

Honoring Elders — Listening with Love

Objective:

Students will understand why elders are important in families and communities. They'll learn about Haitian elders through the Forever Friends program and practice showing respect through listening and storytelling.

Materials:

- Chart paper or board
- Drawing or writing paper and crayons
- History and Images of MFOH's Forever Friends program – see below

Lesson Outline (20 min)

1. Opening Question (5 min)

Ask: "Who is the oldest person you know?" "What do they teach you?"

Write responses on the board (examples: stories, kindness, how to cook, family history).

Ask: "What does the word 'wisdom' mean?" Explain: Wisdom means knowing important things—especially from life experience. Elders carry wisdom that helps us make good choices.

2. Activity: "What I Can Learn from an Elder" Drawing (10 min)

Students draw a picture of:

- A grandparent, older neighbor, or friend
- Something they can learn from them (a story, a song, a life lesson)

Encourage them to write one sentence: "One thing I learned from my elder _____."

3. Closing Reflection (5 min)

Ask: "How can we show love and respect to elders every day?"

Ask: "What can you do this week to show kindness to an elder?"

MFOH Forever Friends Program

On November 27, 2020, some very special friendships were formed at the Maison Bon Samaritain (MBS) home in Gros Morne, Haiti. Grade school children from the nearby School of Jesus and Mary (Lekòl Jezi-Mari) presented artwork, drawings, and notes -- which they had created for the occasion -- to the residents of MBS, who are elderly and disabled.

The intergenerational experience was especially poignant given the extreme isolation the MBS residents have been experiencing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Besides enjoying the occasion to share songs, dance, and treats, the residents lost no time offering their life experiences with the students, including advice on the need to study hard and treat their teachers and others with respect. “Be respectful because you will be leaders someday,” confided one.

The kick-off of “Forever Friends” was made possible by a grant from Sherry Power, director of FOREVER FRIENDS. Established in 1998, FOREVER FRIENDS Inc. is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is rooted in the value of intergenerational relationships. The organization strives to bring children and elders together in various settings, so both groups learn from and about each other, form friendships, and break down age-related stereotypes.

Since that initial meeting in November, the students and MBS residents have met multiple times. The residents start clapping and dancing as soon as they see the students. Students bring music and song, read stories for the residents, share jokes, and dance. There is much joy in these gatherings!





