

# MAKING THE CASE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL CHILDCARE:

## How Adults 50+ Can Support Home-Based and Family Childcare Centers

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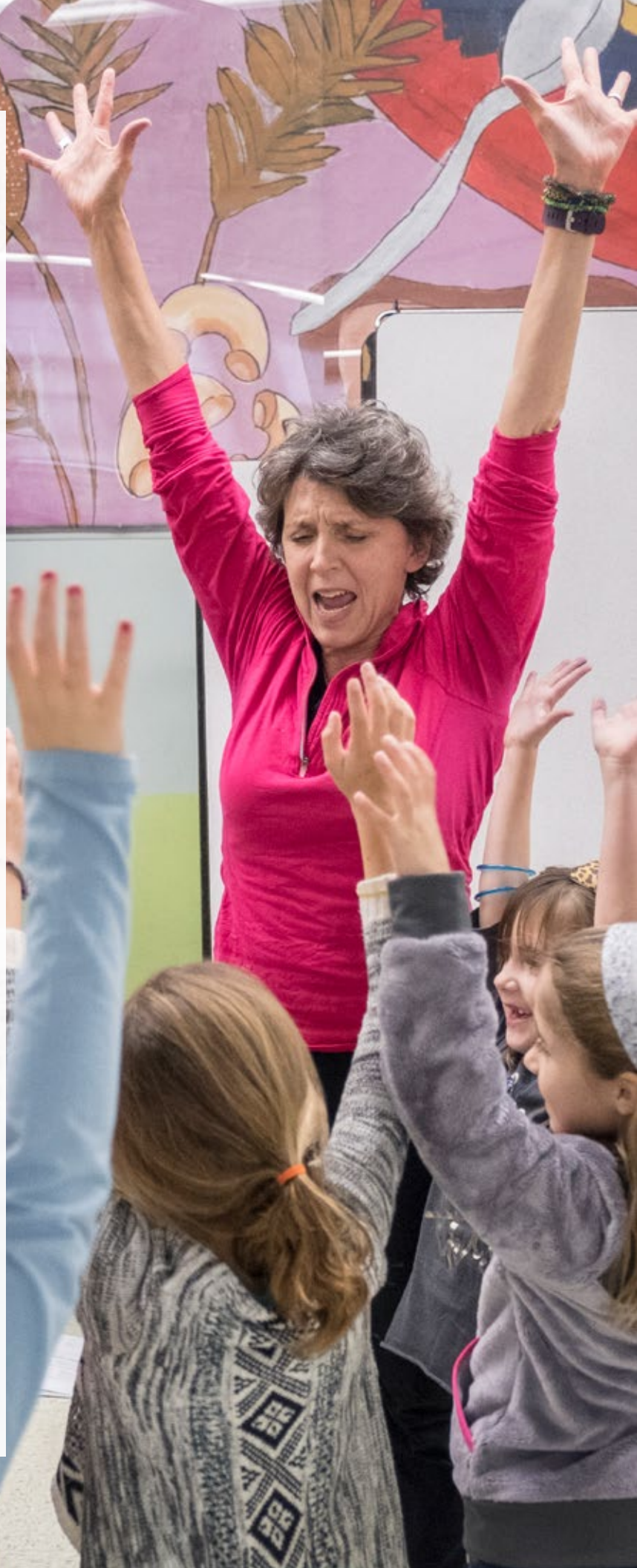


## OVERVIEW

This paper will examine the meaningful roles that adults 50+ can play to help improve the quality of childcare for young children 0-5. It will show that intergenerational approaches to child care have the potential to create brighter futures for currently underserved youth; benefit older adults seeking purpose, income and connection; and unlock doors to economic prosperity for small business owners (mostly low-income women of color) currently running home-based and family childcare centers.

