



The Word

2024 Issue No. 2

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The Word from Our Co-founders

Frank Williams Jr. and Jim Isenberg

As we near the close of 2024, it's time for a bit of Grandpas United™ reflection about the past months, while looking ahead to the New Year. Frank and I have been busy with a variety of efforts to promote Grandpas United™ across Westchester County and New York State. The support of our political leaders for Grandpas United™ has been incredibly helpful as we move forward with programs in White Plains and other Westchester County cities.



Grandpas United™ continues to be engaged actively with efforts to build trust for our youth with our White Plains Police Department. Grandpas United™ supported a YPI program for high school boys in April, and another for high school girls in November. This program has received great support from the WPPD officers and the many youth that have participated in this trust building program.

We want to give a big shout out to White Plains Mayor Tom Roach. Mayor Roach has been an active participant at our JumpStart for Dads graduations. The development of this program for new fathers has been well received as we create linkages with local hospitals, medical and community organizations. The Grandpas involved with JumpStart for Dads have created an invaluable new program that supports our intergenerational community!

In March, we were invited to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice conference that was focused on prevention programs in NY. We had a wonderful opportunity to share Grandpas United's mentoring work with the Youth Court as well as discuss the bimonthly mentoring training sessions for Grandpas! The conference participants were impressed with Grandpas United's active engagement with young men who had no fathers or grandpas in their lives!

In April, the Grandpas United™ program was honored that one of its members, Jim Isenberg/me, was selected as a Volunteer NY Spirit Award winner. This award underscores the great value and commitment of Grandpas United™ to give back to our communities! The Volunteer NY Awards breakfast offered a unique opportunity to share our work with over 500 government, corporate and non profit leaders as well as the overall Westchester County community.

Grandpas United™ had another exciting Civic Engagement Awards program that also focused on support for youth exploring new career options such as aviation. We had a terrific group of winners and an impressive group of high school seniors who joined the awards competition.

The Grandpas also were involved with the White Plains Youth Bureau's Summer Employment program. We offered an engaging session on networking with potential employment contacts to more than 200 youth from White Plains High School. The Grandpas later convened a very positive, intergenerational dialogue with youth about their views of the community and how they see their Leadership developing in the future!

Finally, Grandpas United™ continues to build its presence in New York with our first ever Grandpas Summit on December 5, in collaboration with White Plains Hospital. If you are a Grandpa or know any Grandpas who want to give back, support positive involvement with youth and enjoy new friendships with other like-minded Grandpas, please contact us, as we welcome you! "Onwards, Grandpas United"!





The "Grandpas Go to School" Handshake

by John Steward and Marc Sharff

Each Fall, we Grandpas look forward to reconnecting with a select group of students at Church Street Elementary School.

This year, we went back to school to meet back up with our young "old" friends. Some of the boys are old friends because we first met them as third graders last year, while others are new fourth grade friends. We meet up every other week during their lunch period to chat, joke, and play board games like Chess, Connect Four, Sorry, and Mancala.

More of our hands-on activities with them might be as simple as making paper airplanes or — more importantly — learning the nuances of shaking hands. Last year, we showed the boys how to effectively shake hands and introduce themselves to people they meet. It became a fun routine for all of us each time we got together.



Top photo: Marc Sharff, John Steward, Nick Wolff.

Bottom photo: Dennis Cuddy, John Steward



At our first meeting this school year, with no prompting from the Grandpas, the boys we worked with last year walked into our classroom and immediately walked to each of us, said hello, and shook our hands. Of course, all of the Grandpas responded in kind, with big smiles! The new boys naturally followed, and now it has become a "thing." They look us in the eye, shake hands, and say hello upon entering and again before leaving. Very cool, and so grown up!

The other day, one of the new boys asked me if we had a Grandpas United for the second grade, because his younger brother was in the second grade. "Maybe next year," I told him. He seemed disappointed. How wonderful it would be to have more Grandpas so we can meet up with more kids from more different grade levels! The more, the merrier. It's a win/win, for sure.

Meeting of the Minds "Across Generations"

The Across Generations collaborative event, by Grandpas United™ and the White Plains Youth Bureau, was created to facilitate constructive dialogue on aging-related topics, such as intergenerational understanding, collaborative problem-solving, and fostering meaningful relationships across age groups.

