



Ideas for *Intergenerational Living*

Penn State Intergenerational Initiatives Advisory Group

Matthew Kaplan, Ph.D., Editor

State Extension Specialist
Intergenerational Programs & Aging
The Pennsylvania State University

Nancy Crago, Ph.D.

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Allegheny County

Mary Ann Curren

Director of Therapeutic Recreation
Foxdale Village

Janice Alberico, Director

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Lawrence County

Annette Kratzer, Director

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Union County

Nancy Grotevant, Director

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Pike County

Linda Hendricks

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Columbia County

Marie Hornbein

Take Note Producer
Penn State Public Broadcasting

Andrea Bressler, CFCS, M.S.

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Clearfield County

Susan Hoover, PA Site Coordinator

Penn State GEC/Gerontology Center
The Pennsylvania State University

Wendy Middlemiss, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Health and Human Development
The Pennsylvania State University

Cheryl Miller

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Perry County

Jon Nussbaum, Ph.D.

Professor of Comm. Arts & Sciences
The Pennsylvania State University

Mary Jo Kraft

Penn State Cooperative Extension
York County

◆ From the Editor (Page 2)**◆ Book Review: *Roots&Branches: Creating Intergenerational Theater*,
by Arthur Strimling (Page 2 & 6)**

By Bonnie L. Vorenberg, President, ArtAge Publications

◆ The Golden Opportunity - Grandparenting (Page 3)

*By Andrea Bressler, CFCS, M.S., Extension Educator
Penn State Cooperative Extension, Clearfield County*

**◆ Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: An Unexpected Example of
Warrior Spirit (Page 4)**

*Matt Kaplan, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Penn State University*

◆ Announcements (Page 4)

*Upcoming conferences hosted by Generations United and the International Consortium
for Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP)*

◆ Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement (Page 5)

*Introduction to a report from the Harvard School of Public Health - Metlife Foundation
Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement*

Newsletter Production

Colleen Bloom
Staff Assistant

PENNSTATE

An Equal Opportunity University

College of Agricultural Sciences
Cooperative Extension

Penn State, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Pennsylvania Counties Cooperating

From the Editor:

The “Ideas for Intergenerational Living” newsletter continues to be one of the primary outreach tools of the Penn State Intergenerational Program (PSIP). Rooted in Penn State Cooperative Extension, the PSIP seeks to *enrich people’s lives and address vital social and community issues by promoting effective intergenerational programs and policies*. Articles in this issue of the newsletter highlight an array of intergenerational resources, events, conferences, and program suggestions. If you have an intergenerational program or perspective that you would like to share with others, please let me know and we’ll weave it into our next newsletter. Just drop me a line at (814) 863-7871 or send an e-mail to msk15@psu.edu.

Thanks. ❖

Matt Kaplan, Associate Professor
Intergenerational Programs & Aging
Penn State University



ArtAge, The Senior Theatre Resource Center **Roots&Branches: Creating Intergenerational Theater**

By Bonnie L. Vorenberg, Senior Theatre Expert
Copyright 2004

In *Roots&Branches: Creating Intergenerational Theater*, Arthur Strimling proves that when young and old performers use personal stories as the basis for their plays, it makes powerful theatre. Written for both professionals and amateurs, Strimling’s practical techniques and philosophy serve as a blueprint that will guide future work in this creative form of drama.

Roots&Branches will be useful to practitioners in theatre, education, therapy, social work, and allied areas. The ideas apply in schools, community centers, churches, or any setting where young and old gather. It’s a template that’s practical, and creative. The book also includes numerous *Roots&Branches* scenes and monologues, a complete list of their shows, and many endearing photos of the company in rehearsal and performance.

After graduating from Columbia University, Arthur Strimling worked under the direction of Joseph Chaikin for ten years. Chaikin created productions and workshops based on the actors’ lives and experiences using the ensemble theatre format, so Arthur learned at the feet of a master. Later, he perfected his craft with the Talking Band, an avant-garde group of the 1970’s, which toured internationally. Through his off-Broadway work, Strimling met Barbara Myerhoff, author of the book, *Number Our Days*, and co-director of the academy award-winning documentary by the same name. Thanks to her work with seniors, Myerhoff helped a generation of social workers, gerontologists and artists appreciate that “reminiscence is a major developmental task, essential in the process of aging well and dying well.” Myerhoff told Strimling, “You like stories; you should talk to old people. They have a lot of stories and no one is listening.”

