

**Books With Positive Portrayals
of Aging and Older Characters for
*Younger Readers, Middle Readers, & Older Readers
from PreK to Grade 6***

Background: Numerous studies have found that while American children have a positive view of old older adults in their own family, they have a negative world view of aging. Nobody had been able to explain this paradox. But Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities at The George Washington University postulated that a major factor contributing to children's negative attitudes about aging is that the earliest literature in the form of fairy tales that the youngest of children are introduced to typically portray older people as wicked, weird, or weak—conveying very negative images of aging. Consider Cinderella's malevolent step mother, the evil old witch in Hansel and Gretel, the scheming Rumpelstiltskin, and the child abusing old lady who lived in a shoe as but a few examples. These are great classics, but what if families want to offer additional images—positive ones—of aging through literature to their children? To begin with, there have been very few reading lists available listing and describing books for the very young where older adults are portrayed positively. None have been easily accessible and widely recognized, to the extent that the youth of America have a better sense of the potential that can accompany aging, they can develop a life cycle perspective that improves their preparedness for both the problems and possibilities of later life as well as enhancing their attitudes toward positive intergenerational relationships. To address this gap, Dr. Cohen approached the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) of the American Library Association to explore collaboration in creating an authoritative, annotated, widely disseminated reading list for children, describing books portraying aging and older adults in a positive light. The effort was one of the initiatives coming out of the Center's newly established public education program on aging—known as the SEA Change Program, where SEA Change is an acronym for Societal Education about Aging for Change. The ALSC enthusiastically agreed to collaborate and used their infrastructure of librarians across the country to assemble a list of 91 books presenting aging realistically and positively for children from Pre-K through Grade 6. The Center on Aging, Health & Humanities had the list evaluated by more than 100 librarians and 100 consumers from around the country, and the evaluations came back overwhelmingly highly favorable. The reading list is now available for public use. After reviewing and/or using the list if you have further suggestion about other

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books that you think should be added to the list, please let us know. We will then, at a later time, publish a new list that includes reader recommendations. Also, any general comments you have about the list would be most appreciated. Meanwhile, we hope you find the book list that follows useful.

Ackerman, Karen.

SONG AND DANCE MAN.

Knopf, c.1988.

Three children spend the day in their grandfather's attic, enjoying his tap dancing and memories of vaudeville. (Younger Readers)

Ada, Alma Flor

I LOVE SATURDAYS Y DOMINGOS . Illustrations by Elivia Savadier.

Atheneum Books, c.2002.

A young girl enjoys the similarities and the differences between her English-speaking and Spanish-speaking grandparents. (Younger Readers)

Alexander, Lloyd

THE GAWGON AND THE BOY

Dutton, c. 2001

When eleven-year-old David is too ill to attend school, he is tutored by his Aunt Annie who changes his life with her unorthodox style. (Middle Readers)

Arnold, Marsha Diane

THE CHICKEN SALAD CLUB. Illustrations by Julie Downing.

Dial , c.1998.

Nathaniel's 100 year old Great-Grandfather loves to tell stories from his past but seeks someone to join him with a new batch of stories. (Younger Readers)

Barasch, Lynn

OLD FRIENDS

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, c.1998

A very old woman misses her friends who have died, especially her best friend Anna, until she meets a little dog in front of her apartment. (Younger Readers)

Bauer, Marion Dane.

WHEN I GO CAMPING WITH GRANDMA. Illustrations by Allen Garna.

Bridgewater, c.1995.

A girl and her grandma share the joys of canoeing, fishing, hiking, and sleeping in the wilderness. (Younger Readers)

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Bawden, Nina.

GRANNY THE PAG

Clarion Books, c.1996.

Catriona lives with her loving but unorthodox Harley-Davidson riding Granny. (Older Readers)

Belton, Sandra.

FROM MISS IDA'S PORCH

Macmillan, c.1993.

Everyone gathers at Miss Ida's to hear about Duke Ellington, Marian Anderson and other true stories from the past. (Middle Readers)

Bercaw, Edna Coe

HALMONI'S DAY. Illustrations by Robert Hunt.

