



Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 16, 2010

Media Contact:

Yahaira García-Perea 559.263.1024

Local Volunteer Honored with 2010 California Senior Community Leader Award & California Wellness Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award

- Grandma" Emma Curtis has invested 27,600 hours mentoring at-risk youth over the last 23 years -

(Fresno, CA) Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission's (EOC) Foster Grandparent Program proudly announces "Grandma" Emma Curtis as the recipient of the 2010 California Senior Community Leader Award and the California Wellness Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award. She will be presented with these distinguished awards during The California Wellness Foundation's California Senior Leaders Program Award Ceremony later this month in Oakland, CA. The program brings visibility to older California volunteers who have made real and lasting contributions to healthy aging and community building while demonstrating a commitment to social justice and/or broader level social change.

Throughout her 23 years as a Foster Grandparent volunteer, Grandma Curtis has impacted the lives of more than 15,000 youngsters. She began her volunteer service through EOC's Foster Grandparent Program at Marjaree Mason Center where she comforted children exposed to domestic violence; now, she spends her time mentoring students at EOC's School of Unlimited Learning Charter High School. Her volunteer day may include one-to-one mentoring sessions with teenage runaways undergoing life trauma, personalized consolation to adolescents facing unwanted pregnancy, or encouraging courage in the spirit of youngsters attempting to break from gang affiliation. Along with her dedication to making a difference in the lives of our young citizens, Grandma Curtis walks the hallways of retirement centers and hospitals bringing cheer to senior citizens who have taken ill.

Grandma Curtis grew up in Arkansas during the era of segregation and her commitment to social justice and civil rights was born from her experience as a nanny during the period of Jim Crow division, as a member of the Little Rock Arkansas community during the time of the Little Rock Nine, and as a spiritually conscious human being during the civil disobedience/direct action movement of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. She was called to action by these events protesting at Little Rock Central High School and taking part in marches with Dr. King. She carries this legacy forward as she and her late husband formed a ministry to serve the disenfranchised and homeless members of our community.



Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission

At 86 years-young, Grandma Curtis shows no signs of slowing down. Despite the time devoted to her volunteer service, Grandma Curtis still finds the time to serve her community as a block captain, an active member of St. Rest Baptist Church, a board member on numerous commissions and advisory committees including Fresno Foster Grandparent Program Advisory Group, and a former participant of TRIAD Elder Council.

About Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (EOC)

For over 44 years, Fresno County EOC – a private, nonprofit agency – has helped low-income Fresno County residents become self-sufficient. EOC offers over 30 comprehensive community-based programs that develop an individual's capabilities and places them on the path toward financial independence.

###