This paper will focus particularly on the staffing of home-based and family childcare centers where nearly 50 percent of U.S. children receive care. These centers are typically underserved and overlooked by private, public and nonprofit services alike. Because home-based childcare is a market-driven sector and hugely fragmented, it has traditionally been difficult for concerted efforts like Jumpstart and Foster Grandparents to reach, but that doesn't have to be the case going forward. This paper will offer ideas – based on bright spots from other intergenerational models – for ways that all sectors can leverage older-adult talent to support home and family-based childcare.

Finally, this paper will argue that making a difference for future generations depends to a great degree on our ability to marshal all available resources, including older adults, to support the mostly low-income women of color currently shouldering this burden.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
WHY BRING THE GENERATIONS TOGETHER? .....	2
WHY IS EARLY CHILDHOOD SO IMPORTANT?.....	4
WHY FOCUS ON CHILDCARE? .....	6
WHO PROVIDES CHILDCARE IN THE U.S. TODAY? .....	7
WHAT OBSTACLES EXIST? .....	8
WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES?.....	9
CONCLUSION .....	16
BIOS .....	16
ENDNOTES .....	18

## INTRODUCTION

When Natasha Auguste-Williams, a family daycare provider in Bridgeport, Connecticut, sought to expand her business, there was only one person she felt she could turn to: her mother, Margaret Auguste.

They share the same values and goals, seeking to improve services for children from single-parent and low-income families. “A lot of people think that when you have a home daycare the kids just come and sit inside and watch TV all day. I wanted to change that. I wanted to start a program where books are within the child’s reach, and where there are opportunities to learn and explore.”

For parents who think their children will never eat vegetables, Natasha shows them videos of their children eating tomatoes and cucumbers from the garden the kids helped plant. A local nonprofit, All Our Kin, which offers a range of services to support family childcare programs, provides soil and organic seeds so that children in family daycares can learn about nature and nutrition. The kids love getting their hands dirty, too.

Their family daycare thrives because parents love that their children have a safe and stimulating environment in which to learn.

So, of course, Natasha met more demand than she could supply. To satisfy the growing need, she opened a second floor of their home as another certified family daycare space. Now, Natasha looks after the pre-school-aged children on the upper floor, while her mother looks after the babies on the ground floor. “She has the patience for it,” Natasha says. “It was natural because she raised the five of us and was a nanny and a baby nurse before. She knew exactly what she was doing.”

This paper will examine the meaningful roles that other adults like Margaret can play to help improve the quality of childcare for young children 0-5. Making a difference for future generations depends to a great degree on our ability to marshal all available resources, including older adults, to support the mostly low-income women of color currently shouldering this burden.

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## WHY BRING THE GENERATIONS TOGETHER?

### **Demography, economics and generativity all conspire to create a natural fit for adults 50+ in the childcare field.**

*We're living longer.* In his 10 facts about longevity, Andrew Scott, economics professor at London Business School and author of *The 100-Year Life*, points out that realistic life expectancy has risen and will continue to do so. He suggests that many people alive today will live to 100, with increasing percentages getting an additional two decades.<sup>1</sup> Those who do live longer will also live *healthier* longer, thanks to medical research and advancements.<sup>2</sup> That means that many of us may have as many as 40 years to fill with joy, learning and renewed purpose after we've retired from a primary career.

*We're looking for purpose later in life.* Despite longer lives, society's preconceptions about retirement and aging mean there are few structural or emotional supports available to individuals navigating this transition. It can be a difficult time, particularly for those who are having trouble earning necessary income. But given that people over 60 are the world's fastest growing demographic population, there are huge benefits to older adults and to society at-large when people in the second half of life are able to use their experience, skill and talent to help meet social needs and solve social problems.

*We're looking for paying jobs later in life.* Ending a primary career can mean the start of a second or third act, one filled with purpose and a paycheck. The current model of retirement at 60 or 65 cannot sustainably support all of us as we are living longer. More people are continuing to work beyond retirement age. While 18.8 percent of people over 65 worked in 2016, researchers predict the number will rise to over 30 percent by 2021.<sup>3</sup> With more adults looking to work beyond retirement age, employers and entrepreneurs have an opportunity to get creative about new career pathways for the most experienced.

