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Local residents are mourning the passing of Dorothy Grant, a community volunteer and activist who devoted decades of her life to helping disadvantaged families in Fontana.

Grant, who worked for the Fontana Unified School District for 26 years, had an elementary school named in her honor in northern Fontana in 2005. She spent much time volunteering at the school and greeted students as they arrived each morning.

She received much recognition for her efforts, including the prestigious Jefferson Award, a national honor which is known as the "Nobel Prize for public service."

"It feels good to give and help others; it keeps my mind occupied and healthy," said Grant after receiving the Jefferson Award in 2009. "God has been good to me and I keep giving because God keeps giving to me. It is my passion."

Despite being hampered by asthma and diabetes, she remained active well into her 80s. When she wasn't taking a break for bowling, she was involved in reading to hospital patients, feeding the hungry, and organizing community events.

"There is always something to do. There are always people to help. It will be irresponsible for me to look the other way, to

ignore the need," said Grant in 2009. "I will continue doing the same until God calls me."

A native of Louisiana, Grant moved to Fontana in 1959. She began working in the cafeteria at the new Alder Junior High School when it opened in 1960. She later worked as a matron for the Girls P.E. Department at Fontana High School before retiring.

Starting when she first came to the city, she became a political activist, regularly attending meetings of the Fontana City Council and San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors and lobbying for street lights, sewers, paved roads, and sidewalks in her previously underserved neighborhood.

She lobbied for a recreation center which was later named for Jessie Turner, and she helped to establish the North Fontana Head Start Center (which closed in 2002). She was heavily involved in food giveaway programs run by the county and by private groups, including delivering Meals on Wheels to seniors in the area.

As a volunteer, she helped children and seniors in many ways, including serving in the Exchange Club. Throughout the year, she and other volunteers would make lap blankets, hundreds of which have been taken to shut-ins and convalescent homes.

For more than 25 years, Grant was a volunteer member of the Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County Board of Directors, representing the poor.

"Dorothy has been dedicated to providing young and old people with the chance to develop personal and leadership skills to insure a future for educational opportunities through scholarships and referrals," said Wayne Ruble, another dedicated community volunteer. "As a result, she helped form

the Dorothy Grant Foundation, placing the wellbeing of all children as a priority."

She received the San Bernardino County Education Medal of Honor along with several other awards.

Grant died last Saturday. Check back on the Herald News website for service times and additional information.