

## Region 11 (Hardin County) ~ Pansy Michels Wins Individual Bridges Over Barriers Award

by Teresa Edlin, Coordinator, New Highland FRC

**Elizabethtown (KY)** • It is with great pleasure that I nominated, Ms. Pansy Michels, for the Bridges over Barriers Best Partner Award for the Individual Category. In 1993, FRYSC's were being pioneered in our state. It was also the year that I was hired as the FRC Coordinator. Looking at the mission and responsibilities, I knew that I needed help to be effective. I sent an e-mail out to the school staff. A reply came from a kindergarten teacher saying that a Grandmother of one her students wanted to be involved with the school but she did not need an additional volunteer. I contacted her and I fell in love with this special lady, Pansy Michels, the moment I met her. She agreed to come to the FRC at least one day per week during the school year to assist me with clerical work and to facilitate a school- wide birthday self-esteem program which required going through the old 1990's computer print outs of students, designing class sheets of each child's birthdays, baking cupcakes for students (600-700) plus staff, and distributing them to students with a ribbon telling each child that they are special. Pansy still runs the program for our FRC. This program has become easier over the years. Cupcakes are donated. Class lists are easily printed. However, she still hands out ribbons, cupcakes, and pencils to students. After 21 years, she has become mostly known as the beloved Cupcake Lady at our School! She also was involved with doing eye screenings on students for several years during the 90's. She also paid for a cab for one year for referrals working on their GED who did not have transportation. She has cleaned many tables in the cafeteria for our school.



Ms. Pansy continues to work one day per week at the school. She also works to assist most evening events -working two full days prior to our huge back to school Readi-Fest to help me organize it. The project is so huge; I would not be able to do it without her. She always comes early with a smile and leaves with a smile as she helps me clean up after events. She assists with our dental screenings days, Field Day, Family Fun Nights, Cradle School, etc. Over the years, she organized volunteers for a two-month (7 day/week) community fundraiser at the mall for our center, a variety of Santa Shop Fund Raisers, and much more.

Pansy took a break from volunteering at our FRC from 2003-2005, during the time that her husband was being treated for cancer. He also volunteered at our FRC during events, at the encouragement of Ms. Pansy. After her husband passed away, she came back to the FRC to assist us. She said she truly believed in our mission and that her time with the students was priceless to her. She told me many times, "God has given me health to serve and this is where I am supposed to be". She also takes care of an elderly sister in a nursing home and is active serving in a variety of roles in her church.

Pansy has also assisted the FRC many times financially. She often shows up with donations of items that she knows that we need. She has purchased a variety of refreshment items over the years that help the FRC with concession donations from PTO, Santa Shop Items, Clothing, and Basic Need Items for Families, Holiday Help Sponsorships, etc. I could truly go on and on...

Pansy's Granddaughter is now a teacher in our school system and talks about fond memories of assisting her grandmother with volunteer events at our school.

Pansy is 79 years old, a widow, and a FRC Advocate like no other. Her service to the FRC has been behind the scenes work. However, her long term loyalties, dedicated service, donations of time and personal resources show her devotion to our program should be recognized. She is amazing!