*As we enter our encore years, connection to earlier generations becomes increasingly important to us.* Rather than settle into a self-focused older age, many feel the compression of time compelling them to nurture the future, seeing younger generations as the extension of their own stories. The psychologist Erik Erikson calls this personal drive "generativity." The act of giving forward to the next generation saves us from stagnation and ensures the well-being of the future. In generativity, older adults find renewed purpose and responsibility.

*And connection between older and younger generations becomes increasingly important to society.* Throughout human history, older adults have played an important role in children's lives. As anthropologist Kristen Hawkes put forth as part of the "grandmother hypothesis," adults may have evolved to live as long as they do because there is an evolutionary imperative for grandmothers to support their grandchildren. In hunter-gatherer societies, grandmothers helped with child-rearing and acquiring food for youngsters.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the work of raising children became possible because it was subsidized by grandmothers' contributions. Across time, grandmothers and grandfathers have continued to nurture, nourish, teach and mentor younger generations. These roles are various and especially important for those children today who don't have a connection to grandparents. In meeting across generations, we can meet needs across society.

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In generativity, older adults find renewed purpose and responsibility.

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## WHY IS EARLY CHILDHOOD SO IMPORTANT?

**The gift of additional years can be and is used in many ways — recreation, personal enrichment, longer careers, encore careers for the greater good. But there is a good case to be made that bringing encore talent to children’s earliest years will provide the biggest payoff for society now and in the future.**

*The foundation for future success is laid in our first five years of life. From the moment a baby comes into the world, she is on the sprint of her life. The earliest years are when children learn and grow the most, with 90 percent of brain development occurring in the first five years and forming the foundation for success later in life.<sup>5</sup> Emotional bonding at 0-2 and social interaction from ages 3-5 set the stage for a child’s ability to relate to others and cope with stresses to come. Babies and children depend on the love and safety provided by parents and caregivers to hit those developmental milestones.*

*Healthy brain development depends on healthy environments, and poverty puts that development at risk for millions of children. Tragically, access to positive early environments is not equally distributed. There are approximately 72 million children in the U.S. While the overall poverty rate is 14 percent, 21 percent of children live in poverty, with another 22 percent of children nearly poor.<sup>6</sup> Being raised in poverty increases the likelihood of risk factors for developmental delays, such as parental depression, substance abuse and social isolation.<sup>7</sup> Even by 18 months, children of low socioeconomic status are speaking on average 40 percent fewer words than their higher status counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Fewer than half of low-income 5-year-olds enter school prepared, and many are far behind their peers.<sup>9</sup> But research shows that more caring adults in the lives of children growing up in challenging circumstances can buffer adversity and lead to better outcomes.<sup>10</sup>*

*Investing in young children is good business for our society. No matter the circumstance, if a child isn’t reading at grade level by third grade, he or she is likely to fall behind or eventually leave school and is at much higher risk of incarceration and drug abuse later in life. As Nobel-winning economist James Heckman has argued, investing in early childhood is not only the right thing to do, it also offers the best return on investment for reducing deficits and strengthening the economy. He’s shown that for each \$1 invested in early childhood, \$9 come back to the society at large in the form of increased income taxes and decreased spending on other social programs and criminal justice systems. All future investments in human potential become more productive if made on the heels of early investment at younger ages.<sup>11</sup>*

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## WHY FOCUS ON CHILDCARE?