Through engaging discussions, we successfully bridged the perceived generation gap and explored strategies for building alliances and connections between older adults and youth. This program featured esteemed speakers including the Valedictorian and Salutatorian of White Plains High School, alongside other youth leaders and members of Grandpas United™.



*Grandpas (2nd row, l-r) Ervan Caesar, David Greene, Paul Schiffman, Ben Borenstein, Mark Bonistall and Frank Williams, Jr.
Front row: White Plains High School students and Youth Court volunteers*



JumpStart for Dads Continues to Grow

by Vito Sessa and Ervan Caesar

Grandpa United's JumpStart for Dads (JSFD) virtual skills and support program for fathers has great news to report. We have completed a number of additional groups since our inception last December. Ervan and Vito, appreciate the help of fellow Grandpas United volunteers, Harry Campbell, Paul Schiffman, Dave Shakin, and John Steward, who have been facilitating other sessions. We are also teaching JSFD in Spanish, with a bilingual JSFD graduate facilitating the course. All feedback has been extremely positive, all the participants were engaged and shared their experiences and feelings freely.

Many participants have come to us through the JumpStart flyer on the White Plains Hospital (WPH) website. Some have been referred to the program by their pastors and, most recently, we have received referrals from social service agencies and the local Head Start program.

Ervan and Vito continue to recruit participants throughout White Plains and beyond. They presented JSFD at a Men's Ministry Breakfast at Bethel Baptist Church and held a workshop at the 9th Annual NY Fathering Conference at the County Center. Good connections with other agencies who service families and dads were made. Much interest resulted from their talks with the Domestic Violence Unit at W.P. Public Safety, as well as with family court judges at the NYS Judicial Institute.

Celebrating our graduating fathers has become a tradition. We have hosted JSFD celebratory breakfasts for the recent graduating participants, their families, and the JSFD team. Several celebrations were held at the White Plains Youth Bureau including an inspiring talk by Mayor Roach about the importance of fathers. Another celebration was held at Pamplemousse Project.



JumpStart for Dads graduating family celebration at The Pamplemousse Project with Grandpas (l-r) John Steward, Paul Schiffman and Dr. Vito Sessa.



JumpStart for Dads graduating families with Mayor Tom Roach and Grandpas (l-r) John Steward, Harry Campbell, David Shakin, Dr. Vito Sessa, Paul Schiffman and Ervan Caesar.

Certificates of completion were awarded along with a JumpStart for Dads reference guide, and (of course) Goodnight Moon and The Hungry Caterpillar for the fathers to read to their children. At these heart-warming events, JSFD facilitators Harry Campbell, Paul Schiffman, Dave Shakin, and John Steward, agreed to stay connected with the fathers. Just wonderful...



Grandpas United and JSFD honor Grandpa David Shakin for his service to our programs. Dave plans to stay in touch and continue to facilitate JSFD sessions virtually with Harry Campbell. Thanks, Dave!



Grandpas to the Rescue!

Ice Cream Emergency at Bits N Pieces Camp

An annual summer favorite activity is our Grandpas Go To Camp event at the Bits N Pieces summer camp. This year, our Grandpas amped up the fun with the Ice Cream Emergency truck experience and dance party.



The campers were amazed by the customized emergency vehicle fully equipped with an ice cream sundae bar. DJ Corey kept the party jumping while the children and Grandpas shared the good vibes. Everyone had a great (and yummy) time. See you next summer!

Summer Employment - The Elevator Pitch



This past June, the Grandpas were invited to help coach the Youth Bureau's Summer Employment candidates on interviewing skills and how to put their best foot forward. Over 150 students participated over three days of workshops, preparing for summer jobs throughout White Plains.



The Grandpas mentored the students in small groups and helped them present their strengths concisely and with confidence - also known as the "Elevator Pitch." The students appreciated the Grandpas expertise and professional experiences. The Grandpas enjoyed sharing their wisdom through coaching an enthusiastic crowd.





Coffee With Grandpas and Commissioner Chong

Our keystone program continues to inform and build connections within our Grandpas community.

In October, Grandpas United™ was honored to host a talk by White Plains Public Safety Commissioner David E. Chong.

