per day, reimbursement for transportation, and an annual physical, which have all been proven to improve the seniors' mental and physical health; and

Whereas, In Lenawee and surrounding counties, nearly 550 seniors have served as foster grandparents, contributing countless hours of non-judgmental guidance to nearly 2000 students and young adults, improving their reading, writing, and math skills as well as social interactions and self-esteem; and

Whereas, Michigan citizens benefit from 19 Foster Grandparent Programs that serve approximately 60 Michigan counties, with approximately 1,200 foster grandparents serving an estimated 9,000 young people in Michigan annually; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of this legislative body declare January 2018 as Foster Grandparent Month in the state of Michigan. We honor these selfless senior volunteers and the services they provide to children in our communities