**Given the value of additional attention to the earliest years, it's easy to see why we should focus additional attention on childcare centers.**

*The changing nature of families and work means more children are in nonparental care. Today over 60 percent of mothers with children under 6 are working, compared to fewer than 10 percent in 1940. And growing numbers of children, about 30 percent currently, live in single-parent households, making the need for childcare options even greater. A child's earliest learning may have taken place primarily in the home before, but most young children are now learning in external environments and with non-parents — whether through formal childcare or unpaid care with family, friends or neighbors. Roughly 11 million children under 5 are in nonparental care for an average of 33 hours a week.<sup>12</sup> As many as 10 times more of those hours are spent in paid childcare by age 5 than in full-day pre-kindergarten programs.<sup>13</sup> And in fact, even with the existence of programs like Head Start, only 44 percent of children from low-income families attend preschool, compared to 69 percent of children from high-income families.<sup>14</sup>*

*Childcare is early childhood learning. Regardless of location, whether in daycare or at home, young children are continuously learning from everything and everyone around them. Every relationship then becomes a teaching one. As articulated in the recent U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, “The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare,” the distinction between early childhood learning and childcare is misleading because “childcare IS early childhood learning, regardless of the building it's in or what we call it. The question is only whether it's advancing or impeding children's learning.”<sup>15</sup>*

*Childcare increases workforce productivity by ensuring parents have the ability and peace of mind to participate. Most two-parent households have two working adults, and the vast majority of single parents are working. Without access to reliable childcare, parents suffer from reduced productivity at work, absenteeism and job loss. Surveys have shown that 70 percent of the nonworking poor cite “taking care of home/family” as the reason they're not in the workforce.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the service sector employs the majority of the working poor in part-time, shift-based jobs with irregular or nighttime hours, creating additional need for childcare that is reliable and safe at all hours.<sup>17</sup>*

## WHO PROVIDES CHILDCARE IN THE U.S. TODAY?

### **Childcare in the U.S. is a fragmented marketplace.**

*In raising children, there is no one size that fits all.* Over the course of a child's life, parents may engage a number of different childcare arrangements, often concurrently. Parents, relatives, family, friends and neighbors (FFN), facilities, and home-based daycares form a patchwork solution for the care of children in the early years. Unlike the K-12 system, childcare is a largely market-based sector with no single provider occupying more than 5 percent of industry revenue.<sup>18</sup>

*Childcare is a fragmented marketplace with few business support services.* The vast majority of providers, roughly 90 percent, are home- or family-based care providers that are owner-operated and have no employees.<sup>19</sup> Imagine if every restaurant in the country operated independently, and each one had to create its own payment and accounting system, navigate the tax codes for the industry (which differ state to state), and market its services — all with an employee group of one. This is the state of home-based childcare, a market of nearly 700,000 establishments that are largely unserved by tailored business support services.

*People who care for young children are primarily women who are paid less than almost any other group of employees.* Informal caregivers, mostly women, have shouldered the burden of rearing the next generation, but they carry on largely unsupported by our society and social systems. Childcare workers receive some of the lowest wages in the U.S., earning an average of \$10.72 per hour in 2015 for full-time work.<sup>20</sup> Nearly half of them are living in poverty, receiving some form of government assistance like welfare, food stamps or Medicaid.<sup>21</sup> In areas with prohibitively high costs of living, childcare workers are leaving the workforce to earn higher wages in the food and beverage or transportation industries.

*Family, friend and neighbor care is widely used among low-income families, and it presents unique challenges.* For low-income families, this largely informal, home-based care is cited as the most desirable form of care for its flexibility, cultural consistency and trustworthiness of the caregiver.<sup>22</sup> Nationally, half of all children under 6 will spend time being cared for in settings like these. While caregivers are motivated by wanting to help family members or earn additional income, they also report challenges with isolation, stress and conflicts with parents or other commitments.<sup>23</sup> As the Packard Foundation discovered in its survey, “The Importance of Informal Child Care in California,” many informal caregivers feel “they don’t have the right supports or connections to other people who are doing the same work.”<sup>24</sup>

*Older women are grandmothers to their own and other children.* Family, friend and neighbor providers are almost exclusively women, with the majority of relative care provided by grandmothers.<sup>25</sup> They’re caring full- and part-time, and one of the most commonly cited benefits of grandmother care is the flexibility in providing short-notice or sporadic care.<sup>26</sup> Grandparents are not just babysitting, either. Today 2.7 million grandparents nationwide are acting as the primary caregiver to grandchildren, and the number is increasing.<sup>27</sup>

In modern times and ancient, grandparents help provide childcare safety nets for parents, and the inclination extends beyond nuclear families. Alison Gopnik, developmental psychologist, has written extensively on the phenomenon of adults caring for children even when they aren’t related. She explains, “The emotions of care are triggered by a social context....Even more than other animals, humans respond to the act of caring itself... What makes us love a child isn’t something about the child — it’s something about us. We don’t care for children because we love them; we love them because we care for them.”