Comm. Chong told us about his early years growing up in NYC's public housing, then almost by chance, took the Civil Service exam and joined the NYPD. He spent 20+ years undercover in a Chinatown gang. His stories were fascinating!



Comm. Chong was also a first responder on 9/11 and survived the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers.

Following 9/11, Chong joined the NYPD's Counter-Terrorism Bureau as the Commander of the Global Intelligence and Analysis Unit. His message to the next generation is to never forget what happened.

ON DECK DEC. 17, 9:30AM - VIRTUAL COFFEE WITH LEGENDARY NY MET MOOKIE WILSON!

Notes from Youth Court

Grandpas United™ volunteers continue to mentor young men referred through the Youth Court juvenile justice diversion program. We are proud that the program continues to report a 0% recidivism rate for those who complete the program. Every student must write an essay about what they learned during the process. It is heart-warming to see the positive impact the Grandpas have made in these young people lives. See below.

"Being in youth court I have learned that I made a mistake, and it is never right to hurt someone... By spending time with the Grandpa, I learned that there is help everywhere and that there are always people who are willing to help out through the bad stuff in your life, and it is okay to look up to them for help. They are there to listen to you and you can open up to them to look for help and support." – M.

"I also enjoyed talking to my new Grandpa mentor, Dean. So far, we have talked twice on the phone and gotten to know each other. He is very nice and supportive in our conversations. Overall, he is a great person and I look forward to getting to talk to him more, even after finishing probation." – D

Youth-Police Initiative: Building Trust

The Grandpas proudly continues to sponsor the Youth-Police Initiative (YPI) programming in White Plains. This evidence-based intervention has been proven to reduce the incidence of youth violence. Its goal is to bring at-risk youth and local police officers together through shared activities and conversation. By bonding over meals, team-building, and personal stories, they find common ground and built trust in one another.

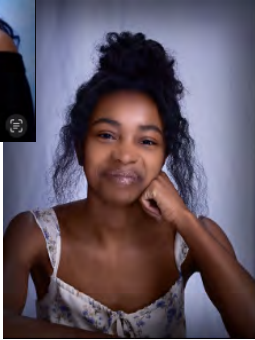
We appreciate the commitment and participation of White Plains Police Chief Castelli, Lieutenant Fazzino, SRO Ashley Garcia and NAFI facilitator Denisha Tate-McAlister in bringing this important initiative to sixteen teen girls at the Slater Center.



Our 2024 Civic Engagement Scholarship Winners



Sarah
Dhaiti



Nia
Griffin



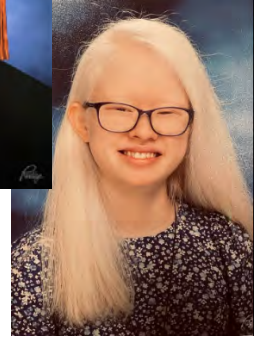
Alex
Mathews



Noah
Millard



Sabrina
Mondschein



Nuala
Stanghellini

As part of our mission, Grandpas United™ established an annual Civic Engagement Award program to honor high school seniors on track for graduation who have developed the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in their community.

We are proud to recognize Sarah Dhaiti, Nia Griffin, Alex Mathews, Sabrina Mondschein, and Nuala Stanghellini as our 2024 Grandpas United Civic Engagement Award winners. Eagle Scout Noah Millard received the Solomon Gibbons Legacy Award for his community service and commitment to a career in the trades.

Together, our six winners have served people of all ages in and around our community. They have volunteered their time at Youth Court, were leaders at anti-hate and drug prevention workshops, addressed food insecurity, took active roles in faith-based clubs and initiatives, had leadership roles at WPHS, tutored at the Slater Center, and supported the Youth Bureau's Aviation Academy.

They plan to further their education by majoring in a wide range of fields, including Hospital Administration, Industrial Design, Computer Science, Aeronautical Science, Family Law, and STEM Education.

They are quite a group of highly talented and committed young people, of whom we are all very proud.

Did you know these scholarships are possible only through private donations?

Please include Grandpas United in your giving plans this year.

Your generosity today will help us enrich our community with special intergenerational activities only funded by private donations, such as:

- Our annual Civic Engagement Scholarship Awards program for high school seniors dedicated to making our world a better place.
- JumpStart for Dads graduation kits for young fathers who want to be the best Dad they can be for the next generation.
- Special intergenerational activities, such as field trips with White Plains, guest speakers, and enrichment programming at schools.

