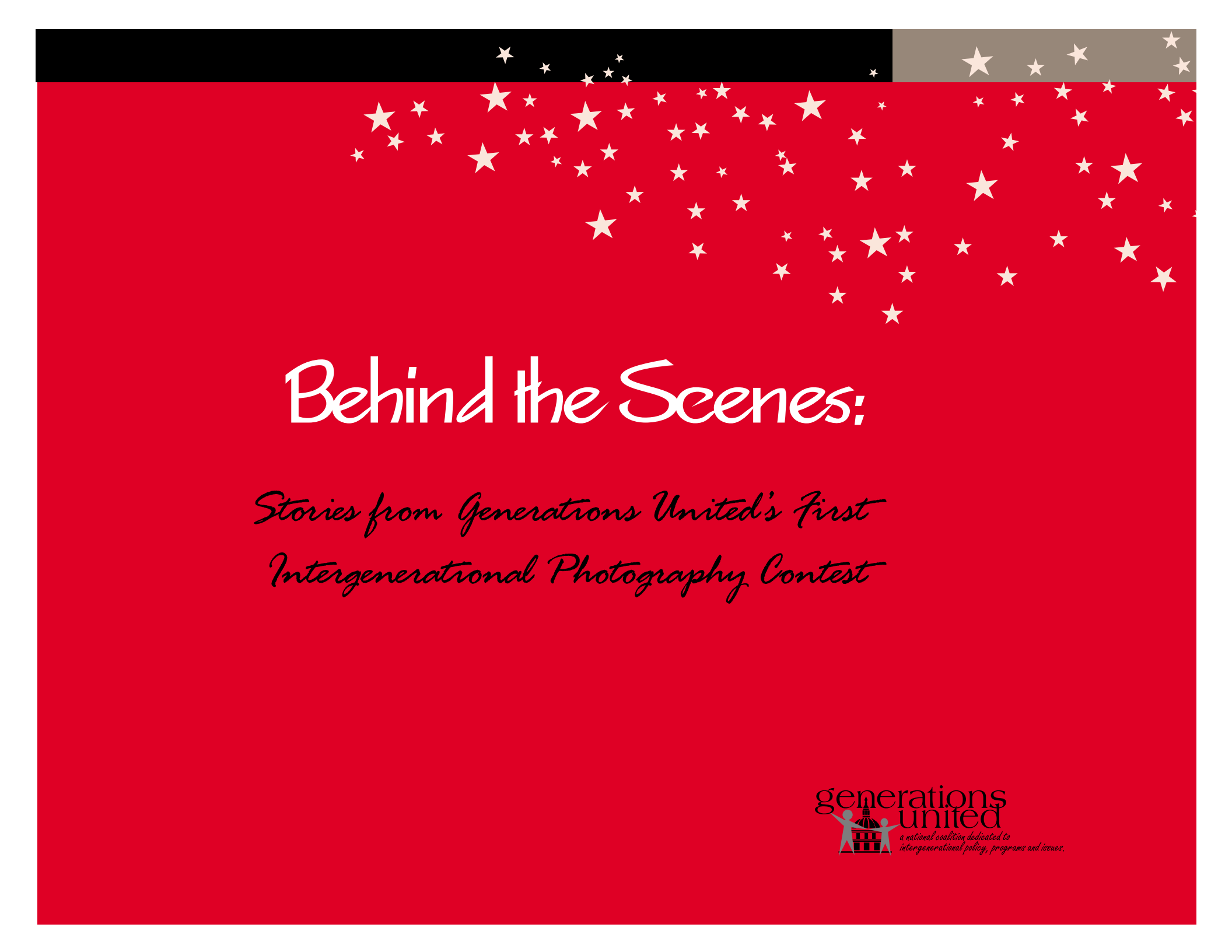




Behind the Scenes:

*Stories from Generations United's First
Intergenerational Photography Contest*



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Acknowledgments

Generations United would like to thank all of the photographers who, by capturing an intergenerational relationship on film and entering their photos in the contest, have helped us to see the importance of connecting children, youth, and older adults.

We would especially like to acknowledge the seven winning photographers, the subjects in their photos, and the many organizations who shared not only their pictures, but also their personal stories for this publication.

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A good picture is equivalent to a good deed.

-Vincent Van Gogh



Introduction

It has been said that every picture tells a story. This book presents a compilation of the stories behind the winning photographs from Generations United's first Intergenerational Photography Contest, sponsored by the MetLife Foundation. Through interviews with the photographers and the subjects, this publication captures and shares the situations around the photographs, the photographers' feelings about photography, peoples' values regarding intergenerational relationships, and the impact of winning GU's Intergenerational Photo Contest on both photographers and subjects. The winning photographs are here, of course, along with pictures of the photographers.



Don McCullin, a photojournalist who has covered wars and most recently the AIDS pandemic in Africa, once said: "Photography for me is not looking, it's feeling. If you can't feel what you're looking at, then you're never going to get others to feel anything when they look at your pictures." When you view these winning photos, the feelings of the subjects are clearly evident. The photos tell stories of teaching, learning, loving, gift giving, and laughing together.