Inspired, Strimling created an intergenerational storytelling project in New York with kids from poor neighborhoods and Jewish senior citizens. The seniors told their memoirs to the youngsters and before long, the relationships transformed. “They bonded in non-

(Continued on page 6)

Today's Grandparents

Written by: *Andrea Bressler, CFCS, M.S.*

*Extension Educator, Penn State Cooperative Extension
Clearfield County*

Teenagers Need Their Grandparents

Never doubt for one minute your influence on your teenage grandchildren. Healthy connections with adults are the single most important factor in helping teens develop into successful adults. Listed below are some ideas to help strengthen your relationship with your teenage grandchild.



When your teenage grandchild messes up, use this incident to help your grandchild learn something. Teach teens how to make amends (“So you took something that wasn’t yours. How will you return it or repay the person?”) The point is to help your grandchild learn a better way of doing things, and not to hurt her through angry words or actions.

Tell your grandchildren what’s good about them, and tell them often. Sometimes it’s hard to find good things to say about moody 14-year-olds; but you can do it. Find out what makes your grandchild unique and wonderful, and praise her over and over for it. You have no idea how powerful your words of praise are, even if the only response you get is a shrug. You can be sure she heard you, so keep it up.

Teens are going to push, complain, whine, and even try to get around your rules. Don’t give up. Know your rules and enforce them consistently; be predictable. When you become predictable, your grandchildren can trust you. Allow your grandchildren the opportunity to make choices. Then, when they keep agreements, make good choices, and honor rules, congratulate them for being responsible.

When your teenage grandchild says, “I want to tell you something,” it is time to give her your undivided attention. To show that you are listening, make eye contact with her, nod your head, and wait until she is finished to respond. The great thing is, when you hear her out, her ability to listen to you will also increase.

Show respect to your grandchildren. Acknowledge their feelings, their ideas, and even their complaints.



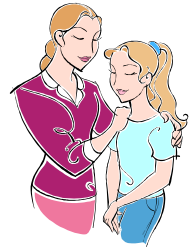
Teens will learn to show respect to you from the way you show respect to them.

Teens who know they have a community of support – friends, teachers, parents, grandparents, and other adults – have more fun and success. Encourage their interests and help them find positive ways to take part with others. Get to know the friends of your grandchildren.

It takes time to build solid relationships. You are shaping the life of another human being, so stay with it. Continue to build this relationship with your teenage grandchild and the future will be brighter for you both.

Doing It Together

How Well Do You Know Your Teenage Grandchild?



Grandparents and teens can answer these questions individually. Then set aside time to review your responses together.

1. What is your grandchild’s favorite meal?
2. What is your grandchild’s favorite class in school? Least favorite class?
3. Who is your grandchild’s closest friend?
4. If your grandchild could do anything he or she chooses for a day, what would it be?
5. Who is your grandchild’s favorite singer or musical group?
6. What kind of pet would your grandchild prefer?
7. What makes your grandchild really angry?
8. What embarrasses your grandchild the most?
9. What is your grandchild’s biggest fear?
10. What is your grandchild’s biggest complaint about your family?
11. What person outside the family has most touched your grandchild’s life?
12. What is your grandchild’s greatest strength?
13. What achievement or skill is your grandchild most proud of? ❖

Source: *Positive Parenting of Teens, University of Minnesota Extension Service, 1999*

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: An Unexpected Example of Warrior Spirit

*Matt Kaplan, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Penn State University*

During the weekend of October 22-24, 2004, I learned something new about “warrior spirit,” and it had nothing to do with warfare or martial arts. I attended the Kinship Family Retreat in Hopwood, PA, a weekend-long event planned by 10 Penn State Cooperative Extension county offices in Western PA for 35 grandparents raising grandchildren families.