Dial, c.2000

In a story of understanding and acceptance, Jennifer is worried that her grandmother, visiting from Korea, will embarrass her on her school's Grandparents' Day. (Younger Readers)

Bogart, Jo Ellen

JEREMIAH LEARNS TO READ . Illustrations by Laura Fernandez and Rick Jacobson

Orchard Books, c.1999

Jeremiah decides that it's finally time to learn to read and goes back to school with the children in the community. (Younger Readers)

Buckley, Helen E.

GRANDFATHER AND I. Illustrations by Jan Ormerod.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, c.1994

IN the middle of a busy family, Grandfather has the time to walk and look with his grandson as long as they like. (Younger Readers)

Bunting, Eve

CAN YOU DO THIS, OLD BADGER? Illustrations by LeUyen Pham

Harcourt Brace, c.1999

Although Old Badger cannot do some of the things as easily as he used to, he can still teach Little Badger the many things he knows about finding good things to eat and staying safe and happy. (Younger Readers)

Bunting, Eve

A PICNIC IN OCTOBER

Harcourt Brace, c.1999

During their annual picnic to Ellis Island, Tony's grandparents express their thanks and patriotism as they remember their safe journey to America from Italy, many years ago. (Middle Readers)

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Cannon, Janell.

VERDI.

Harcourt Brace, c.1997

Verdi, a python, discovers that no matter how old or green he becomes, he is still his fun loving self. (Younger Readers)

Carris, Joan

AUNT MORBELIA AND THE SCREAMING SKULLS

Little, Brown, c.1990

Todd's peaceful life is interrupted when his Great-Aunt Morbelia, who has a morbid fascination with ghosts and death omens, moves in. (Older Readers)

Choi, Sook Nyul

HALMONI AND THE PICNIC

Houghton Mifflin, c.1993

Yummi's grandmother, Halmoni, chaperones the class picnic, sharing Korean food and culture with Yummi's friends. (Younger Readers)

Cooney, Barbara

MISS RUMPHIUS

Viking Press, c.1982

When still a little girl, Alice Rumphius decided that when she grew up she would visit faraway places, live by the sea and do something to make the world more beautiful. (Middle Readers)

Cowley, Joy

BIG MOON TORTILLA

Caroline House, c.1998

After Marta has had a bad day, her grandmother shares some comforting words of advice. (Middle Readers)

Creech, Sharon

RUBY HOLLER

HarperCollins, c.2002

Thirteen-year-old twins Dallas and Florida, who have grown up in a terrible orphanage, find their lives changed forever when an eccentric but sweet older couple brings them to an almost magical place called Ruby Holler. (Middle Readers)

Cutler, Jane.

DARCY AND GRAN DON'T LIKE BABIES

Scholastic, c.1993

Although they agree that they may change their mind later on, Darcy and Gran are not happy about the new baby in the family... (Younger Readers)

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Del Negro, Janice.

LUCY DOVE

Dorling Kindersley, c.1998.

An elderly seamstress outwits a terrible monster. (Younger Readers)

Dorros, Arthur.

ABUELA.

Dutton, c.1991.

A little girl and her grandmother fly together over New York City. (Younger Readers)

Dorros, Arthur

ISLA

Penguin, c.1995

A grandmother shares memories of the Caribbean island where she grew up.
(Middle Readers)

Dugan, Barbara

LOOP THE LOOP

Greenwillow Books, c.1992

Anne's friendship with her neighbor lasts long after Mrs. Simpson goes to live in a nursing home. (Middle Readers)

Duncan, Alice Faye

MISS VIOLA AND UNCLE ED LEE. Illustrations by Catherine Stock.

Atheneum, c.1999

A young boy helps his two neighbors, one as neat as pin and the other as junky as a pack rat, become friends. (Younger Readers)

Fleischman, Paul.

SEEDFOLKS.

Harper, c.1997.