Reading the accompanying stories brings the viewer into the scene captured on film. The feelings of admiration, respect, and love between the children, young people, and older adults in the photographs are even more apparent when one learns about the relationship between them, whether they knew each other for many years or just one day. GU offers this publication as a way to capture not only the powerful stories behind the photographs, but also the significant impact intergenerational relationships make in the lives of younger and older people.



Grand Prize Winner



Photographer: Karen Larsen,
Age 50, Lincoln, Nebraska

Grandma Jean (Jean Jones), age 79, loves the children at McPhee Elementary School in Lincoln, Nebraska. As a Foster Grandparent for 2nd and 3rd graders, Jean is always busy with math problems, reading, and spelling. Nicholas Kroon is just one of many children who love Jean and wanted to have pictures taken with her.

Karen Larsen, Director of the Foster Grandparents Program at Aging Services in Lincoln, took the picture of Jean and Nicholas while she was photographing the foster grandparents at McPhee working with their students to make end of the year gifts. Although Nicholas and Jean were not paired up to work together, Jean describes him as “a little boy who is very lovable and has a great personality. He likes everybody and everybody likes him.”

Karen chose to submit the photo of Jean and Nicholas for the GU photo contest because “it captured what the Foster Grandparents do with children, work one on one. You can see what they’re working on (I was close enough to the subjects) and there is a wonderful expression on Jean’s face. Sometimes photos are so posed; this didn’t appear to be posed. You can just tell when you like something.” Since winning the GU photo contest, Karen makes taking pictures of the foster grandparents and children more of a priority.

Jean liked the photograph when she first saw it: “I thought it was a good picture. I’m no beauty queen or anything like that. I’m just a plain old grandma with my short grey hair. It was good, and I was thrilled for Karen that it was the one that won.”

Karen, Jean, and Nicholas were very excited to learn that their photo won the GU contest. As the grand prize winner, Karen received a trip to Washington, D.C., for herself and a guest, to receive the award during GU’s International Conference. Karen chose Jean to accompany her. Although Jean was facing a back operation, she eagerly accepted Karen’s invitation. Karen remarked, “Jean was great to travel with. She hadn’t been to DC before. Jean had trouble walking but she never complained.” When Nicholas found out Jean would be going to Washington, he said “What about me?” Jean told him “I can’t take you with me, but I’ll bring you back something special.” Nicholas requested a signed picture of the president. Through much effort, Jean filled that request and also brought Nicholas back a variety of Washington toys and memorabilia. Nicholas’ signed photo of President Bush continues to hang on his door.

While the trip to Washington was a thrill for Jean, her real reward for being a Foster Grandparent at McPhee is the children. “I tell everybody I’ve never had such a rich, rewarding job as I have now. There’s always math homework, and stories to be written, and this morning we had to write some poetry,” Jean said. “You get so much back,” she added. “This job gets me up in the morning and gets me going, and it’s great. I could sit around in the apartment and watch TV all day, but what would I be giving back to people? In my later years I’m contributing to something.”

*"You get so much back. This job gets me up in the morning and gets me going, and it's great. I could sit around in the apartment and watch TV all day, but what would I be giving back to people?
In my later years I'm contributing to something."*

– Foster Grandparent, Jean Jones

Elaine Peters, Coordinator of McPhee School, agrees that the reinforcement for the Foster Grandparents isn't the money, but the relationships with the kids. She described Jean as "a great soul. She's very concrete. The kids absolutely love her." She added that the Foster Grandparents have a huge impact on the children and the learning process. She found that Jean "is a good observer of the whole process of learning. Jean seeks out the kids who are struggling."

Nicholas' dad Kevin Kroon described the important work of the Foster Grandparents as well: "They have the patience, being older. They've learned not to be in such a hurry about everything. In our lives, we're running all the time; they take the little breath in the day and help the kids with things." He said Nicholas' highlight of the school day is his time with his Foster Grandparent. "They're almost like other grandmas. They talk about not just what they're doing in school but what else is going on in their lives." Nicholas says "It's a lot funner to be reading with somebody," and he enjoys eating with and talking to Grandma Jean at lunchtime. According to Karen Larsen, Jean has provided a great deal of support for Nicholas so he can accomplish his schoolwork and get things done. As for Jean, she is happy that "first thing in the morning, even the little boys come up and hug me."

Part of Jean's motivation to be at McPhee is the needs of the children. Jean expressed her concern for the children. "The kids have so much baggage, I'm afraid they'll fall through the cracks." She said that school is different today than when she was growing up because the parents are not as involved and often do not read to their children. Karen Larsen feels that "Foster Grandparents can be that stable person in the kids' lives."

Program Coordinator Elaine Peters is impressed with the Foster Grandparents' commitment and loyalty to the school and the children. She observes that they want to learn new strategies for teaching reading, attend school functions outside of their 20 hours of service per week, and "are part of the glue that holds us together at McPhee."

As for Jean, she says it was an honor to go to Washington DC, and that "we got treated royally. But it didn't change me. I already had my mind set on what I was going to do." The children, parents, and teachers at McPhee Elementary School are certainly glad that being a Foster Grandparent is what Jean's mind is set to do.

About the Foster Grandparent Program

The Foster Grandparent Program is part of Senior Corps, which, along with AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America, is one of the programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Foster Grandparents devote their volunteer service to one population: young people with special or exceptional needs. Across the country, Foster Grandparents are offering emotional support to child victims of abuse and neglect, tutoring children who lag behind in reading, mentoring troubled teenagers and young mothers, and caring for premature infants and children with physical disabilities and severe illnesses.