## WHAT OBSTACLES EXIST?

**To help nurture our youngest, we can turn to our elders. But to make it happen, there will be systemic hurdles to overcome in funding, fit and logistics.**

*Childcare is drastically underfunded.* As it is, childcare workers are paid 30 to 60 percent less than their teacher counterparts in kindergarten classrooms<sup>28</sup> To support paid part-time work by older adults in childcare settings, particularly at-home daycares serving low-income children, there will likely need to be some philanthropic or public funding supplements.

*Childcare requires commitment.* Making a meaningful difference for young children is all about loving relationships. Studies have shown negative outcomes for children cared for in environments with high teacher turnover.<sup>29</sup> Anyone looking to serve our nation's children directly will need to commit to the endeavor for an extended period of time in both training and service, and providers who want to leverage the talents of older adults will need to screen for that longevity.

*Family daycares are disperse and often unlisted; even parents struggle to find them.* For older adults who want to plug into this system, greater coordination, likely from public or nonprofit intermediaries, will be required. Technological innovation to link and support these independent businesses could also go a long way here.



*Family daycares are not just any business; they are homes first and foremost.* Many people are accustomed to volunteering in schools, libraries or other public shared-use spaces. Volunteers or employees in a home daycare enter a family business. Fit and sensitivity will be the most important characteristics for productive partnerships. For newcomers, this will require awareness that they are entering the space as invited guests. For home-based providers, additional energy for recruiting, managing and motivating new employees or volunteers will be required.

## WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES?

Despite the challenges described above, many older adults can and do play a meaningful role in supporting children in the most critical years. For decades, institutions have found ways for older adults to play a role in children's lives, through national programs like Foster Grandparents or local school reading and mentoring programs. Most formal intergenerational efforts currently target K-12 youth through schools or other community partners. Imagine if we created options for older adults to love and support infants and young children in home childcare settings as well.

### **More older adults could use their entrepreneurial energy to start their own homecare businesses.**

As her son approached age 5, Fern Mandelbaum wasn't sure where to send him for a final year of preschool in Palo Alto. "There were parochial options at the local church and JCC, but if you just wanted your kid to have something quiet and welcoming before kindergarten, there was nowhere to turn."

So Fern, a serial entrepreneur and investor, turned to PJ Lents, a teacher and tutor who'd spent 20 years in the public school system. Together they worked to open a family daycare center that offered a kindergarten curriculum. PJ got to create the classroom she'd always wanted, while Fern handled all of the taxes, licensing and capital needs. They opened a large family daycare center in the house PJ was renting in Palo Alto. Periwinkle School occupied the ground floor, with PJ residing upstairs with her two school-age sons.

"I think if kids have beautiful paints and beautiful paper, they can't help but make something they feel proud of." This gives a sense of how PJ set up the Periwinkle School world. Soft colors and inviting shapes from natural materials like wood and cotton adorn every surface. A wooden playhouse stands in one corner, and every month it takes on a different theme: Farm Stand in October, as students are learning to count apple and pumpkin seeds; Post Office in February, as they're writing Valentine's Day letters to each other. On the first day of the month, students run into the classroom on a mission to learn what new shape their playhouse has taken.

PJ has an incredible knack for the little details that will spark a 5-year-old's curiosity. "My mind is constantly trying to figure out what's gonna make them want to join my exploration team?" She knows that once she has that wonder on her side, the learning will take care of itself.

