



Angelo and Joy Radatti (fifth and third from right) take a stroll through Shevlin Park with their children and grandchildren.

Below, Angelo carries his granddaughter, Ashlyn.

Grandparents, Version 2.0

by Sharon Vail, for *The Bulletin*

A new generation of grandparents are turning their backs on the rocking chair, opting to work hard, play hard, and keep up with the grandkids

Did you really think the generation that ushered in the age of Aquarius, marched for civil rights and witnessed the first moon landing would age quietly in their rocking chairs?

No way, baby.

They may be retired, they may be grandparents, but they're not the grandparents of past generations. Today's

grandparents live fully and play hard, and they show no signs of slowing up.

"We need to think of these folks as doing more than denture commercials," said Marge Coleman, vice president of wellness and programs with Touchmark, a developer of retirement communities in eight states and Canada.

"That's just not where it's at."

Many of the residents at their Bend development, Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village, reflect today's grandparenting lifestyle.

"People are living longer, being more mobile," said Coleman. "They're

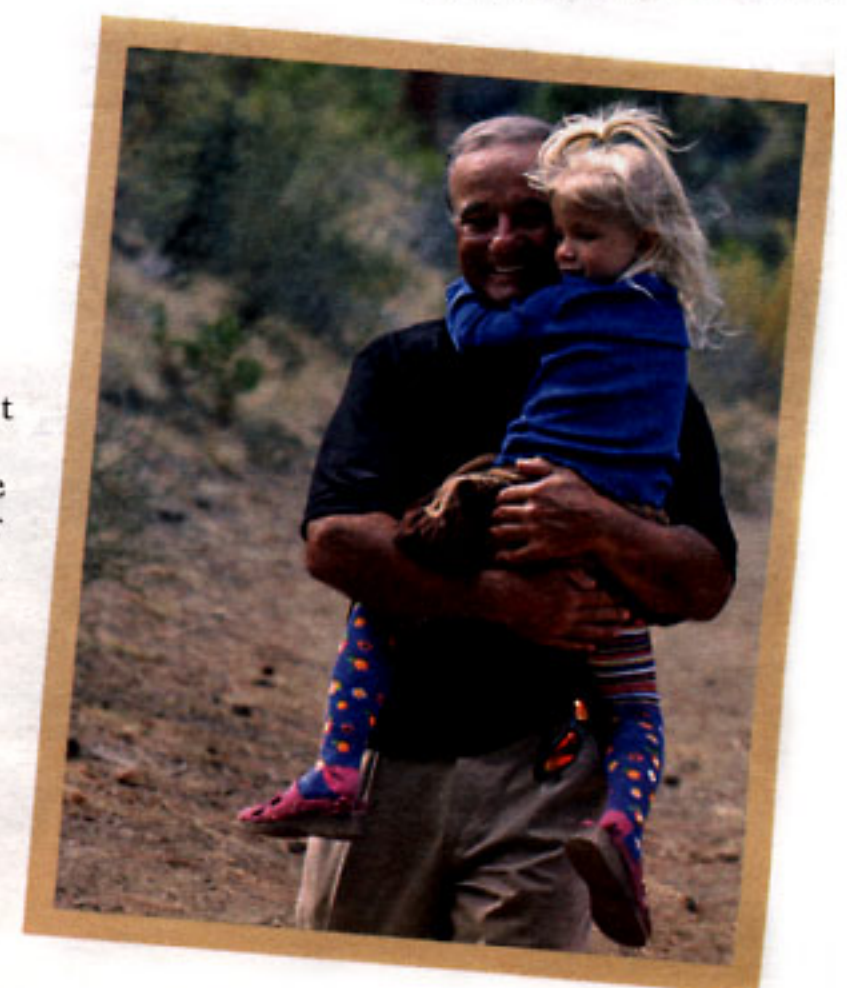




Photo courtesy of Harley Davidson

"They're retiring so they don't have to do lawn maintenance and have more time to do things that are fun.

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Hilary Kenyon makes 70 years old look like 40. She moved to

Bend two years ago to be closer to 10-year-old granddaughter Denali. Even though Kenyon has always been active, she's ramped up the activity level.

"We ski together, swim together, skate together, play tennis," said Kenyon. "I have a ping pong table, and every time she comes over, we have to play. She plays a

good game so I can't slouch."

She also helps out in the everyday things, like taking Denali to school. She's intimately involved in Denali's life, and she couldn't be happier.

"I'm not one to sit around," said Kenyon. "It's just great to be with family and do things. I like to keep busy."

In doing those things with her family, Kenyon often plays the role of teacher.

"I do a lot of artwork too, and Denali is interested in art, so when we're inside when the weather is bad, we can do painting and artwork together," she said. "She's a big reader, and we all like to read. There are



Hilary Kenyon, 70, kicks the soccer ball around with her 10-year-old granddaughter, Denali.

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Bill McDonald of Bend (left) passed along his love of flying to his 18-year-old grandson, Hogan.



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things I can help her with and teach her."

While grandparents have always passed on knowledge and skills to their grandchildren, these days it often strays far from the traditional skills of baking cookies or learning to knit.

Bill McDonald of Bend passed on his love of flying to 18-year-old grandson, Hogan.

"I was a career Air Force pilot, and I think probably it rubbed off on Hogan," said McDonald. "He got his private license while he was still in high school. He's working on his multi-engine certificate right now, so I think he's probably on a good track for (an aviation career). Actually, my mother and father were both pilots, so he's probably one of the rarest people in the world to say that his great-grandmother was a pilot."

"He's helped me out with my training, and we've gone flying together a couple of times," said Hogan.

McDonald, 71, and his wife Audrey spend a lot of time with their seven grandchildren, who all live in Bend.

"We've seen probably 5,000 soccer games," said McDonald with a laugh.

The McDonalds often travel with their grandchildren. They've also camped and hiked with them, and they participate in more mundane activities, like helping with homework. All this interaction isn't lost on the younger generation.

"It's pretty cool," said Hogan. "They're just awesome."

Both Kenyon and McDonald live at Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village, and they illustrate the kind of involvement with young people,



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grandchildren or not, the company likes to encourage. Touchmark requires its communities to provide intergenerational activities for residents, like tutoring young people in foreign languages, because they recognize the value of what older people can contribute to society.

Coleman emphasized that the activities are relationship-building rather than just entertainment for residents, and that even if the relationships are with people who aren't family, they remain just as important as those tied by heritage.

"In other cultures, the older adult is the wisdom keeper, and we should listen and be attentive to what they have to say," said Coleman. "I think we've lost that. . . If you talk to these young people after they do their projects with our residents, you can see how meaningful these relationships become."

Coleman illustrates the new image of grandparents herself. Her grandson asked her to go with him on an overnight school trip to the Oregon Zoo. It was a program the

zoo sponsored to let kids see what animals do at night. It meant spending the night, when they did sleep, in a sleeping bag on a hard floor.

"Everybody else in the room was a parent, but he said, 'Grandma, I want you to go and not Mom and Dad because you're way more fun. And I think you'll do better if you don't get much sleep,'" she said. "He was 12 when we did that. He's now 15, and every time I talk with him and every time I see him, he brings it up. It's just a really special memory for him."

Coleman can't imagine her own grandmother ever considering doing that with her. But the times they are a'changing.

"Our goal is to make people realize this is a new beginning, and they should not be pulling out their rocking chairs and their afghans and counting down," she said.

For today's grandparents, rocking their way into the sunset takes on a whole new meaning.



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