Foster Grandparents:

- Thrive on direct interaction with children
- Believe that they can make a difference in the lives of children
- Serve children directly through one-on-one, hands-on service
- Serve 20 hours a week - usually 4 hours a day Monday through Friday
- Are 60 years of age or older
- Meet certain income eligibility guidelines
- Receive modest tax free stipends to offset the cost of volunteering
- Receive reimbursement for transportation, some meals during service, an annual physical, and accident and liability insurance while on duty
- Participate in pre-service and monthly service training sessions

To find a Foster Grandparents project in your area, visit www.seniorcorps.org or call (800) 424-8867.



Photographer Karen Larsen with Jean Jones at GU's International Conference.

Second Place Winner



Photographer: Cleone Mocik,
Age 52, Hackettstown, New Jersey

Cleone Mocik, Director of Friendship Center Intergenerational Child Care Center in Hackettstown, NJ, took the photo of Isabel and Tony during a visit by the children to the Day Break Senior Day Care Center at Heath Village Retirement Community. The care center is on the campus of the Heath Village Retirement Community. This intergenerational child care center brings children and older adults together twice a month. Although often shy in the beginning, the children quickly overcome their shyness around the older adults and look forward to their time together.

Tony, age 81, suffers from dementia. At the Day Break Center, Tony, a former piano player, sometimes plays songs during the bi-weekly children's visits, and the kids sing. On the day the photo was taken, Tony got in the mood to dance, and Isabel, 3 years old when the picture was taken, grabbed his hands. Tony is a happy-go-lucky guy and Isabel was "delighted" to dance with him.

Cleone snapped the photo because it was a good example of the willingness of the older adults to get up and interact with the kids. Most of the time, however, the kids entertain the adults. Cleone described the dancing as surprising because the older adults generally are not very active. When Tony danced, it prompted others to get up and dance as well.

Cleone decided to submit the photo because it was spontaneous and "showed lots of emotions." She said "It was a happy moment; I had to get it on camera." Cleone takes many pictures around the center and gives cameras to all the day care teachers so they also can capture inspirational moments.



Photographer Cleone Mocik with some of her students.

When Cleone heard she was a GU contest winner she was shocked and "jumped for joy." She posted the photo in the lobby of the day care center, where it serves to impress potential families with the intergenerational component. Parents are attracted to the center because they like the idea of having a "grandma" or "grandpa" around their kids.

Isabel's parents, who are from the Dominican Republic, sent copies of the photograph home to relatives. Mrs. Gomez felt "very emotional, oh my, so excited," upon learning that the photo was a winner. Isabel was also elated when she learned the news. At the day care graduation, Cleone presented a framed copy of the photo to Mrs. Gomez.

"They see aging is natural. The kids help them (the elders) walk, get outside, and get into their seats. My kids run to their older friends during family activities. They like to see them."

– Isabel's Mother

Mrs. Gomez said she loves that the kids interact regularly with the older adults. She said, "I think this keeps them (the older adults) alive. They need it. The kids need it too. They're not afraid to see people in wheelchairs or limping or getting old. They see aging is natural. The kids help them walk, get outside, and get into their seats. My kids run to their older friends during family activities. They like to see them."

Isabel and her identical twin sister have attended the day care center since they were two and a half. They adapted to the older adults very quickly and enjoy performing for them in the auditorium at the senior residence. Isabel said this about her time with the older adults: "It's fun. We dance, we read, we sing, and we walk. Tony is a good dancer."

About The Friendship Center

The Friendship Center is an intergenerational child care facility that incorporates senior citizens from Heath Village Retirement Community, the adjacent retirement community, into its child care programs. Older adult volunteers assist the center's professional staff by teaching stories and foreign languages, conducting nature walks, providing musical accompaniment, reading stories, and supervising craft and woodworking projects. Heath Village residents join with the children for special events and holiday celebrations, and pair off with them to be pen pals. Most important, the Heath Village residents who share in the Friendship Center's activities bring their maturity and love of children to help create a warm, caring environment, giving the children the feeling of a large extended family. The Friendship Center Intergenerational Child Care Center was started by the Heath Village Retirement Community to meet the child care needs of the staff, who receive a discount on tuition.

Third Place Winner



Photographer: Maya Brooks,
Age 10, Sharpsville, Pennsylvania

Maya Brooks was just 10 years old when she took a photo of her 7-year-old sister Rayna reading the grocery store circular to her 88-year-old great-grandmother, Thelma Swartz. Maya heard about the photo contest from her Mom, Leah, who works at a YWCA. Maya really wanted to win the contest and took photos with that goal. She said it was her grandmother's idea to take the photograph of Rayna reading to her great-grandmother, and even though it was a posed picture, Maya said, "That's actually something that they used to do a lot." Maya and her mom rushed to have the photos developed and get the application postmarked on time. Since they were so close to the deadline, they weren't sure her photo would even be considered.

