



Evening festivities began with Dalry Darlings Crystal Brubaker, 10; Andrea Shellenberger, 9; Jodi DeLong, 11; and Jenna Martin, 9, serving milk punch, cheese and crackers to guests.



Taking Time
by
Rebecca Escott

In the last decade, the number of children living with their grandparents has increased by almost 40 percent, according to the most recent U.S. Census. A documented 3.2 million children live with their grandparents full-time, and there are millions of other grandparents who assume child-rearing responsibilities on a part-time basis.

Add to these "part-time" arrangements the tens of millions of kids who will spend a week or a month with Grandma this summer, and you have lots of grandparents who are faced with new discipline, communication, feeding, and entertainment challenges.

Grandparent caregivers experience increased demands—financial, legal, physical, social. Some also confront their own child who may be abusive or drug addicted. If you are a grandparent caregiver, part-time or full-time, you need to seek support. Some of that support will come from your own grandchildren. Their hugs and smiles can refuel you. Addi-

tional help comes from the community—friends, support groups, family service agencies, and local communities services like the public library.

These places and people will help you fill a critical role in your grandchild's life. You certainly make a difference and have an opportunity to positively affect your grandson or granddaughter's future.

As I reflect on the times I spent with my grandparents, I think two of their greatest gifts to me were the gift of listening and the gift of encouragement—needs that are often neglected in a crazy world! As you spend time with your grandchild this summer, look for ways to communicate how special she is to you. Make yourself available for conversation.

The conversation may come more easily if you're busy doing something together. With younger children, plan a scavenger hunt.

Before going outdoors, make up a list of things to look for—a robin, a yellow leaf, a daisy, a green roof, etc. Then walk together. Ask your pre-teens to teach you a song, a dance, or a group cheer. Make homemade pogs with your grandchildren. Showing an interest in the things of their generation really communicates that you care.

Pogs is a reminder to me that some things change. As grandparents you see that. Now car seats and bike helmets are both mandated realities in Pennsylvania. The hot TV shows and toys come and quickly go, but some things don't change. Kids still like to be hugged, to be the center of attention occasionally, to laugh and to run. They want to be liked; they want to fit in. They also need to know limits.

Providing reasonable limits for children may be a challenge for grandparents especially if the children's parents don't do that consistently. It is not helpful for grandchildren to get everything they want or to be able to do anything at any time. Children benefit from some rules and guidelines.

It's been a while since you last disciplined a youngster, here are a few strategies to try:

Separation—If you care for more than one child, have them go to separate areas if they begin to fight with each other. Use this as a time to calm down.

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