Young and old, black and white, neighbors help transform a decaying urban neighborhood with a community garden. (Older Readers)

Flood, Pansie Hart

SYLVIA & MIZ LULA MAYE . Illustrations by Felicia Marshall.

Carolrhoda, c.2002

In 1978, nine-year-old Sylvia and her mother move to Wakefield, South Carolina, where Sylvia becomes best friends with a woman approaching her one hundredth birthday. (Older Readers)

Flournoy, Valerie

THE PATCHWORK QUILT. Illustrations by Jerry Pinkney.

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Dial Books, c.1985.

Tanya helps Grandma make a beautiful quilt which tells the story of their family.
(Older Readers)

Fox, Mem.

WILFRID GORDON MCDONALD PARTRIDGE

Kane Miller, c.1984

When his parents tell him his friend, Miss Nancy, has lost her memories, Wilfrid sets out to find them for her. (Younger Readers)

Giff, Patricia Reilly

PICTURES OF HOLLIS WOODS

Wendy Lamb Books, c.2002

When her elderly foster mother shows signs of forgetfulness, 12-year-old Hollis tries to protect them both. (Older Readers)

Graham, Bob

ROSE MEETS MR. WINTERGARTEN

Candlewick Press, c.1992

A young girl's attempt to retrieve her ball from her grouchy old neighbor's yard changes the way they feel about each other. (Younger Readers)

Greenfield, Eloise

GRANDPA'S FACE

Philomel Books, c.1988

Tamika sees her beloved grandfather making a mean face while he rehearses for one of his plays and becomes afraid that someday he will make that face at her!
(Younger Readers)

Grimes, Nikki.

STEPPING OUT WITH GRANDMA MAC

Orchard, c.2001.

Grandma Mac isn't a cookie-baking, grandchild-spoiling kind of grandmother, but her granddaughter learns to recognize the small ways she shows her love.
(Middle Readers)

Grimm, Jacob.

BREMEN TOWN MUSICIANS. Illustrations by Hans Fischer.

North-South, c.1998.

Aging animals thrown out by their masters get the better of a band of robbers.
(Younger Readers)

Hanel, Wolfram.

WEEKEND WITH GRANDMOTHER

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North-South, c.2002.

Tony takes a car trip with his fun-loving grandmother. (Middle Readers)

Holt, Kimberly Willis

DANCING IN CADILLAC LIGHT

Putnam, c.2001

In 1968, eleven-year-old Jaynell's life is enlivened when her eccentric Grandpap comes to live with her family. (Older Readers)

Houston, Gloria

MY GREAT-AUNT ARIZONA

HarperCollins, c.1992

Arizona Houston Hughes, an Appalachian girl who dreams of seeing the world, grows up to become a teacher who inspires generations of schoolchildren. (Younger Readers)

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald

AUNT FLOSSIE'S HATS (AND CRAB CAKES LATER)

Clarion Books, c.1990

When they visit their favorite relative, Aunt Flossie, Sara and Susan enjoy her collection of hats and their many stories as they share tea, cookies and crab cakes. (Younger Readers)

Johnson, Angela

TONING THE SWEEP

Scholastic, c.1993

Emily and her mother travel from Cleveland to Arizona to bring back her lively and beloved grandmother Ola, who is dying of cancer. (Older Readers)

Johnson, Angela

WHEN I AM OLD WITH YOU Illustrations by David Soman.

Orchard Books, c1990.

A little boy daydreams about how wonderful it will be to join Granddaddy in his favorite activities when they both are old. (Younger Readers)

Joyce, William.

THE LEAF MEN AND THE BRAVE GOOD BUGS.

HarperCollins, c.1996.

The leaf men save the night when the old woman who tends the garden becomes too sick to protect it. (Younger Readers)

Katz, Susan

SNOWDROPS FOR COUSIN RUTH

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Simon & Schuster, c.1998

Nine-year old Johanna and eighty-two-year-old Cousin Ruth try to help their family heal after the accidental death of Johanna's younger brother. (Older Readers)

Kesselman, Wendy Ann.

EMMA.

Doubleday, c.1980.