“I wake up every morning and pinch myself that I get to do this,” PJ says, having spent the last two years leading her students — known as Periwinkles — through their last learning journey before elementary school. “I never leave Periwinkle, I’m always thinking of ideas when I’m at art shows or out with friends. I don’t know what I would do with my creativity otherwise.” For PJ and the parents and kids she serves, learning has become much more of an art than a science. “It’s all about the love,” she says. “That’s what they’ll remember.”

Imagine if older adults like PJ, with space of their own and a love for children, were supported by local business leaders, public agencies and nonprofits to open home childcare centers of their own. The new business would provide additional options for working parents and income for the proprietor, as well as meaningful new relationships for all involved. To make this vision a reality, many of these older home childcare operators — just like the younger ones who predominate today — would need more support, training and connection to succeed.

### **More older adults could use their patience and parenting skills to volunteer in childcare settings.**

At 70, Granny Jefferson — her preferred name — quit her job at a hotel and settled into retirement. She had children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren to visit, but even so, a few months into retirement she felt she had more to give.

So when a neighbor told her about the Foster Grandparents program, a federal volunteer program for seniors 55+, she signed up with her local Cleveland chapter. Her love of children made her a great fit, and arriving for grandparent duty every morning at 8:30 a.m. was a luxury compared to her previous job, which started at 6 a.m.

The kids took to her immediately. “When I’m not there, the kids will say ‘Granny Jefferson! Where were you, we missed you!’ It makes me feel good. It makes me feel needed. And they need a grandmother!”

A little-known program with a long history, Foster Grandparents has placed over a million low-income seniors in schools and other youth settings to serve millions of children since 1965. The older adults work part-time and earn a small monthly stipend. They are often paired with an individual student or two who need extra help and attention. In the classroom and on the playground, they encourage, nurture, mentor and love children as a grandparent would.

The program has discovered that most Foster Grandparents stay for years, many recruiting their friends and neighbors along the way. One Foster Grandparent in Cleveland, Granny Dee, followed in the footsteps of her mother who was a Foster Grandparent before her. Now Granny Dee and her twin sister are both carrying on the work.

Imagine if older adults with time and love to give had many more well-crafted opportunities to volunteer in childcare settings. Programs like Foster Grandparents and Jumpstart, a national nonprofit working to get all children ready for kindergarten, have built effective recruiting engines for older adults willing to commit to part-time volunteer work. Now what if those older adults could be organized to meet children wherever they may be cared for, expanding the scope of childcare volunteerism to include home- and family-based care? Localized efforts that are culturally sensitive could go a long way in matching the supply of older-adult help with the needs of children in childcare settings.

**More older adults could use their creativity to lead activities and build curricula for young children.**

On a warm summer day in San Diego, you can find Stephanie Melaney and Zandy Gilmaher in the Intergenerational Garden at Cayumaca College. They are the garden grannies, tasked with cultivating a ½-acre plot of land and, more importantly, the young minds of pre-K students. Every week for a few hours in the morning, they gather the young children from the Cuyamaca Child Development Center to get their hands dirty in the garden.



“What is inside this nest?” Stephanie uses a decorative robin’s nest to entice her young charges into the garden to begin the day’s lesson. Soon they’re roaming through the pumpkin patch and the apple orchard to spot ladybug eggs and caterpillar cocoons.

While the garden grannies follow the structure of a Farm to Pre-K curriculum, they often add their own color. “I come up with games and different ways to teach about water, movement, cantaloupes,” Stephanie said. “I love the mental aspect and creating the ideas.”

From the garden grannies’ tutelage, the students learn about fruits and vegetables, admire the wonders of nature and taste the deliciousness of their harvest.

The garden, established with funding from San Diego County, is a labor of love from volunteers who donate their expertise. One volunteer used his tiling skills to create a beautiful tabletop where cucumbers are inspected and eaten. Another group of volunteers designed and built the wooden signs, each a different animal, to mark the sections of the garden.

