

WESTPORT — A dozen Dartmouth seniors in their 90's were put in the spotlight Sunday, recognized for their accomplishments and commitments.

"I didn't expect it, but it's a nice feeling after all these years," said Alzida "Elsie" Ferro, who still volunteers twice a week at the Dartmouth Council on Aging and is turning 94 next week.

The event, "Yesterday's Children, Wisdom of our Elders" which had to be moved to White's of Westport due to the large number of people attending, was Sunday at noon, put on by the Dartmouth Wanderers, Dartmouth Friends of the Elderly and the town's Historical and Arts Society. Honorees were to be given citations from United States, state and town government officials.

"She calls it her second home," said Laura Gula about the COA, telling Ferro's story to the audience.

"I do a little bit of everything," Ferro told The Standard-Times. She answers phones or works in the gift shop if needed.

"I talk to and hug everybody, that's my job now," she said.

She said she missed her husband Jacintho "Jessie" Ferro who died in 2013. She recalled her first date with him at the former Lincoln Park amusement park on the ferris wheel. She also remembered when the two worked together at the Willow Tree Ice Cream Parlor on Rockdale Avenue when it was owned by Jesse's family.

Elsie organized monthly themed parties with Jesse, helped out with bingo and was instrumental in bringing live bands to the senior center. She was named "senior sweetheart" in 1991.

However, she had some family with her Sunday, including two nuns that traveled from New York.

"This is more like a family gathering," said Maria Connor, Friends of the Elderly president, adding some people saw each other for the first time in years.

"Families do appreciate these members who have done so much," Connor said.

Ellie White of Dartmouth Friends of the Elderly and the Wanderers said "I was very impressed when I read some of the biographies" of the elders.

Connor noted “They are your neighbors, from down the street,” and have “accomplished quietly.”

Select Board Chairman Frank Gracie III took to the podium before the 12 seniors were honored.


“I think the elders of the community are to always be respected,” he said. “I think they have all the wisdom.”

He encouraged younger people to spend some time with the elderly to “learn what life is really all about.”

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Walter E. Dearing accepts the applause of the crowd during a program to honor him and 11 others age 90 or above who have contributed in some way to society during a luncheon held at White's of Westport. [DAVID W. OLIVEIRA/STANDARD-TIMES SPECIAL/SCMG]



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Alzida (Elsie) Ferro speaks about her life during a program to honor her and 11 others age 90 and above at White's of Westport. [DAVID W. OLIVEIRA/STANDARD-TIMES SPECIAL/SCMG]




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Alzida (Elsie) Ferro accepts the applause of the crowd during a program to honor her and 11 others age 90 or above who have contributed in some way to society. [DAVID W. OLIVEIRA/STANDARD-TIMES SPECIAL/SCMG]




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Navy Veteran Donat Bernier listens to the speakers during a program to honor him and other nonagenarians. [DAVID W. OLIVEIRA/STANDARD-TIMES SPECIAL/SCMG]



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Family and friends gather to honor 12 seniors during a luncheon held at White's of Westport. [DAVID W. OLIVEIRA/STANDARD-TIMES SPECIAL/SCMG]