

# Penn State **EXTENSION**

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## Ideas for Intergenerational Living

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### From the Editor

In this issue of *Ideas for Intergenerational Living*, we highlight the intergenerational shared site program at Messiah Village (Mechanicsburg, PA), one of the oldest programs of its kind in the nation. Read on to learn about an interesting intergenerational Easter Egg event and more about Penn State's partnership with the Japan Intergenerational Unity Association and the "Uniting the Generations" conference that will take place in Tokyo on August 2-5, 2006. And, of course, don't forget to share the *The Golden Opportunity--Today's Grandparents* insert with grandparents you know.

All the best.

Matt Kaplan, Associate Professor  
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A child and "Grandbear" share a hug after lunch on a field trip.  
Photo: Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, PA

grow  
Intergenerational Bonds

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## Children's Family Center at Messiah Village (Mechanicsburg, PA)

Profile by: Denise C. Him  
Intergenerational Coordinator

For over 27 years, Children's Family Center at Messiah Village has been providing the Central Pennsylvania area with a unique, shared-site intergenerational childcare program. The program began with ten children who met in a two-room apartment rented from Messiah Village. From these modest beginnings, the Children's Family Center has grown into a full-scale childcare center, and the intergenerational program has blossomed into a multifaceted program, full of interactions between the children and seniors.

Today, Children's Family Center serves over 70 children from 6 weeks of age through kindergarten, with 30 additional children who attend the Summer Camp Program. The strength of the Intergenerational program is directly related to Children's Family Center's location within Messiah Village. Each day, numerous



A child and a senior work together on a leaf rubbing.  
Photo: Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, PA

informal interactions occur as the children go for walks in the hallways and on

the sidewalks around the Village. Because of its location in the courtyard of the nursing care area, the Center's playground is a great place for the children and seniors to wave to one another through the windows. The formal interactions cover a broader spectrum of the program. Each day, groups of children visit areas within Messiah Village's Nursing Care, Assisted Living, and Adult Day Services for a planned intergenerational activity. The teachers and activity leaders take turns planning these activities. During the activities, the children and seniors interact by making crafts together, singing together, and doing exercises together.



A child receives a special framed puzzle from a senior friend during the IG Art Exchange.  
Photo: Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, PA

Also, once a month a small group of Children's Family Center's children and a few residents meet for an indoor picnic lunch. Throughout the year, there are also many parties and special gatherings.

At the heart of the intergenerational program is the volunteer program. The senior volunteers, who the children affectionately call "Grandbears," come from all levels of care to spend time with the children. The Grandbears participate in various ways. Some of the Grandbears like to rock the infants, while others prefer reading to the pre-school aged children. Some of the Grandbears even swim with the kindergarteners and help to chaperone the Summer Camp fieldtrips.

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## The Golden Opportunity – Today’s Grandparents

Andrea Bressler, CFCS, M.S.  
Extension Educator, Clearfield County  
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### Positive Aspects of Aging

When we were younger, the idea of having a birthday was wonderful; but today the idea of getting older isn’t as appealing, at least for some people. Growing older does offer challenges, but it also provides rewards.



Many of us are more confident, wiser, and mellower than when we were younger. If you choose to stay active and involved, your world broadens and you are more motivated. There is an increased awareness of how precious time is and a desire to use it more wisely.

Having grandchildren is another positive aspect of aging. Grandchildren can remind us that we need to nourish the child that is within each of us. Grandchildren provide us with an opportunity to be curious, to be excited about life, and to be playful. This quote by Michael Prichard says it all, “You don’t stop playing because you grow old; you grow old because you stop playing.”

(Reference: Senior Series, Ohio State University Extension)

## Simplify Your Life and Find New Ways to Connect With Your Grandchildren

Today’s families feel the stress of blending work with family. The demands of these multiple roles contribute to emotional distress, fatigue, and role overload. As we age, most of us develop a better sense of what’s truly important and don’t react to all of life’s little aggravations.

