



Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Partnership of Wisconsin

UW-Extension Survey Shows What People Enjoy About Being Grandparents

The role of grandparent is hard to define. It can mean anything from someone who makes the best holiday cookies or tells good family stories to the primary child care provider in the family.

A recent survey of grandparents in Milwaukee County by University of Wisconsin-Extension reinforces the fact that grandparents are playing many different roles in today's families. And grandparents are finding many ways of connecting with and enjoying their grandchildren.

The survey included 150 grandparents identified through community organizations, and 189 grandparents involved in Milwaukee County's Kinship Care, which means these grandparents are formal caregivers to their grandchildren. UW-Extension also conducted focus groups with Latino and African American grandparents.

Even among grandparents outside the Kinship Care program, 22 percent were parenting their grandchildren and another 25 percent provided child care on a full-time basis.

"Clearly, we are seeing many grandparents who have substantial responsibility for their grandchildren's care these days," says Mary Brintnall-Peterson, University of Wisconsin-Extension specialist on aging.

When asked what they enjoyed most about being a grandparent, respondents answered in six general categories:

1. They experience two-way, unconditional love with their grandchildren.
2. They enjoy contact with their grandchildren.
3. They like observing the growth and development of their children.
4. They enjoy special activities, such as outings and celebrations, with their grandchildren.
5. They want to serve as educators, teachers, listeners, historians, advisers and spiritual confidantes with their grandchildren; and
6. They like providing for their grandchildren.

Grandparents also say they spend time in many different ways with their grandchildren. Beyond routine visiting and traditional family gatherings, many grandparents say they enjoy one-on-one time with their grandchildren, including dinners, shopping, sewing, cooking, sports events, fishing and traveling together.

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