A 72-year-old woman discovers her artistic talent after receiving a birthday gift. (Younger Readers)

King, Casey and Linda Barrett Osborne.

OH, FREEDOM: KIDS TALK ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT HAPPEN

Knopf, c.1997

Children interview their families, friends and neighbors who took part in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s. (Older Readers)

King-Smith, Dick

THE STRAY. Illustrations by Wayne Parmenter.

Crown, c.1996

When seventy-five-year-old Henny Hickathrift runs away from the old people's home, she meets five children and their parents who welcome her into their family. (Older Readers)

Kovalski, Maryann

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME

Scholastic, c.1992

In this familiar sing-along, Grandma has as much fun as her sports-loving granddaughters at a big league baseball stadium. (Younger Readers)

Lasky, Kathryn.

SEA SWAN.

Macmillan, c.1988.

At the age of 75, a very proper Boston lady decides that she will learn how to swim! (Younger Readers)

Lisle, Janet Taylor

THE LOST FLOWER CHILDREN

Philomel, c.1999.

After their mother dies, two children find both healing and magic in a special garden as they spend the summer with their elderly aunt. (Older Readers)

Lobel, Arnold.

UNCLE ELEPHANT.

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Harper, c.1981.

A young elephant spends time with his elderly Uncle while his parents are lost at sea. (Younger Readers)

Lowell, Susan

LITTLE RED COWBOY HAT. Illustrations by Randy Cecil.

Henry Holt, c.1997.

On her way to visit Grandma, Little Red meets a wily wolf in the desert...But Grandma, with ax in hand, runs in to save the day! (Younger Readers)

McCully, Emily Arnold.

GRANDMAS AT BAT.

Harper, c.1993.

It's Grandmas to the rescue when the kids' team needs a new coach. (Younger Readers)

McElroy, Lisa Tucker (with help from Courtney O'Connor)

MEET MY GRANDMOTHER. SHE'S A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

The life of the first woman Supreme Court justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, as seen through the eyes of her granddaughter. (Younger Readers)

McElroy, Lisa Tucker (with help from Eileen Feinstein Mariano)

MEET MY GRANDMOTHER. SHE'S A UNITED STATES SENATOR

The busy life of Senator Dianne Feinstein of California is seen through the eyes of her six-year-old granddaughter. (Younger Readers)

Mahy, Margaret.

RATTLEBANG PICNIC. Illustrations by Steven Kellogg.

Dial, c.1994.

Granny McTavish's overcooked pizza saves the day when it replaces a broken wheel and saves the family from a volcano. (Younger Readers)

Mead, Alice

JUNEBUG AND THE REVEREND

Farrar Straus and Giroux, c.1998

When his mother moves the family out of the projects and accepts a position as the live-in manager of a residence for senior citizens, Junebug develops some unlikely friendships with his elderly neighbors. (Middle Readers)

Miller, William

THE PIANO. Illustrations by Susan Keeter.

Lee & Low, c.2000

A young girl's love for music leads her to a job in the home of an older woman who teaches her not only to play the piano but also to care for others. (Younger Readers).

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Mills, Claudia

GUS AND GRANDPA AND SHOW-AND-TELL. Illustrations by Catherine Stock.

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, c.2000

Gus despairs of coming up with something interesting and impressive for his second grade class's show-and-tell, until he gets a great idea while visiting his Grandpa. (Younger Readers)

Morgenstern, Susie.

A BOOK OF COUPONS.

Viking, c.2001.

The new teacher is "wrinkly and old", but he brings unusual gifts with his books of coupons. (Middle Readers)

Older, Effin.

MY TWO GRANDMOTHERS. Illustrations by Nancy Hayashi.

Harcourt, c.2000.

Lily gets to visit her two grandmothers at different times of year to celebrate family traditions...Bubbe Silver in the city for Hanukkah and Grammy Lane in the country for Christmas. To start a new tradition, she invites them both to her house for a special Grandmothers' Party (Younger Readers)

Peck, Richard

A LONG WAY FROM CHICAGO

Dial, c.1998

Over 8 years, Joey and Mary Alice spend one week each summer with their larger-than-life Grandma Dowdel in rural Illinois. (Older Readers)

Peck, Richard

A YEAR DOWN YONDER

Dial, c.2000.