Making an effort to enjoy life’s little moments simply means taking the time to stop and enjoy: a beautiful sunrise, the first bite of ice cream, etc. What a gift it is to be able to share this joy with your grandchildren! Many of today’s children are kept so busy going from activity to activity, they are not given this opportunity to stop and savor the moment.

Begin by turning off the TV. We waste too much time sitting in front of the TV. You can be sure your grandchildren are also watching too much TV. So turn off the TV, and think of an activity you can share with your grandchildren. This could be a museum or park visit, or a board game that you both enjoy playing.



Be spontaneous. This is the key to feeling like you’re in control of your own destiny. Every once in a while, a change in your routine can spark your spirits and

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your energy. Don't fall into the trap of insisting on the same daily routine. Your grandchildren will love you for your spontaneity and welcome your visits.

Many grandparents have more patience than their own children. Perhaps you, instead of her parents, can teach your grandchild a new skill. The two of you can sign up for classes and learn this new skill together. What a great example to show your grandchild the value of life-long learning. Or you can share your own interests with your grandchild.

Growing up, I spent a week each summer at my grandmother's home. She was an avid quilter, spending several hours each day quilting. I was interested in learning to sew, but my mother did not have the patience to teach me. My grandmother was very willing to share her love of sewing with me. So I have wonderful memories of these weeks spent sewing many outfits at my grandmother's home.

Decluttering your space can also be invigorating. We accumulate so much stuff that our living space can become cramped and unsafe. Divide your desk or room at home into sections. Pick one section and start decluttering. It takes energy to keep your possessions in working order or dusted. Get rid of the stuff that's broken or missing a part. The items which remain should provide some useful or sentimental value. You'll be able to savor these items – and be better able share your favorite memories with your grandchildren – without them swimming in a sea of clutter.

(Reference: Family Tapestries, Ohio State University Extension)

## An Intergenerational Easter Egg Hunt

By Laurie Sicko, Youth Dev./4-H Educator  
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On April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Teens Networking Together (TNT), participated in an Easter Egg Hunt activity at the Kennett Friends Home. The participants included residents of Kennett Friends Home, 14 TNT members, a little sister of a TNT member, and collaborating staff. Everyone worked together to prepare plastic Easter eggs filled with candy. This activity was not only to assist the residents from Friends Home to prepare their own eggs, but also to help the TNT students with their community egg hunt.



As we found, the key to organizing a successful community event is to involve many groups in the

community. For our event, this included: Ray's Trailer Park, Santa Maria Apartments, Ellicott Road Trailer Park, Avondale Apartments, Avon Wheel Mobile Home Community, a South Jenersville Road Community, the Linden Street Community, and the Kennett Friends Home Community. In addition, members of the Southern Chester County Literacy Coalition, now known as "Cosecha: Cultivating Community," participated and guided this activity with the help of two Lincoln University student interns. TNT members were present at each of the Easter egg hunt sites, which involved searches for no fewer than 100 Easter eggs.

This activity was planned by a dynamic group of youth leaders and adult mentors, all of whom shared a morning of bringing joy, laughter, and companionship to one another and to others. In fact, the young people and seniors worked so well together, and shared such wonderful conversations and experiences. This is likely the beginning of a long tradition of joint intergenerational Easter Egg Hunt celebrations.

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## Penn State Partnership with the Japan Intergenerational Unity Association

News Release—Penn State Ag Sciences News 6/16/06

PENN STATE, JAPANESE AGENCIES PARTNER FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. - The aging of the baby boom generation in the United States and globally has created growing concerns regarding relations between the young and the elderly. To help bridge the generation gap, faculty and educators in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences will collaborate with agencies in Japan to see how America and Japan can learn from and adopt each other's successful intergenerational programs.

Matthew Kaplan, associate professor of intergenerational programs and aging, administers a project entitled Japan-U.S. Partnerships to Promote Intergenerational Programs and Practices. Supported by a grant from the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership, the two-year initiative includes an international conference at Japan's Waseda University and a study tour by Japanese intergenerational professionals of the United States.

