



**CITY OF NEW HAVEN  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**NEW HAVEN** IT ALL HAPPENS HERE

Mayor John DeStefano, Jr. [www.infonewhaven.com](http://www.infonewhaven.com)

For Immediate Release  
June 12, 2008

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
**Jessica Mayorga**, Director of Public Information  
203-946-7660, 203-627-4224 (cell)

---

**-PRESS RELEASE-**

**MAYOR DESTEFANO HONORS EARTH ELDERS  
PROGRAM IN NEW HAVEN SCHOOLS**

***PROGRAM CONNECTS SENIORS AS PART OF A HISTORY  
CURRICULUM TO TEACH CHILDREN USING THEIR 1<sup>ST</sup> HAND  
EXPERIENCES***

**NEW HAVEN-** Inspired by the world's oldest adults—"super centenarians" at least 110 years old—New Haven is the first city in the nation to embrace a unique learning experience through a curriculum that directly links elementary schools with local senior centers to foster intergenerational respect and understanding. At a news event today, Mayor John DeStefano, Jr. honored the seniors, students and educators involved in the program and praised the project for its impact on relationship-building between children and seniors.

"This program provides an important opportunity for inter-generational learning and for young people to connect with our seniors," said DeStefano. "There is so much our young people can learn from our older residents. While our kids can learn a great deal by reading their history books, there's nothing like being able to meet and talk to someone who lived through some of the experiences they're learning about."

One-hundred twenty fifth graders, an equal number of older adults and six teachers and staff members are currently participating in the city's program which began in April. Co-sponsored by the Earth's Elders Foundation of Kent, Conn., and the Connecticut

Commission on Aging based at the state Capitol in Hartford, the program will resume at the schools in September.

Participating schools are the Celentano Museum Academy, 50 students; Edgewood Magnet School, 30 students; and Hooker Middle School, 40 fifth-graders.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Reginald Mayo thanked Miriam Camacho, Director of Instruction, for helping arrange the pilot program in the three schools. “We have had a tremendously positive experience with this new program,” Dr. Mayo said. “In a culture that tends to be youth-driven, this has helped our young people to really appreciate our elders, not just as the keepers of history but also as teachers of tolerance and understanding in our society.”

The curriculum, offered free of charge to schools nationwide, is the brainchild of Earth’s Elders Foundation founder and chairman Jerry Friedman, who traveled the world between 2000 and 2005 interviewing and photographing 62 super centenarians. The book based on Friedman’s travels, “Earth’s Elders: The Wisdom of the World’s Oldest People,” features 50 photos and interviews.

The city’s fifth graders follow Friedman’s example by interviewing older adults in their families, at the senior centers and throughout the community. To satisfy curriculum requirements, the students prepare essays, take photographs and produce artwork based on the interviews.

The free curriculum and accompanying teacher’s guide in use now in New Haven are offered free to schools around the country via the Earth’s Elders website, [www.earthselders.org](http://www.earthselders.org).

The educational materials were developed by Friedman and the Bank Street Graduate School of Education in New York to provide innovative ways for students to learn about history, geography, health, ethics and other subjects by exploring original family documents and interviewing family and community elders to create oral histories. In New Haven, the curriculum is being used to complement the students’ studies in history, social studies and English.

A retired award-winning photographer, Friedman began his globe-trotting super centenarian quest in 2000 after spending four days in his 90-year-old mother’s Boston care facility “...to try to imagine my own elder years.”

This year the foundation and commission co-sponsored an exhibit March 31- April 4 at the historic Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

“We are thrilled to introduce the Earth’s Elders curriculum to New Haven’s schools where the students, teachers and older adult participants have received it so enthusiastically,” said Jerry Friedman, founder and chairman of the Earth’s Elders

Foundation of Kent, Conn. “It’s extremely gratifying that so many people in our home state are working together to turn a generation gap into a living generation bridge.”

“It is an honor for the Connecticut Commission on Aging to join with the Earth’s Elders Foundation to bring this inspirational and educational program to New Haven, where it has been embraced with such energy, enthusiasm and creativity by all involved,” said Commission on Aging Executive Director Julia Evans Starr. “The foresight and leadership shown by the New Haven community is truly an inspiration for other towns and cities in Connecticut and across the country.”

The Connecticut Commission on Aging, based at the state Capitol, was established by the legislature in 1993 to give the older adults of today and tomorrow a stronger voice within state government on issues including health care, long-term care, nutrition, housing, employment, transportation, legal assistance and economic security. The commission’s 17 voting members are appointed by the governor or members of the General Assembly. Its 16 ex officio members include state legislators and commissioners from several state departments.

[END]