WEST HARTFORD, CONN. – The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph (USJ) invites senior citizens from the surrounding community to participate in an intergenerational literacy volunteer program. *S.P.E.C.I.A.L.*, which stands for *Seniors and Preschoolers Engaging Collaboratively in All Learning*, was first initiated in 1999 with a start-up grant from the Fisher Foundation and has since become a model for other preschool programs. USJ’s School for Young Children is conveniently located at 238 Steele Road in West Hartford.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kimberly Perrotta, assistant director of The School for Young Children, at 860.231.5569 or kperrotta@usj.edu.

At The School for Young Children, volunteers are warmly welcomed like a part of the family! Senior volunteers are assigned to the same classroom for an hour each week. Joining the same classroom weekly allows special relationships to develop. Activities that *S.P.E.C.I.A.L.* volunteers regularly engage in during their hour at The School for Young Children include:

- Reading to individual children, small groups of children, or the entire class
- Accompanying small groups of students to The School’s lending library to take out books
- Participating in art and cooking activities
- Sharing a special interest such as a foreign language or yoga
- Simply engaging in conversation
Intergenerational programming offers preschoolers individualized attention; increased involvement in literacy activities; supportive, positive role models providing motivation to learn; and meaningful relationships and respect of the talents and wisdom of older people. Similarly, senior citizens who participate in the S.P.E.C.I.A.L. program garner significant benefits including a sense of purpose and satisfaction; continued involvement in their communities; and opportunities to share knowledge, skills and values with the next generation.

Founded in 1936, USJ’s School for Young Children was established at a time when early childhood education was nearly nonexistent and quickly established itself as a leader in the field of child development. In addition to being one of the first preschools in the State of Connecticut, The School for Young Children ranks as one of the first laboratory sites in the nation designed for preschool teacher training. Today, 140 children from ages three to five years are enrolled at the school; enrollment is open to the public. For more information about The School for Young Children at the University of Saint Joseph, please visit www.usj.edu/syc.

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The University of Saint Joseph (USJ) offers a wide range of graduate, undergraduate, and certificate programs that combine a professional and liberal arts education with a focus on service. Coeducational graduate master’s and doctoral degree programs are taught on the University’s two campuses in West Hartford and Hartford, Connecticut; at off-campus locations throughout the state; and online. Undergraduate programs for women and for coeducational adult students take place on our beautiful suburban campus and include more than 22 majors and six pre-professional programs, each of which provides personal attention in a caring environment. Founded in 1932 by the Sisters of Mercy, the University of Saint Joseph welcomes students from diverse backgrounds and religious traditions. To learn more, view our website at www.usj.edu.