Maya chose the photo to submit because "it was the one that came out the best; in the other ones their heads were cut off." Maya submitted the photo in the "Celebration of Diversity" and "Intergenerational Activity" categories because Rayna is half African American and half German-Dutch. When she heard she won the contest, Maya was happy and told her grandmother and great-grandmother, and "my mom told everyone else." She said her great-grandma (who is now deceased) was "happy for me. Kind of proud." Maya said that winning the contest made her feel like a "real photographer." With the money she won from the GU contest, Maya has opened a savings account, to which she has added Christmas and birthday money.

Although Maya has not been taking many pictures lately, the photography bug has hit her sister Rayna. Rayna reported, "I just got a new camera. I like to take pictures of nice buildings or photograph anything I like, not just anything that catches my eye but stuff that is interesting. Like buildings: how they look and how they're designed and how their shape is and how their texture is. I take pictures of people that are willing for me to take their picture. Sometimes my sister lets me take her picture. Mom and grandma only let me take their pictures when they have their make-up on. I don't know if I will enter a photo contest now, but at some time I would like to." Leah said, "Rayna has an old soul. She would say really funny things and her great-grandma loved to tell people about that."

Their great-grandmother was very special to Maya and Rayna. Even though she was blinded by macular degeneration, she took care to make her time with her great granddaughters special. Leah Brooks said her children had a "pretty neat relationship" with their great-grandparents and continue to be close with both their maternal and paternal grandparents. "Great-Grandma Thelma took care of Rayna while she was in half-day kindergarten, and the girls got to have lots of quality time with the great-grandparents. It was really a blessing to have them, and to have a close relationship with them—to get to know them a little better on a regular basis." From their great-grandma, Rayna and Maya learned to eat sauerkraut on New Year's (a German tradition) and use Pennsylvania Dutch sayings. Thelma loved to drink tea and play tea party with the girls, cook spaghetti, and serve vanilla wafers. Rayna enjoyed sitting on her great-grandma's lap and reading to her. Rayna explained that her great-grandma liked

to hear what was on sale. Leah maintains that for Thelma, “helping with child care helped her health. She looked forward to it. She could still be a caregiver and feel important. She was always proud and bragging about the kids.”

Because her daughters have mixed racial and ethnic heritage, Leah feels it is important to expose Rayna and Maya “to all the different cultures so they understand people are more than how they look.” Thelma was an important role model for Rayna and Maya. Leah explained that Thelma “was one of the only women in her generation in her community who graduated from high school. She graduated two years ahead of her class, and she never quit learning. Although she didn’t go to college, Thelma instilled in all the family the importance of education, and praised them when they tried their best. She taught her family the importance of being honest, of hard work and good morals.” She also started family traditions, such as buying each grandchild (and great-grandchild) an ornament each year for Christmas. Her daughter has continued that tradition since Thelma’s death.

Leah feels that Thelma was a very wise woman with insight into many things. She told the girls stories and passed on some of the things that happened in her childhood. Rayna and Maya are lucky to have had Thelma for a great-grandma. They have clearly inherited her love of learning and family.



Maya Brooks, the youngest winning photographer in the contest.

Honorable Mention: Celebration of Diversity



Photographer: Sheila Sears,
Age 50, Mobile, Alabama

On the day the photo was taken, Esperanza Flores, 24, had come to work just like on any other day in the past month. As a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, she had been assigned to the Senior Services Center in Mobile, Alabama. She met Mr. Howard, 83, as he stepped off a bus to attend the Center's "Master Games" event. Esperanza noticed when he held her arm that he was a very kind person. While waiting for the rest of his group, Mr. Howard asked her to lead him to a room where he heard music. A line dancing performance was taking place as part of the day's celebration. "We were standing by the door in the corner, my hand on his shoulder, and he just turned around and started dancing with me. I was surprised. It was very sweet, and he just had the most beautiful smile!" That is when the photograph was taken that captured the beginning of the story for Mr. Howard and Esperanza.

After their first meeting, Esperanza and Mr. Howard became good friends. Mr. Howard told Esperanza that he had lost his vision but had gained so much; he could see "the beauty of peoples' souls." He explained to her that his priorities changed after losing his sight; for example, he learned to play the piano. Mr. Howard was always joyful, praised people for whatever good he could sense in them, and often prayed by himself and with others. Esperanza feels that Mr. Howard "really changed my life."

Esperanza enjoys the photo of her and Mr. Howard. It reminds her of the lessons he taught her, and she likes to see the peace and joy in his face. "He always looked like that," she remembers. She explains that "the picture is a story of love and the true meaning of life: to see beyond the things we can see and to reach out with an open heart." The photo also reminds her that her meeting Mr.



Photographer Sheila Sears pictured here with Gus Whalen, CEO of Warren Featherbone Company. Sheila received the 2001 Warren Featherbone Foundation Award for Innovation in Connecting the Generations at GU's International Conference. This award is presented to individuals who creatively connect the generations.

Howard "didn't just happen. God brought me to this place and brought us together. It was special that it was captured in the photo. This photo is more than two smiles and two people dancing." For his part, Mr. Howard was very happy to hear that the photo of him and Esperanza had won a contest. He said, "Oh, praise God." Esperanza remarked, "It is wonderful that others can see the moment" in the photo.

