



Postal Customer  
BULK RATE U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Lake Stevens Journal, Inc.  
ECRWSS

# Lake Stevens JOURNAL

Volume 40 Number 4

25¢

January 26, 2000

**THIS WEEK!**



**Everyday Heroes: Our annual Salute to Women** ..... Inside  
GFHS selects Alumni Hall of Fame winners ..... Page 5  
Viking swimmers on road to league title ..... Page 7

## Celebrate Women

# Sunnyside preschoolers keep volunteer young

by Jeanette Brown  
Journal contributing writer

In a recent interview with long time East Sunnyside resident Vera Johnson, it soon became apparent that she is a virtual living and walking history book; and that she is making important contributions toward the young lives she touches at a local preschool on a weekly basis.

At the same time, Johnson is reaping a variety of benefits while interacting with the pre-kindergarten children who attend Sunnyside Preschool.

"The children learn a lot from my stories and life experiences; and in return they help to keep me young," says the 77 year-old woman, with a sparkle in her eye. "The hugs are great too!"

The pre-school's owner, Cindy Brengman, has no doubt that the contributions made by older adults in early childhood programs are an interdependent one.

She believes that "The experience with older adults gives children a healthier sense of how they and others fit into the world, a better understanding of the life cycle.

"Our community's senior citizens facilitate a transfer of history and culture, a sense of place.... that can only be taught by one who has been there."

The wisdom Johnson brings to her pre-school students as a volunteer is a precious and priceless experience for the children.

Members of Johnson's extended family do not live in the area, and she feels that her life is more productive and meaningful because of the nurturing relationship she experiences when she visits with her "surrogate grandchildren" at the preschool.

Brengman and parents of children who attend the pre-school are also very grateful and appreciative to have a volunteer of Johnson's caliber.

Vickie Davenport said, "Vera is like an adopted Grandma to my daughter."

Kellie Niki said, "My son just loves going over to Vera's house to select his own pumpkin from the garden."

Pumpkin gathering from her own pumpkin patch is a special seasonal treat for the children; and Johnson makes sure they all get one.

Brengman and the young students who attend Sunnyside Preschool are impressed with the fact that Johnson is very self-assured and also good at using character voices while reading aloud to her very captive audience.

When asked if she had any insightful advice, Johnson stated that her philosophy on living was a simple one, "Keep active and enjoy life!" And that is exactly what Vera Johnson does.

When Johnson is not spending time with the students at Sunnyside Preschool, she has many other "irons in the fire" that keep her active.

Presently Johnson is keeping busy by gathering informa-

tion and interview- ing long time residents of East Sunnyside in order to help her son Gail Johnson and his wife compile a history of the "Historic Sunnyside" area.

Vera Johnson and her immediate family are very much a part of that "Old Sunnyside" history.

In 1932 Johnson moved to East Sunnyside from Newark, New Jersey with her parents, one sister and two brothers. She has resided in the same home where she raised her four sons since 1943.

Johnson remembers working at the Hartford Canneries. She also worked eight years at Tastad Pullet Farm, which was located in the East Sunnyside area, not too far from her home.

One of Johnson's favorite pastimes is reading, and she especially appreciates the books her granddaughters bring to her periodically.

Johnson states that she likes to read about a variety of subjects from Julia Child to China; but she is adamant about the fact that she has no "one" favorite topic or book.

She simply reads "Almost anything I can get my hands on, I love to read a variety of books on all subjects!"



"The children learn a lot from my stories and life experiences; and in return they help to keep me young," says 77 year-old Vera Johnson, who volunteers at Sunnyside Preschool.

When she is not working on the history of East Sunnyside or reading, Johnson likes to go to her ceramic class or do water exercises; but most of all, she looks forward to the visits from her kids, grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



Believe in Yourself!

Thank you! Vera

Respect Others