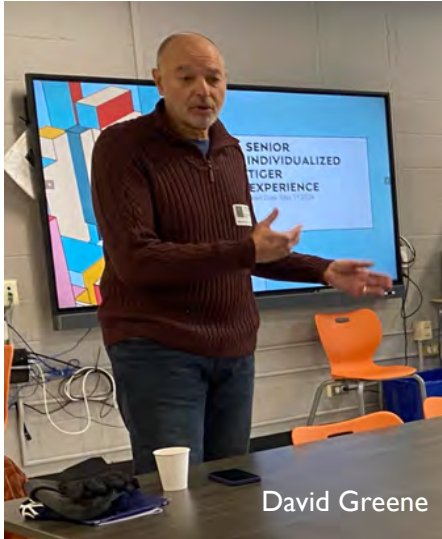


**Scan above to
make a donation.
Thank you!**

Grandpas Mentor WPHS S.I.T.E. Students

Seeking Sponsors for Student Interns - May/June 2025

by David Greene



White Plains High School's Senior Individualized Tiger Experience (S.I.T.E.) gives seniors the chance to experience a post-secondary profession or interest that they are considering pursuing after graduation.

It was my privilege to assist their committee, led by Assistant Principal Gaetano Vitiello and SITE Facilitator Danielle Lo Medico over the past two years, to create this wonderful and exciting program.

I am especially excited about this program because I have seen the success of similar programs I have worked on at Woodlands and Scarsdale high schools, as well as others I have helped start.

Right now, we are hoping to create a network of sponsors in our White Plains community as well as surrounding areas that speaks to the various interests of our students. While we know that this network will be a great experience for our students, we are confident that sponsors of students will also benefit from the commitment, skills, and knowledge our students bring to these experiences.

The program will begin May 1, 2025, and extend through mid-June, ending prior to students' graduation date.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor to a student intern in your workplace or help guide them on their journey to be immersed in an area of their interest, or simply have any specific program questions, please contact:

**Jeffrey Hirsch at jeffreyhirsch@wpcsd.k12.ny.us or
Genevieve Little at genevievelittle@wpcsd.k12.ny.us**

We look forward to another successful S.I.T.E. year for WPHS seniors and are excited for this venture with you.



Grandpas United™ Across Westchester



New Rochelle is partnering with a number of organizations, including the newly opened Boys & Girls Club, the City of New Rochelle Parks & Recreation Running Club, and the Bethesda Baptist Church Food Pantry, to name a few. The Grandpas even marched in this year's New Rochelle Thanksgiving Day Parade!

Ossining holds Coffee With Grandpas gatherings every two weeks. They continue to mentor teens at the My Brother's Keeper program, and meet with younger children at Grandpas Reading Circle and Game Time in the after school program at the Ossining Recreation Center.

Peekskill's Grandpas are busy with local youth. They have participated in an intergenerational program in honor of Black History Month, interacted with youth at a St. Patrick's Day celebration, and a Bowling With Grandpas event. The Grandpas are also helping high school students fill out college applications.

Port Chester Grandpas regularly accompany youth to enrichment programming and field trips. They also coached the Port Chester Youth Bureau basketball team for a successful competitive season.

Volunteer New York Honors Grandpas United™



Our co-founder and (new) Westchester County Hall of Fame member, Jim Isenberg, and Grandpas United™ were honored with the 2024 Volunteer Spirit Award in Education & Literacy.

This major annual event was attended by over 500 individuals from Hudson Valley's who's who of volunteerism, followed by an incredible program that celebrated the strength and spirit of our community.



CALLING ALL GRANDPAS! WE WANT YOU!

Just a few hours of your time makes a difference. Call or text 914-446-0783 to join or for info.



Sponsored in part by the
Westchester County Youth Bureau

The mission of Grandpas United of the White Plains Youth Bureau is to utilize the talents, skills and experiences of our Grandpas to improve our community. We aspire to serve as male role models and mentors to enhance the growth and development of our youth, while sharing our talents and experiences with one another, enabling us to maintain our dignity self-respect and self-worth. For more information, call the White Plains Youth Bureau at 914-422-1378, visit or email GrandpasUnitedWPYB@gmail.com.