Pam Plimpton, director of Aging and Independent Services of San Diego County, says the goal of the Intergenerational Garden and other programs is to “inspire communities to take this up themselves, to find many more ways to be more intergenerational because we know it supports kids and older adults and also strengthens communities.”

Imagine if all community institutions found ways for older adults to share their passion and expertise with young children for the mutual benefit of both groups. Any neighborhood could decide to start an intergenerational garden. A soccer club could host intergenerational games to foster fitness and inspire a love for the sport in the next generation. With so much learning taking place outside the education system, especially in the early years, there are countless ways for people to become educators just by sharing their skills and interests.

### **More older adults could use their business talents to support the business of childcare.**

Natasha Auguste-Williams, who opened the home-based childcare center mentioned at the beginning of this paper, had help from people other than her mother. Natasha had been a nanny for 16 years when she decided to open her own home childcare center, Sweetpea Home Daycare. Like many home providers, Natasha wanted to raise her children while working from home and saw a childcare business as a way to accomplish both. While Natasha loved taking care of young children and was an expert already in early childhood education, she had never operated a business before. She knew she wanted to make a difference in children’s lives, but how much should she charge a parent? How would she find new clients and create contracts for her services?

Enter Katie Stenlik. Katie is a business consultant for All Our Kin, a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that trains, supports and sustains home-based family childcare providers to increase the quality, availability and sustainability of early care and education programs. It’s a triple win: Child care providers move out of poverty; parents succeed in the workforce; and children develop skills and competencies for success in school and life.

In her role, Katie helps home childcare providers succeed as entrepreneurs and business owners, navigating territory that any small business owner might face: marketing, pricing, accounting, taxes, contracts and policies. Having previous business experience helps as a business consultant, but a lot is learned on the job because family childcare can be a niche sector when it comes to topics like tax rules and employment. Instead, Katie says, “The key component necessary for being a business consultant is being able to be really compassionate with childcare providers so you can coach them and help them grow.”

The business courses at All Our Kin helped Natasha see the need to raise her prices to cover the cost of materials and food and also helped her find the right way to communicate the change to her clients. Through marketing help from another All Our Kin workshop, she gained new customers. With this additional business training, Natasha has increased Sweetpea’s income and built a more sustainable business, making her profession not only personally fulfilling but financially feasible in the long-term as well.

Imagine if older adults who had a knack for business had opportunities to provide business support to home childcare providers. The fragmented marketplace of home childcare providers currently lacks professional services that other industries enjoy, creating a vacuum where older adults can lead the charge. Can there be a cavalry of retired business professionals who make the task of starting and running a home childcare center less of a mystery? The thousands of home childcare providers who are raising our children shouldn’t have to do it all on their own.

### **More older adults could be play companions to young children.**

In Little Havana, a mostly-Spanish speaking suburb of Miami, some of the older adults playing bridge and exercising at their local activity center have also chosen to cross the hall into another role: playmate. The Rainbow Intergenerational Learning Center offers infant through pre-kindergarten childcare to more than 100 children, and it is staffed almost entirely by older adults — teachers, assistant teachers and volunteers alike. Like their community, they are all primarily Spanish-speaking, comprising more than 10 nationalities and offering many decades of child-rearing experience. Of her older-adult staff, Annie Benedetti, the center’s director, says they have what they need to succeed with kids because “at the end of the day, it’s all about heart.”

Rainbow gained accreditation from Quality Counts, a statewide school quality program, for its ability to prepare children for elementary school. This required re-training many of the older adult teachers to speak English with the children. “They have to be ready. College starts here, with us,” Annie says.

As play companions, the volunteers lead games, pitch baseball, organize dance parties and hold hands. Since most of the staff works part time, Annie says they have tons of energy and also plenty of time to rest. “It’s a perfect balance,” which is necessary, since Rainbow doesn’t take breaks or summer vacation, apart from three holidays each year. As Annie says, “We serve the working poor. We don’t take days off.”