Esperanza moved from Mexico to Texas with her family at age 18. She started college with little knowledge of English, and after four difficult years decided to

*"The picture is a story of love and the true meaning of life: to see beyond the things we can see
and to reach out with an open heart."*

—Esperanza Flores

volunteer for the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. She was always involved in church and wanted to do missionary work. She decided to take a year off from school and do "something meaningful." She chose to work with older adults because she thought they needed help and because she was very close with her own grandmother and great-grandmother. During a previous volunteer experience in a nursing home, Esperanza discovered that she "loved working with seniors." When she learned that she was going to be placed in Mobile, she had to look on a map to see where Alabama was in the United States. She was scared about being so far from her family.

After fulfilling her one-year commitment, Esperanza stayed on as a contract employee at the Senior Services Center because she was enjoying the job so much. She is still in Mobile, but now she is back in college studying nursing. Teresa Atkins, Director of Public Relations and Special Events at Senior Citizens Services, describes Esperanza as "an amazing person to work with. She would do

anything that was needed and everyone at the center knew her. She was always smiling, listened to the seniors for hours, and was very giving and creative. She donated several paintings she had created for a fundraiser." Esperanza made a lasting impression on the older adults at the Center. While people come and go often, Teresa points out that two years after Esperanza left, people still keep in touch with her and Esperanza continues to visit. "She built very strong relationships."

About Senior Citizens Services

Senior Citizens Services has been in Mobile for 30 years. The agency began as a support service for Mobile seniors and has grown into a community center. Senior Citizens Services offers the following programs: adult day care, computer lab with instruction, fitness classes, cafeteria, arts and crafts classes, monthly health screenings, and a clinic staffed by a nurse.

Honorable Mention: Intergenerational Activity Portrayed



Photographer: Faye Brown,
Age 67, Moundville, Alabama

Faye's mother's "Great Depression Improvisational Christmas Fruitcake" has been baked yearly since the Depression. Now that Faye's mom is in a nursing home, the tradition continues at Faye's home and involves all the family members who live close by. "All nine children had a part in the baking and we have passed the ritual down to our children and grandchildren." The annual baking tradition also includes cookies.

In the photo, Faye's sister Trillie Brown, age 61, is teaching her grandnephew (Faye's grandson) Tyler how to make the homemade fruitcake. Faye snapped the photo because "it captured an intergenerational activity and how important it is to get together with my children and grandchildren and pass on activities that are part of our family heritage. We want to make sure they know their heritage and that we've done things together." Faye said the day they made the fruitcake was very special and she wanted to capture that and the teaching and learning that were occurring. Faye also liked the "intense expression on Tyler's face as he was sifting the flour." Tyler was especially "enthralled" with sifting the flour, although the cake doesn't really call for sifting. Tyler's other favorite part of the process was mixing the fruit with his hands. Trillie remembers the day as being special because she does not see Tyler very often. "He learned to love me all over again that day," she explained.

"Nona" Faye is known as the family photographer. "I run around with the camera." She takes many photos because "these moments are so fleeting. I just like to hold and keep them, and photography is the best way." During the Depression, Faye's father lost everything, so she only has three or four pictures of herself as a child. Faye reflected, "My time in history has blessed me with the

mechanical means to purchase a gadget, buy a roll of film, persuade my family to 'hold still' for one brief moment (which is no easy matter), snap a button, and within a week's time and for an hour's wage I can hold in my hand a wonderful part of yesterday." Faye added that she fears she will forget a happy or funny moment so "I need to take a photo so I can remember. I want Tyler to grow up and see the photos of himself making the Christmas fruitcake and remember that it was a happy time." Faye wants to "preserve" happy moments, like the ingredients in the fruitcake. Faye put the pictures of the fruitcake making in a special photo album of Tyler. She keeps photo albums of all her grandchildren.

Faye was very excited that she won the contest. Like many of the other winners, she did not think she had a chance of winning. "I sent letters all over and to family members across the country to tell people to look at the GU website to see the picture, and I gave copies to everyone in the family." Tyler was too young to understand that he won, but Faye said he was "tickled to see himself on the Internet." Trillie is proud that the photo still hangs on her refrigerator.

Faye and Trillie, besides being sisters, are also professional collaborators. Faye has written five books about growing up during the Depression, and Trillie has illustrated all of them. Some of her book titles include *Pot Likker*, *Pulley Bones*, and *Pea Vine Hay*; *Chinch Bugs*, *Chinky Pins*, and *Chinie-Berry Beads*; and *Granny's Teacakes*, *Grab'led 'Taters*, and *a Gillion Twice-Told Tales*." For the past 15 years, Faye has written a column for *FloridAgriculture*, a monthly publication of the Florida Farm Bureau. According to the *FloridAgriculture*, Faye's column, written in the idiomatic speech common in her home county (Hale County) in Alabama, "celebrates a special brand of regional folk culture and the

people who have shared it. Faye crafts her stories from her own memory, from interviews with older people, and from conversations with her siblings. Not quite autobiographical, her tales are vivid representations of an authentic rural culture (70 years ago in west-central Alabama).” Her articles have appeared in over 20 newspapers in Alabama. Trillie identifies herself more as a painter than an illustrator, and says she likes to paint old scenes, like barns, and things she remembers from her youth.

