

Garfield-Maple Sun Person of the Week: Iona Pinkston

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There is no age limit on caring. Most people are familiar with the need for foster care for children. But how many realize that there are adults with disabilities who need a foster home as well?

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Through hardships or circumstances beyond their control, a growing number of adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities find themselves in need of a helping hand. For these adults, their fondest wish is for a stable, loving home environment that is equipped to meet their special needs. And for at least two adults with disabilities in northeast Ohio, Iona Pinkston has made their wish come true.

Pinkston is a Foster Mentor for REM Ohio, a local human services provider for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. As a Foster Mentor, Iona provides quality personal care, individual-focused attention and supervision. Besides the care that she gives in her home, Pinkston puts a great deal of emphasis on integrating those in her care into the community where they live.

An active member of the Calvary Presbyterian Church, Pinkston recently appeared in a play with one of the adults in her care. She is also a praise dancer and has plans to organize and teach praise dancing to the children of the church.

Individuals placed in a foster home often maintain close relationships with their biological families, but their mentors play a very important role in their lives, said Mary K Ziccardi, northern regional administrator, REM Ohio. Adults placed in foster homes require special care and extraordinary commitment from their foster mentors. Foster care home participants in general thrive in these settings because they provide safety and stability by loving committed foster mentors.

Many of the adults served by REM Ohios Adult Foster Care program are enrolled in day programs or work at jobs and are able to have a high quality and variety of life experiences.

Prior to becoming a foster mentor, Pinkton worked for the Plain Dealer for 26 years. She has two grown children and four grandchildren.

Know someone who qualifies as Person of the Week? We welcome nominations at jyachanin@sunnews.com via e-mail or to Parma Sun Post, 5510 Cloverleaf Parkway, Cleveland 44125-4815.

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