

Grillin' with My Grandchild: Blending Educational Topics for Greater Impact

James S. Bates, PhD,* Tammy Jones, MEd** and Michelle Treber, LD, MA,***

INTRODUCTION

Being an involved grandfather means participating in various activities with grandchildren. Not only do grandfathers benefit from meaningful interaction with their grandchildren in the area of well-being (Bates & Taylor, 2012; Carpenter, 2015), but potential impacts on grandchildren include developing a deeper sense of family identity and being the focal point of love and nurturance.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Grillin' with My Grandchild (GWMG) is a 3-session program. A different theme is woven throughout the educational discussions and activities of each session. Session themes are: The Present, The Past, and The Future. Each session is about 2 hours. It brings grandfathers and grandchildren together to learn about healthy relationships and lifestyle habits.

Family members participate in activities that involve the creation of an electronic memory book using tablet computers and grilling food.



Figure 1. Grandfather and grandchild creating electronic memory book. Courtesy of Tammy Jones.

During the first half of the session, a family relations specialist leads a brief instructional discussion about building strong grandfather-grandchild relationships.

During the second half of the session, a nutrition specialist provides educational instruction in healthy food grilling, nutrition, and food safety topics. The culminating activity occurs when grandfathers and grandchildren work together to prepare their nutritious meals over a grill.



Figure 2. Foil pack meal and foods. Courtesy of Tammy Jones.

PROGRAM GOALS

1. enhance grandfather-grandchild relationships
2. encourage communication and understanding across the generations
3. increase feelings of positivity and care for the other
4. increase youth's and elder's knowledge of healthy food grilling and food safety



Figure 3. Participants checking the internal food temperature. Courtesy of Tammy Jones.

LESSONS LEARNED

Improving Partnerships: GWMG provided an opportunity for educators to work with community partners to offer the program. Partners provided resources such as, site location, program promotion, and accessibility to new participants. The program allowed us to network among Educators who are offering the program throughout the state to expand impact and improve the program. GWMG teaches across two of the three "Healthies," Healthy People and Healthy Relationships, making for a well-rounded program.

Improving Practices: GWMG improves effective technology use among youth and adults by incorporating tablet technology. It also models appropriate uses of technology.

LESSONS LEARNED

Improving Programming: GWMG is unique and combines several program options including technology, food preparation, and family conversations. Conversations are guided by session themes and are recorded electronically with responses captured on the tablets for the creation of an electronic memory book. Grilling food encourages interaction and nutrition and food safety education. The indoor/outdoor grills eliminate any weather barriers associated with grilling.

Improving People's Lives: Participant's lives were improved in several ways. The relationship connections made between grandfather and grandchild carried over to the family. Parents contacted educators to express positive comments about the conversations that were held at home following each session. The nutrition and food safety lessons provided participants with important and, in some cases, new information about food. The conversations each week enlightened educators about how participants used their new knowledge at home.



Figure 4. Aprons, grilling utensils, and educational material.

REFERENCES

- Bates, J. S. (2009). Generative grandfathering: A conceptual framework for nurturing grandchildren. *Marriage & Family Review*, 45, 331-352.
- Carpenter, S. (2015). Intergenerational music outreach: Institute for Music and Health, Verbank, New York. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 13, 182-187.

*Extension field specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences

**Extension educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Pike County

***Extension educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Pickaway County