The Uniting the Generations conference will take place in Tokyo, August 2-5. The event is being organized by the Japan Intergenerational Unity Association (JIUA) in conjunction with Penn State and more than 20 partnering organizations and agencies in Japan. More than 50 intergenerational specialists (including 40 from Japan and specialists from six other countries) will share their intergenerational experiences and insights.

"We share much with Japan," says Kaplan. "They also are concerned about fewer three-generation families living together, shifting values regarding the care of elderly relatives, growing materialistic and individualistic sentiment on the part of young people, and stereotypical portrayals of older adults in the media.

"In Japan, there are some unique programs that help older adults pass on local cultural traditions to children. Some of these models could prove especially useful in rural counties with large elderly populations and strong local traditions like those found in Pennsylvania, which has the nation's second-largest percentage of residents over 65."

Japan -- a country with a very rich heritage and a population that is aging at a faster rate than in any other nation -- is home to some innovative, dynamic

intergenerational programs aimed at preserving cultural traditions and promoting a sense of cultural identity, according to Kaplan.

"One example is the Toy Museum, which brings together children, parents and nursing home residents," he says. "While teaching participants about quality toys, the museum encourages interaction and play; there's an affiliated program that lets older adults earn certification as 'toy doctors' who repair and maintain toys at a toy 'hospital' for children who bring their favorite toys."

Andrea Bressler, a Penn State Cooperative Extension county-based educator who will attend the conference, is particularly interested in bringing the Toy Museum program model home to Clearfield County. "We encourage 4-H members to participate in community service projects," she says. "With four skilled nursing-care facilities, eight assisted-living facilities and the need for meaningful experiences for residents, I'm certain we could secure a willing partner to pilot the project."

Cheryl Miller, an extension educator in Perry County, is interested in how the Japanese culture generates respect for its elders. "I want to learn how this respect is taught and instilled in the younger generation," says Miller. She plans to develop a learn-at-home program for grandparents raising grandchildren.

The U.S. study tour, which is planned for May 2007, will bring Japan's intergenerational leaders to Penn State and to sites in Philadelphia, New York and Hawaii to visit a variety of innovative programs and attend a seminar series on key topics related to program planning and evaluation. Information on the conference and study tour can be found on the Web at <http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/2006/index.htm>.

"A crucial part of Penn State's outreach program, of which cooperative extension is a vital part, is to build international bridges," says Deanna Behring, director of international programs in the College of Agricultural Sciences. "Countries across the globe are experiencing many of the same demographic changes and challenges that affect how children and older adults live and receive care, so it makes sense to form strategic international linkages between Penn State's and Japan's intergenerational leaders. We see this as an important opportunity to promote international understanding and global social change."

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### We're on the Web!

<http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu>

### Price List & Order Form:

<http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu/Docs/CurrOrderForm.pdf>

## Resource Highlights

### Family Involvement Storybook Corner

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/storybook/index.html>

(Noted in: *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth Newsletter*, Vol. 7, #1-2, D. Perkins)

The Family Involvement Storybook Corner is a unique source for information on using children's storybooks with family involvement themes to engage families in their children's education and encourage family-school-community partnerships, all while supporting literacy. Family involvement storybooks can be used to promote the awareness, discussion, and practice of family involvement in a wide range of settings -- including family literacy programs, family support and parenting programs, out-of-school time programs, and ESL programs. There are annotated bibliographies of storybooks with family involvement themes for ages 4-8. In addition, one can download a teacher lesson plan and parent handout for using a multicultural storybook to promote involvement.

### Perspectives: The Role of Grandmothers in Developing Countries

The Grandmother Project ([http://www.aarp.org/research/international/perspectives/may\\_06\\_gubser\\_grandmother.html](http://www.aarp.org/research/international/perspectives/may_06_gubser_grandmother.html)) a U.S. non-profit organization, is dedicated to enhancing the role grandmothers play in health for women and children in developing countries.

(From the *AARP Global Newsletter*, Vol. 4, Issue 6, June 28, 2006)

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