Faye also works part time as a rural coordinator with Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in Tuscaloosa County. In her job, she meets with groups of older adults in the county. “I encourage senior adults to stay involved with their grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and neighborhood kids. This is one of the things that keeps them young versus ‘decaying on the vine.’” She includes sharing time during the meetings when the older adults tell what they have done lately with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Faye also encourages older adults to take pictures and write about their lives and pass the stories on to children. She leads a seminar called “Putting Your Past on Paper” in which she encourages older adults to write their life stories as a legacy for their families. Faye is using her winning photo as a tool to motivate older adults to take pictures. She took her winning photo around to the groups she leads and said, “I won. You should be taking pictures of yourselves and your spouses with your grandchildren.” She is pleased that some of the older adults

are starting to be more interested in taking photographs.

In addition to her work as a writer and RSVP coordinator, Faye works with young children in her church and volunteers in local schools, where she demonstrates activities from past generations, such as churning butter and using a washboard. “There is nothing I like better than being with young children,” Faye says. “I love intergenerational interaction.”



Nona Faye Brown and grandson Tyler Brown, age 4, hang plastic Easter eggs onto a dogwood tree for Easter 2002. Egg rolls, church attendance, and an intergenerational family meal on Easter Sunday are family traditions.

Honorable Mention: Humorous Situation



Photographer: Dan Dillman,
Age 14, Montello, Wisconsin

Dan Dillman's photo of Laura Pulford, 14, and Ernie Vohland, 85, captured a light-hearted moment during a holiday party at Hometown Village Apartments, where Ernie lives. As Laura was getting ready to be photographed standing next to Ernie, Ernie pulled her onto his lap and they started laughing. Dan said, "I thought it would be a good picture." Dan chose to submit this photo because "it looks like a Kodak moment. I was trying to achieve the best intergenerational photo I could get. They looked so happy, like the kind of photo people will want to look at over and over and over again. It expressed a lot of emotion, laughter, and humor." Dan was 14 and in 8th grade when he took the photo. The Coordinator of the Marquette County Commission on Aging gave each Teenpower participant a disposable camera to take pictures at Hometown Village and enter the contest, which led to Dan being one of only two winners in the GU contest under 21 years old.

Dan captured the upbeat photo during a bi-weekly visit to Hometown Village by youth involved in the Adopt-a-Grandparent program, a collaboration among Montello Teenpower, the Marquette County Commission on Aging, and Hometown Village. Teenpower is a non-profit, youth-led, community service organization whose teenage members discuss various community conditions and plan and implement needed and meaningful projects. Dan got involved in Teenpower at age 12, learning about the organization from his sister. Last year, when Dan was a 15-year-old high school freshman, he was elected president of the group; he runs meetings and projects and makes sure everyone is doing their jobs. He describes himself as the most active member of the group.

Dan feels Teenpower's visits to Hometown Village are important "for the elderly to feel like they have a purpose. When we started coming, they started having fun and not feeling all down all the time. They started enjoying life. They were always looking forward to our visits." Although Ernie is in a wheelchair and can't move well, Dan said, "he is always happy when we come to visit." Laura added, "Ernie has a wonderful personality and tells lots of stories." Ernie worked as a milkman, delivering the milk with horse and wagon, and owned a bakery in Montello for 25 years. Laura especially enjoys visiting Hometown Village because she does not have grandparents and has not been able to share stories with elders. Laura reflects, "Going to Hometown Village has helped me see how nice and sweet older people are." Ernie also enjoyed his visits with Teenpower members: "We had no trouble communicating. Everyone got to be on a first name basis but they also had respect. We were almost like grandparents and grandchildren." Ernie added that visiting with the teens has "given me something that I can do, and luckily, whatever we're doing with the group is working out real well. I got a good lesson. The so-called 'gap' you read about—it isn't really there. We realize that we're not so darn far apart after all." Dan is hoping that Teenpower begins to visit a second senior facility soon.

When he found out he won the GU photo contest, Dan thought "Wooo, pretty cool." The photo and story appeared in seven local newspapers. At school, Dan said people came up to him and remarked, "You're the kid in the paper." Dan was proud of winning and now feels he is more serious about photography. Ernie was pleased about being part of the winning photograph. He said "I was surprised that a guy like me, an old codger, 85 years old, could get this much attention. I got a big picture made of it, too."

Dan's family was also excited about his winning photograph. "They thought I was going to be famous. My mom has a couple of the articles in her office, and her boss wants me to help decorate part of the office building with my own artwork and some other people's." Dan's other artwork includes digital photography, painting, sculpture, and graphic design. Dan recently won 2nd place in the Wisconsin Educational Media Association's statewide art contest.

It pleased Dan that winning the intergenerational photography contest gave Teenpower more publicity. He is happy that Teenpower "joined the Montello Chamber of Commerce. We're now part of the community and businesses. When they send out their catalogue of businesses, we'll be in there." Laura was pleased that Teenpower gained more recognition through the media coverage. She stated, "Teenpower is more recognized in the adult world in Montello. Nowadays a lot of adults don't see kids as wanting to help out."

As a result of the contest, Dan and Laura were asked to speak at the Wisconsin Intergenerational Network (WIN) conference. "I never had so many people shake my hand so many times. It felt good. It was hard to get up in front of everybody. I'm not that good at public speaking; I'm working on it," Dan said. Dan described the experience of sharing his ideas around the state so people can use them as "exhilarating." Laura felt that it was "really cool" to be able to share her point of view on a lot of things with adults at these conferences. She was also happy that Teenpower members got to write an article for the WIN newsletter that is distributed statewide.