Previously, my understanding of kinship care families was solely in statistical terms. For example, I knew from the 2000 U.S. Census Report that nationally, 4.5 million children are living in grandparent-headed households (6.3% of all children under age 18), which represents a 30% increase from 1990. I also read about the host of emotional, legal, health, and daily living challenges that kinship caregivers, particularly grandparents, face as they unexpectedly find themselves in the position of raising a second family. The literature talks about how kinship caregivers are often isolated from friends and other family and frequently suffer from stress related illnesses, such as depression, hypertension, insomnia, and gastric distress. The children, too, have problems. They are twice as likely to have behavioral and emotional problems.

This weekend gave me a chance to see these families up close. My overall impression was that these grandparents displayed nothing short of heroism. In the face of serious family tragedies that have taken the children’s parents out of the picture (e.g., HIV/AIDS, incarceration, and even death), these grandparents have unselfishly stepped in. In many cases, they have had to sacrifice their jobs and even their homes to be available to handle the excessive care needs of many of these children. Several of the grandparents even let their own physical health needs go unmet. At the retreat, several of the grandparents were barely able to



walk, but this did not stand in the way of their participation in activities with their grandchildren. Their facial expressions of silent determination, which masked the occasional grimace of pain, are ingrained in my memory.

I believe we can all draw inspiration from these magnificent human beings and their unwavering perseverance, love for others, and sharply honed survival instincts.

My hat also goes off to the members of the Extension “warrior” planning and staffing team,

which consisted of: Nancy Crago (Chair), Nancy Wallace, Carole Toubakarlis, Carolyn Wissenbach, Patricia Leach, Janice Alberico, Darlene Sansone, Catherine Brady, Joanne Logan, Bryan Dickinson, Tiffany Tezzana, Patty Graf, and Cindy Javor.❖

Announcements

Upcoming Conferences

GU’s 13th Biennial International Conference, The Intergenerational Current: Across the Life Span and Around the Globe, will be held **September 13 -17, 2005** at the Washington Marriott in downtown Washington, DC. The Call for Sessions for GU’s 13th International Conference will be available in early November. Check the GU Website <http://www.gu.org> soon for more information.

The third biennial conference of the International Consortium for Intergenerational Programmes (ICIP) will be held June 26-29, 2006 at Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. The hosts have provided the following link for those wishing to attend the conference and enjoy a holiday: <http://www.ausemade.com.au/national/links/tourism.htm>. The Web site has the links for all the states in Australia (for example: Discover Australia - Sydney, Tourism Queensland, Tourism Victoria, etc). More information will be forthcoming.

Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement

Introduction to a report from the Harvard School of Public Health - MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement

For the full report: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging/index.html>.

For report highlight: http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging/report_highlights.htm.

Approximately 77 million babies were born in the United States during the boom years of 1946 to 1964. In 2011, the oldest will turn 65, and, on average, can expect to live to 83. Many will continue well into their 90s.

The baby boomers soon will have the opportunity to redefine the meaning and purpose of the older years. As some of the demands of work and family that have commanded their attention in mid-life recede, boomers will have the potential to become a social resource of unprecedented proportions by actively participating in the life of their communities.

But will they participate? Compared to their parents' generation, the so-called "Greatest Generation," boomers have done less by every measure of civic engagement, including rates of voting and joining community groups. Given this reality, Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement, a report from the Harvard School of Public Health-MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement, examines these questions:

- Can a national effort succeed in mobilizing large numbers of boomers to contribute their time, skills, and experience to address community problems?
- If boomers respond in large numbers, will civic organizations of various kinds be prepared to receive them?
- What roles can the news media, the advertising industry, and Hollywood play in helping society redefine the meaning and purpose of the older years?

The main message of the report is that there is an opportunity to help boomers create a social legacy of profound importance. Their added years of life give them the chance. Their experiences in life give them the capability. The need to come to terms with the world in a way that brings integrity to their life gives

them the psychological incentive. Much may depend on the actions of the first wave of boomers, many of whom, while inspired in their formative years by President Kennedy's call-to-service, have been notably less involved in civic life than their parents. This first wave may serve as role models for younger boomers, and for future generations as well.

