

In the field of advocating for the gifted and talented of Massachusetts, we often receive inquiries from parents looking for information and resources in meeting the needs of their children. In 2004 I received a call from a member of an increasingly growing population of those concerned about appropriate challenges for children - and that's grandparents.

Marion Shaker contacted MAGE in support of her grandchildren. She was a retired elementary classroom teacher who was actively engaged in taking care of her six grandchildren - with one more on the way.

I remember our first conversation, as she asked the important questions that are difficult to answer: Why isn't there more in place? Why isn't there more that has been done? She then, however, followed those questions up with the question that is the most important of all: "*How can I help?*"

Despite the hectic pace of caring not only for her grandchildren, but also elders in her family, Marion enthusiastically jumped right into service. She came to the table with a willingness to learn and a wealth of energy and innovative ideas. We needed a Membership Chairperson and she took over this critical component of our organization, making many helpful amendments to the way membership is handled and always working with the utmost attention to detail.

She was ready to help at every turn and made a significant contribution by attending the *NAGC Affiliate Education Conference* on a moment's notice to replace a delegate who could not make it due to a sudden illness. She proved to be a powerful advocate and followed-up her work in Washington with advocacy back here in Massachusetts.

I am especially pleased to honor Marion today, however, due to her next step. In learning of the Master's Degree program in gifted education at *The University of Connecticut*, Marion made the decision to enter their *Three Summers Program*. It is not often that one hears of a retired educator pursuing a new degree - - - especially one that is as rigorous as UConn's and requires both online learning and weeks of residency during the summer. However, the talented and driven Marion Shaker did just that and earned her degree in 2008.

Marion is still reaching out to families looking for support in meeting the needs of their gifted and talented children. She has founded *M. L. Shaker Tutorial and Educational Services* in support of her philosophy that, "every child deserves the chance to fly; to soar and excel to his or her full potential."

She is an inspiration both for her drive in advocating for the needs of students beyond her family and in choosing to earn her degree in a field that is often misunderstood and will benefit from having a talented, spirited, hard-working grandparent advocate!

I am pleased to present the *MAGE Public Service Award* to Marion L. Shaker