Teenpower has changed Dan's life. Although his personal and family history have been challenging, Dan is resilient. He said, "I'm advanced for my age. I do more things than other people do when they're older." He is proud of his many contributions: "I can make a difference in my community. I've already made a big difference." Laura feels that "It was really exciting for Dan to be recognized for doing something good." Sue Allen, volunteer adult advisor to Teenpower, raves about Dan: "I'm very proud of him. He's shown exemplary leadership. He's got a "go for it" attitude. I wish we could clone him."



Photographer Dan Dillman, one of only two winners in the contest under 21.

*"The so-called 'gap' you read about—it isn't really there.
We realize that we're not so darn far apart after all."*

— Ernie Vohland

About Montello Teenpower and their Adopt-a-Grandparent Program:

Montello Teenpower was initiated by Sue Allen, Executive Director of Wisconsin Positive Youth Development, in response to a community needs assessment that revealed the need for positive youth development opportunities for teens not involved in sports or clubs. The purpose of Montello Teenpower is to improve the Montello community in whatever ways the members decide. The group elects youth officers and members come up with their own ideas for projects; they listen to community leaders' ideas and develop leadership skills.

Adopt-a-Grandparent

Montello Teenpower members developed the Adopt-a-Grandparent Program in the fall of 2000 as a community service project. The group learned about the social isolation of people living in subsidized apartments in town and decided to address this issue through a community service project. The Adopt-a-Grandparent program consists of bi-monthly visits to Hometown Village, a subsidized senior housing facility, during the school year, and monthly visits during the summer. Depending upon the day, four to ten teens (ages 12-15) and three to eight "grandparents" visit together.

Teenpower members plan the visits. The members gather ideas from the grandparents to add to their own ideas. The group votes to determine each visit's activities and members typically take responsibility for running the activities. Activities include: biographical interviews about grandparents' lives, modern dance performances, making puppets (and then a puppet show), favorite childhood memories, create-a-story, favorite readings, and playing musical instruments. After each visit, the teens talk at their club meetings about how it went and what to do next time. Additionally, the teens and older adults participate together in joint community service projects, such as Join Hands Day, a national day of service coordinated by the Points of Light Foundation.

Teenpower's Adopt-a-Grandparent program won a first place regional youth service award from the Wisconsin Lions Foundation and second place for the entire state in 2002. The grandparents also feel it is an important project. One stated, "I feel these wonderful teenagers are bringing joy to the people of Hometown Village. They are a credit to the community, proving we have many, many young people who deserve a big pat on the back." Sylvia Phillis from the Commission on Aging reported, "The folks at Hometown Village now feel they can contribute something to the community, too. They feel very important, and this program has brought that out."

Honorable Mention: Emotional Expression



Photographer: Cheryll Holden,
Age 57, Rushville, New York

Cheryll Holden loves to take pictures of her granddaughter Korelie. Korelie was 7 when Cheryll took this photo of her with her grandfather, Burrell Holden. Grandpa was giving Korelie a stuffed dog he had bought for her in the gift shop at the hospice where he was living. Cheryll chose to submit this photo to the GU photo contest because of the expression on Korelie's face and to show the interaction between Burrell and Korelie. Although Korelie is not smiling in the picture, she was "really happy" when Burrell gave her the dog.

Cheryll was excited to hear she won the GU photo contest because it was her first time ever entering such a contest. She does, however, take many pictures of Korelie because "every picture conveys a different view of her and a different attitude." Korelie enjoys taking pictures of flowers, and thinks she may one day enter a contest too.

Cheryll is raising Korelie. Korelie's biological parents have little to no contact with her, so Cheryll has raised her granddaughter since birth. When Korelie was born, Cheryll had been divorced from Burrell for more than 20 years, yet remained close to him. Burrell and Korelie enjoyed a very special relationship until his death in 2002. Cheryll said that Burrell was a father figure for Korelie. Korelie said she liked to go out for ice cream with her grandfather and liked that he always "got me stuff like candy and greeting cards. And he told me a lot of stories." Korelie's favorite story was about a grasshopper and an ant.

During his long illness, Korelie visited Burrell often and never expressed sadness. She would eat with him, watch videos, pour him juice, and show him pictures she made in school. Burrell "was always an optimist. He thought he was going to lick this illness," Cheryll said. Korelie visited Burrell until a week before he died. "She was worried about Grandpa, but we instilled in her that you just pray a lot and when the time is right, the Lord will take him and will care about him," Cheryll explained.

Cheryll reports that raising Korelie is challenging at her age but there are also rewards. "I think I have more patience this time around. I see a lot of kids raising themselves and some people take their kids for granted. She's my primary goal. My life is pretty much around her; I don't have much of a life otherwise.... She is one of the easiest children that you could ever raise. She's very obedient and she's very focused no matter what she does. She's almost a little too serious. She's an affectionate, caring, and loving child. We have a very tight bond; when we're watching a movie we look at each other and I'll know what she's thinking." Korelie said she most enjoys baking cookies with her "Nana."

