



### **HPGS Business Awardee, Karen Peterson**

Karen Peterson is the Executive Director of Giving Back Mentoring. In 1999, Karen recognized a need to keep herself and others, who would be classified as “seniors” in a short time, active and involved. The plan she envisioned would use her certification in Brain Gym, a research based program to improve reading ability and decrease the effect of learning disabilities and behavior problems by improving concentration and brain function. By 2000, Giving Back Mentoring was born.

Giving Back Mentoring is a non-profit agency “committed to fostering intergenerational relationships through mentoring, enhancing the individual lives of both the giver and receiver, while creating vibrant and vital opportunities for active elder volunteers (age 50+) to ‘give back’ to benefit their neighborhoods and communities.” Karen trained senior mentors in Brain Gym and joined forces with the Department of Education. Maui public school children were linked with senior citizen mentors trained in Brain Gym, kinesthetic activities, tutoring, and mentoring techniques. Pre and post testing validated the success of the program.

Karen is described as “the heart and soul of Giving Back.” She recruits and trains mentors; is the program director facilitator at each site; facilitates the Support Group for mentors after every mentoring session; trains site leaders and key senior leaders to sustain the program; and is constantly seeking and writing grants to keep Giving Back Mentoring alive.