Fifteen-year-old Mary Alice spends a year in rural Illinois with her feisty but lovable and very wise grandma. (Older Readers)

Polacco, Patricia

MRS. KATZ AND TUSH

Bantam Books, c.1992

A lifelong and loving friendship is born as young Larnel gives his lonely neighbor Mrs. Katz a stray kitten to love after she loses her husband. (Younger Readers)

Rosen, Michael J.

FISHING WITH DAD

Artisan, c.1996

A young man relives the pleasure of his childhood experiences while on a fishing trip

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with his son and father. (Younger Readers)

Rotner, Shelley and Sheila Kelly

LOTS OF GRANDPARENTS

The Millbrook Press, 2001

Photographs of grandparents and their grandchildren visiting, playing and reading together. (Younger Readers)

Rylant, Cynthia

MR. PUTTER AND TABBY TOOT THE HORN. Illustrations by Arthur Howard.

Harcourt Brace, c.1998

Mr. Putter's neighbor, Mrs. Teaberry, decides that they should join a band, but finding the right one isn't as easy as it sounds—for them or their pets.

(Younger Readers)

Rylant, Cynthia

MR. PUTTER AND TABBY PAINT THE PORCH

Harcourt, c.2001

With so much help from his cat Tabby and the neighbor's dog Zeke, Mr. Putter finds it a challenge to paint his front porch! (Younger Readers)

Rylant, Cynthia

THE OLD WOMAN WHO NAMED THINGS . Illustrations by Kathryn Brown

Harcourt Brace, c.1996

An old woman who has outlived all her friends is reluctant to become too attached to the stray dog that visits her each day...until one day he doesn't appear.

(Younger Readers)

Say, Allen

GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY

Houghton Mifflin, c.1993.

A family album tells the story of Grandfather's life...his travel to America, return to Japan, marriage and finally his old age. (Younger Readers)

Schachner, Judith Byron

THE GRANNYMAN.

Dutton Children's Books, c.1999

Simon the cat is so old that most of his parts have stopped working, but just as he is ready to breathe his last, a new kitten arrives for him to raise. (Younger Readers)

Schwartz, David. Illustrations by Bert Dodson

SUPERGRANDPA

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, c.1991.

A 66 year-old Grandpa competes in Sweden's longest bicycle race! (Younger

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Readers)

Schwartz, Harriet Berg

WHEN ARTIE WAS LITTLE Illustrations by Tom Allen.

Knopf, c.1996

Artie enjoys sitting on his front porch and telling the neighborhood children about his pony Jack, his dog Skipper, and his trip with a barnstormer when he was a boy.

(Younger Readers)

Seibolt, Jan

DOING TIME ONLINE

Albert Whitman, c.2002

Twelve year old Mitchell is involved in a prank in which an elderly woman gets hurt. As a result, he is sentenced to participate in a police program two days each week in which he chats online with a nursing home resident. (Older Readers)

Seymour, Tres

TOO QUIET FOR THESE OLD BONES.

Orchard, c.1997.

When Granny complains that the house is too quiet, her grandchildren gladly help her to solve the problem! (Younger Readers)

Shaw, Eve

GRANDMOTHER'S ALPHABET

Pfeifer-Hamilton, c.1997

An alphabet book of grandmas performing a variety of jobs show the opportunities open to kids when they grow up. (Younger Readers)

Silverman, Erica

MRS. PEACHTREE'S BICYCLE

Simon & Schuster, c.1996

Despite many falls, elderly Mrs. Peachtree continues to practice and eventually learns to ride her bicycle! (Younger Readers)

Smith, Robert Kimmel

THE WAR WITH GRANDPA

Delacorte Press, 1984.