The development of the report was funded by a grant from MetLife Foundation as part of its grant-making program in aging and health. Here are two key observations from the report:

Intergenerational Programs Deserve Special Attention

Community-based initiatives that bridge the generations should receive special attention. These programs build community by integrating the old with the young, transmitting knowledge and experience to future generations, and re-enforcing the value of people of all ages. Studies have found that young people in such programs show measurable improvements in school attendance, attitudes toward school and the future, and attitudes toward elders. Adult volunteers report substantial benefits to themselves: the satisfaction of sharing their experience, feeling useful, and giving back to the community.

Communities Should Develop Plans to Involve Boomer Volunteers in Tackling Important Local Problems

Towns and cities should consider organizing large-scale, volunteer-based efforts that reach out to various sectors of their community in an inclusive way to identify and respond to the community's most pressing problems. The success of such efforts, involving individuals of all ages, is likely to depend on a leadership cadre of volunteers who are prepared to make it their principal activity. Once initiatives are designed with broad input, leaders can offer other volunteers a continuum of opportunities for involvement, ranging from episodic to regular and from casual to intensive. ❖



Contact Information:
Center for Health Communication
Harvard School of Public Health
677 Huntington Avenue, Suite 329
Boston, MA 02115

Tel. 617-432-1038
chc@hsph.harvard.edu

(Continued from page 2)

judgmental openness. It's almost as if the link is in our DNA. Grandparent-grandchild; Sage and student; unconditional love." Though successful, Strimling felt the life-story interviews were too limited and that the project would be stronger if he added theatre. Soon he began to adapt the stories for the stage. Then, people really listened.

In 1996, the *Roots&Branches* company was formed with a group of elder actors (the 'roots') and college-age actors from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (the 'branches'). Over a dozen years they developed the creative process that the program continues to use. During a nine-month series of meetings, the company experiments with many storytelling, improvisation, and discussion exercises based on the members' lives. The tape-recorded sketches are transcribed and eventually shaped into plot lines and dialogue that are developed into a final script. The shows become fully mounted productions that tour primarily to New York locations. Their polished performances balance lighthearted explorations of humanity with serious issues ranging from death, aging, and loneliness to immigration, beauty, and fairy tales. The elders inspire the young with their courage and stamina as they pass on the mystery of the human spirit; the youth inspire the elders with their idealism, hope and their savvy, tough ways; both old and young inspire audiences with the magic they create.

Probably the company's most notable work was *Playing Lear* in 2002. Here the company wove the actors' personal narratives, life events, and opinions into scenes using Shakespeare's play as a springboard for a new look on aging and values. For example, in *King Lear*, as Lear divides up his kingdom, he insists that he must keep an entourage of one hundred knights in order to retain his sense of identity. In *Playing Lear*,

Roots&Branches performers ask, "What is your 100 knights? What is it that if you lost it, you would no longer recognize yourself; would no longer be yourself?" In the end of the play, both the characters and the generations come together, paralleling the transformation that happens in the *Roots&Branches* company.

Strimling wrote the book as a guide. But he urges directors to adapt his methods to their own needs, cast and audience. He suggests ways to locate interested agencies, how to conduct the first meetings, techniques for workshops, steps to use in creating a script, and a recommended process for rehearsals. Tips help readers avoid troublesome problems because, as Strimling acknowledges, intergenerational theatre is not easy. The director needs to accommodate actors with two very different energy levels, paces and speeds of memorization, often representing two different agencies. Even scheduling is difficult because seniors usually prefer to rehearse and perform during the day when young actors are in school or work. Strimling urges readers to leap over the barriers because the experience provides so many rewards for participants, audiences, and communities.

Roots&Branches: Creating Intergenerational Theater is a valuable resource that combines the love of storytelling with intergenerational insight to create dynamic works of art. It proves how, as Arthur Strimling says, "A good story changes people more than a good lesson." ❖

Roots&Branches: Creating Intergenerational Theater (\$18.95) is available from ArtAge Publications, the Senior Theatre Resource Center, with its comprehensive collection of plays, books, and a free newsletter. Call 800-858-4998, e-mail bonniev@seniortheatre.com, or visit online at www.seniortheatre.com. Bonnie L. Vorenberg is the author of *Senior Theatre Connections*, the guide to the field.

**For more information on the Penn State Intergenerational Program, please check our Web site:
<http://intergenerational.cas.psu.edu>**

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

© The Pennsylvania State University 2004

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802, Tel. 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.