Imagine if older adults worked in family childcare centers across our country as play aides, assistant teachers and substitutes. One of the greatest labor shortages in our time could be alleviated by this part-time workforce, and children would gain access to new relationships for positive development.



## **More older adults could be “grandparents” to children outside their own families.**

Catalina Garcia, founder of Gma Village, encountered “community grannies” as part of a design research project she and her team were conducting to learn about the challenges parents who work odd hours or unpredictable schedules were facing as they searched for childcare. Through a series of focus groups held at parent cafes in West Oakland, she discovered that some parents “would wake up every day and text their whole network to try to find someone to care for their children.” From time to time, older women would join these cafe conversations, and it quickly became evident that grandmas had the availability and interest to care for children from other families.

One example of such a grandma is Zada Flowers. Zada, now retired, used to work for Head Start and joined Gma Village looking for opportunities to work with kids and support families in her neighborhood. She was eager to contribute to caring for children in the community and needed a little extra income.

Catalina saw an opportunity to streamline a mother’s search for an informal caregiver, while at the same time increasing support and potential compensation for older women. Thus, Gma Village was born — an intergenerational childcare community where low-income parents looking for affordable, flexible childcare can connect with older adults to care for their children. Gma Village uses an online platform, community events and structural support to promote a safe, transparent childcare community for parents, grandmother providers and children.

Now, rather than texting an entire network of informal caregivers individually, mothers in Northern Alameda County, California, are able to browse the Trustline-certified profiles of registered Gmas to find one available for care. As one mother put it, “I feel like I now have the grandma my kids always deserved but didn’t have, the support I always needed but couldn’t find, a new relationship that has forever changed my life.”

Grandmas, in turn, can more comfortably set up contracts with parents in a way that works with their current lifestyle and needs. As one grandmother put it, “I am proud to be a part of Gma Village. I can say that I am a part of something. It makes me happy. I have so much to give. Gma Village works for me. I am at home and I am meeting some really nice people.”

The care of grandmothers brings a unique life experience to a family with young children, which can be a gift to a parent who said she “panicked when my daughter ate a chunk of pink flowers as though they were chicken and instead of calling the doctor, I called Miss Parker and she calmly said, ‘Kids do that sometimes. Don’t worry, those aren’t poisonous’... Because of Gma Village, I can leave my daughter with a grandmother like Miss Parker, who has the wisdom that only comes with life experience and raising children of one’s own.”

Imagine if older adults with love for children made it possible for parents to work at odd hours without worrying about the safety of their children. Gma Village has illustrated how a little bit of technology and structure can facilitate a new ease in caregiving relationships across generations and communities. The challenge will be supporting networks like these so they can expand to scale, while ensuring quality and safety along the way.

“

I feel like I now have the grandma my kids always deserved but didn't have, the support I always needed but couldn't find, a new relationship that has forever changed my life.

”

— Gma mother



## CONCLUSION

In this paper we've imagined the meaningful roles that adults 50+ can play to help improve the quality of childcare for children 0-5. We've shown that intergenerational approaches to childcare have the potential to create brighter futures for currently underserved youth; benefit older adults seeking purpose, income and connection; and unlock doors to economic prosperity for small business owners (mostly low-income women of color) currently running home-based and family childcare centers.

All that's left is for all members of our society of all ages to take a step on the path being blazed by PJ Lents, Granny Jefferson and other pioneers. A brighter, intergenerational future is now, if we make it so.

## BIOS



Joy Zhang is currently an MBA student at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Prior to school, she worked in the social sector addressing challenges of health and aging in developing contexts through the World Health Organization and two social enterprises. She has also worked on at the Skoll Foundation, supporting social entrepreneurs working on the world's most pressing problems.



Madeline Dangerfield-Cha is also an MBA student at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Previously, she was Director of Analytics for a digital marketing agency called Essence, where she designed experiments and mined for meaningful insights in the trove of big data.

Together, Joy and Madeline spent the summer of 2017 on a research fellowship for Encore.org and the Packard Foundation to investigate the potential for intergenerational models of care for early childhood development.

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