Isabel Jensen, an Extension Educator in Ontario County, NY, founded and coordinates the grandparents raising grandchildren support group of which Cheryll is a member. Isabel explained that she had seen an article in *Newsweek* about the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren, was experiencing it in her own family, and "had a suspicion that there was an unmet need in the community." Isabel planned a six-part educational series on the topic and realized quickly that the grandparents wanted and needed ongoing support, so a support group facilitated by volunteers was born. The group meets monthly,

alternating between an education program and coffee and conversation. The group also participates in social events, such as bowling, caroling at Christmas-time, and a Christmas party.

Isabel says that support groups “can help the grandparents reduce stress in their lives and maybe reduce hypertension. It’s a time they can sit back, not worry about anything, and just be with the other grandparents.” Isabel described the support they give to one another: “When one grandparent went back to work, another stepped up to watch the child when she got off the bus. Sometimes they hear, “What are you, nuts? You already raised your kids.” Isabel responds that “a lot of them want to provide a stable environment for the kids. They’ve seen the kids go through so much in their young lives; they want to try and make things better for them and giving them that stable, predictable environment is very helpful.” For many grandparents, “Retirement is almost a dirty word—there is no retirement.”

Isabel said that Cheryl “has gotten so much from the other grandparents who have been in the group since the beginning and now support the others. She’ll probably evolve into that role of helping others who are new to raising their grandchildren.”

Cheryl described raising Korelie as a “labor of love.” Isabel described grandparents who raise their grandchildren this way: “They are the guardian angels, the silent saviors.” Cheryl dedicates her life to loving and helping those around her. Korelie is lucky to be surrounded by such love.

About Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

- In 1997, 3.9 million or 5.5% of all U.S. children were being raised in grandparent-headed households.
- In 2000, 4.5 million or 6.3% of all U.S. children were being raised in grandparent-headed households. Another 1.5 million were being raised by other relative caregivers.
- Grandparents and other relative caregivers who step forward to raise children save taxpayers a minimum of \$4.5 billion a year by keeping children out of the foster care system.

For more information on kinship care, contact Generations United's National Center on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children at (202) 638-1263 or gu@gu.org, or visit the Kinship Care pages of the GU website, www.gu.org.



*Photographer Cheryl Holden
with her granddaughter
Korelie.*

Conclusion

"[Photography] is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever...It remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything."

-Aaron Siskind

The winning photographs of Generations United's Intergenerational Photography Contest capture the beauty and power of intergenerational relationships. Looking at these images, the viewer recognizes the connection between the generations. Reading the stories of the photographers and the subjects, you learn just how deep the connections go and the profound impact of intergenerational relationships.

Response to both the contest and the exhibit has been very positive. Based on interest in the first contest and numerous requests regarding subsequent contests, Generations United, with the support of MetLife Foundation's Health Aging Initiative held a second photo contest in 2002. The 2002 contest saw almost double the number of entries. GU has displayed the exhibit at numerous national conferences and meetings. At one recent conference a visitor to the exhibit remarked, "Now these are the best pictures here!" The photographs are powerful tools to educate people on the roles older adults play in our communities and the value of intergenerational relationships.

For more information on intergenerational initiatives, the Intergenerational Photography Contest, or the Generations United exhibit, contact GU at (202) 638-1263 or gu@gu.org.

About the Intergenerational Photography Contest

In 2001, Generations United conducted its first Intergenerational Photography Contest with generous support from the MetLife Foundation's Healthy Aging Initiative. The purpose of the contest was three-fold: to capture the power and beauty of intergenerational relationships; to convey the important roles that younger and older people play in each other's lives; and to develop a powerful visual exhibit that will be displayed at national conferences, corporate headquarters, and special events. The contest also presented an opportunity for young and old to explore the dimensions of aging as they developed their ideas for photographs.

GU held the contest for the best photographs taken by younger (up to age 21) and older (over age 50) amateur photographers of younger and older people together. The winning photographs demonstrated the importance of intergenerational connections.

The categories used in judging the photographs included the following:

- *Celebration of diversity* – capturing the growing racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of today's United States
- *Emotional expression* – portraying the emotional bonds that are formed between generations
- *Humorous situations* – demonstrating that people of all generations love to laugh
- *Intergenerational activity portrayed* – capturing the beauty of older and younger people working and/or playing together

The intergenerational photo contest was publicized through mailings, the GU website (www.gu.org), announcements in GU's quarterly newsletter *Together*,

and the vast networks of GU members. The seven winners were chosen from among 28 entries from 12 states. Members of the GU Board of Directors served as judges for the contest. The winning photographs were printed in GU publications, posted on GU's website, and shown as part of a signature GU exhibit that helps educate people throughout the country about the importance of older adults in society, as well as the importance of intergenerational programs and issues.

Based on the success of the first Intergenerational Photography Contest, with additional support from the MetLife Foundation, GU conducted a second contest in 2002.

About Generations United

For further information about intergenerational programs, public policies, or initiatives, please contact:

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Website: www.gu.org

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on promoting intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU is comprised of more than 100 national, state, and local organizations, representing more than 70 million Americans, and is the only national organization advocating for the mutual well-being of children, youth, and older adults. GU serves as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU provides a forum for those working with children, youth, and the elderly to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.



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The camera is an instrument that teaches people
how to see without a camera.

-Dorothea Lange





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