When Grandma died and Grandpa came to live with his family, Peter had to give up his wonderful bedroom. When Peter became angry and decided to fight with him, he didn't count on Grandpa taking him on! (Older Readers)

Stolz, Mary

STEALING HOME

HarperCollins, c.1992

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When Great-Aunt Linzy comes to stay in their small house in Florida, life changes for Thomas and his grandfather. (Older Readers)

Uchida, Yoshiko

THE WISE OLD WOMAN . Illustrations by Martin Springett

Macmillan, c.1994

An old woman demonstrates the value of her age when she solves a warlord's three riddles and saves her village from destruction. (Older Readers)

Vizurraga, Susan

MISS OPAL'S AUCTION . Illustrations by Mark Graham.

Henry Holt, c.2000

Miss Opal moves to a retirement home. While the contents of her house are auctioned off, Annie recalls all the things they did together, from baking cookies and making ice cream to listening to ball games on her old radio. (Younger Readers)

Weigelt, Udo.

OLD BEAVER. Illustrations by Bernadette Watts.

North-South, c.2002.

As Young Beaver comes to the pond, Old Beaver feels unwanted until he learns that there's still quite a bit of help he can give the other animals. (Younger Readers)

Wild, Margaret.

OUR GRANNY.

Houghton Mifflin, c.1994.

Grannies come in all shapes and sizes, but the best Granny is your own! (Younger Readers)

Williams, Barbara

KEVIN'S GRANDMA

Dutton, c.1975

Kevin likes to talk about his Grandmother who once worked in a circus riding a unicycle on a tight rope, practices judo, goes sky-diving, and makes peanut butter soup. (Younger Readers)

Williams, Jay

EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT A DRAGON LOOKS LIKE. Illustrations by Mercer Mayer.

Four Winds Press, c.1976.

When a small, fat and bald old man announces he is a dragon, offering to defend the city of Wu against impending attack, everyone laughs at him but one young boy. (Younger Readers)

Williams, Karen Lynn

APPLEBAUM'S GARAGE

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Clarion Books, c.1993

When his best friend Robbie starts acting strange and hanging around with older boys, ten-year-old Jeremy spends more and more time next door with old Mr. Applebaum, whose ability to fix anything has filled his garage and yard with amazing junk. (Older Readers)

Williams, Linda

THE LITTLE OLD LADY WHO WAS NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING. Illustrations by Megan Lloyd.

Crowell, c.1986

A Halloween favorite, the little old lady is pursued first by big shoes, then pants, a shirt, gloves, a tall black hat, and lastly a spooky pumpkin head! (Younger Readers)

Winch, John

KEEPING UP WITH GRANDMA

Holiday House, c.2000

When Grandma decides that it is time to have fun outdoors, Grandpa has a few problems keeping up with her. (Younger Readers)

Winch, John

THE OLD WOMAN WHO LOVED TO READ

Holiday House, c.1997

An old woman who moves to the country in order to have a peaceful life with lots of time to read soon finds that each season brings other tasks to keep her busy! (Younger Readers)

Yep, Laurence

CHILD OF THE OWL

Harper Collins, c.1977.

Paw-Paw helps her twelve-year-old granddaughter Casey both to appreciate her Chinese heritage and come to accept her father as he is. (Older Readers)

Yolen, Jane

MIZ BERLIN WALKS

Philomel Books, c.1997

Miz Berlin tells wonderful stories as she and young Mary Alice walk together around the block. (Younger Readers)

Yolen, Jane

TEA WITH AN OLD DRAGON: A STORY OF SOPHIA SMITH, FOUNDER OF SMITH COLLEGE

Boyds Mills, c.1998

An unlikely friendship forms between young Louisa and her formidable neighbor Sophia Smith. (Middle Readers)

Books for Children Portraying Aging and Older Characters in a Positive Light—15

Zolotow, Charlotte

I KNOW A LADY

Sally describes an elderly neighbor who grows flowers, waves to children as they pass and bakes cookies. (Younger Readers)

This list was created by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association. This effort of the ALSC was part of a collaborative project with the SEA Change Program of the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities at The George Washington University.