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## **ÁegisLiving Partners with Local School for “Grandpals” Program**

***Seniors Help Second-Graders Improve Reading Skills***

REDMOND, Wash. – March 21, 2006 – ÁegisLiving, a progressive senior living company based in Redmond, today announced that its Kirkland community, Áegis of Kirkland, has teamed up with the Lake Washington School District for a program the school calls “Grandpals.”

Grandpals is an innovative partnership that is designed to build a meaningful bond between seniors and children who are struggling with their reading skills. As part of the program, seniors from Áegis of Kirkland visit the school library twice a week to share stories and listen as children read to them.

Here’s how Grandpals works. Every Monday and Wednesday morning, a group of about a dozen seniors, all residents of Áegis of Kirkland, travel by bus to Helen Keller Elementary School in Kirkland. Seniors arrive at 10:30 a.m., and the classes run from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m. Upon their arrival at the school, the seniors from Áegis are greeted by a group of fifth-grade students who escort them to the library, where second-grade students pair off with the seniors for reading time. The second-graders read books to the seniors and work on reading skills, changing partners several times during the session so that everyone has a chance to spend time together.

“I like Grandpals because I can read to someone who listens,” says Olivia Toland, a second-grader at Helen Keller Elementary School. “It is a treat for them and me.”

When the reading classes with the second-graders are over for the day, a different group of fifth-grade students escorts the Áegis seniors back to their bus, each offering an arm or pushing a wheelchair.

The brainchild of PTA member Barbara Tritz, the Grandpals program began in January and has been extremely successful in engaging the second graders in their reading.

“What a motivating and fun way to have students practice their reading skills!,” says Peggy Warner, second-grade teacher at Helen Keller Elementary School. “My class looks forward to Mondays and time to read to their Grandpals. To see the Grandpals come in with smiles on their faces and the students’ eager enthusiasm to read is a heart-warming experience that will last forever with me, my students and Grandpals.”

Grandpals has been a great success with Áegis of Kirkland residents as well. The seniors enthusiastically anticipate their trips to the school and consider these children to be their special friends.

“The kids are just darling. They put so much life back into us,” says Áegis of Kirkland resident Helen Crabtree. “It’s amazing how we go full circle in our lives. As we grow older, we can still serve a purpose by helping the youth.”

Based on the success in Kirkland, ÁegisLiving is developing plans to bring the Grandpals program to all 40 of its communities in Washington, California, Nevada, Colorado and Kansas.

"I've heard so many wonderful stories about how much our Áegis residents love having the opportunity to visit these kids and help contribute to their education," says ÁegisLiving founder and CEO Dwayne Clark. "Grandpals is a great way for our seniors to bond with children in the local community."

Lake Washington School District leaders and representatives will be visiting Helen Keller Elementary on March 27 to witness the Grandpals program first-hand.

**Editor's Note:** Photos of the Grandpals program in action are available upon request. Please contact Amy Best at (425) 823-7272.

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### **About ÁegisLiving**

ÁegisLiving is a national leader in independent and assisted living with a premier Alzheimer's and dementia care program. ÁegisLiving operates 40 communities in Washington, California, Nevada, Colorado and Kansas, with more than \$120 million in revenue under management.

ÁegisLiving provides a diverse group of community options to meet all seniors' needs. **Áegis Senior Living** offers independent, active seniors a distinctive, resort-style community that features luxurious amenities and a wide variety of floor plans. **Áegis Assisted Living** communities are newly constructed and specially designed for seniors who need a little help with assisted-living services or for those who need dementia care. **Áegis Senior Inns** are more casual, remodeled neighborhood communities that offer lower-cost options for seniors who need assisted-living services, or for those who need dementia care.

More information about ÁegisLiving is available at <http://www.aegisliving.com/>.