

GRANDPA TIME

Grandpa Time: There's no retirement for grandpas

David Maack

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Making friends at the community center.

Submitted

David Maack

The grandkids got me a T-shirt for Father's Day that read, "I'm not retired, I'm a professional Grandpa."

I actually bought it but they gave it to me. They don't have jobs, yet, but with everything Kai wants, we told him he needs to get a job. He looked perplexed but we suggested he apply at Culver's. He does like their chicken strips.

Since retiring, I've become a professional babysitter. Actually to be a "professional" you have to get paid. This babysitting gig is costing me money! But am I complaining? Only to their parents. A little guilt goes a long way.

When I took the job, I was determined that we would spend as much time as possible outdoors. These kids watch way too much TV and they need the fresh air. So far, it's going pretty well.

Amy and I are also trying to expose them to different experiences. Recently, we took them up to Milwaukee for a program at the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center's Native Wellness Garden. There were several activities going on including the harvesting of sweetgrass and sage, two of our sacred medicines.

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One of our native elders was planting her garden and she was kind enough to explain to Kai and Tannerbert what she was doing. When Kai asked if he could help, she patiently taught him how to prepare the garden and let him plant and water some seeds.



Gardening, a family activity.
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After the program was over, we jumped in the car and ran down to Racine's Juneteenth Celebration. Earlier in the week, Kai and I stopped at the Bryant Center to see comedian B.D. Freeman and to buy matching Juneteenth Day t-shirts. B.D. engaged Kai in conversation and had him laughing the whole time.

Because Kai and Tannerbert are biracial, we feel strongly that they learn about their Indigenous, European and African ethnic heritages and attending both the event at the Native Wellness Garden and the Juneteenth Day Celebration were good opportunities to have fun while also educating them without them realizing it. Who says education cannot be fun?

Juneteenth is a holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States and Racine's Celebration has been a longstanding tradition in our community. At the event, we ran into their Uncle Willie McDonald, met basketball great Caron Butler and learned more about this historic event in our history.



David Maack, left, and his grandson pose with Caron Butler.
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I'm ashamed to say that in our 32 years living in Racine, this was the first time we ever attended this event. However, it will not be our last.

A couple of weeks ago, Amy and I participated in a blood drive at the Milwaukee Zoo. This gave us an opportunity to show the grandkids the importance of giving back, while also having some fun at the Zoo.

Although it was one of the hottest days of the year, the kids did great except for Kai and I fighting over who would sit on the dragon on the carousel ride. Amy stepped in and said Kai could ride it first and then I could. However, I had to pull him off of it when he refused to relinquish his seat!

While I don't get paid for watching my grandkids, I get rewarded by seeing life through their eyes and the hugs and kisses from these two are an added bonus. Even if I have to trick Tannerbert into giving me a hug.

And every so often, Kai just wants to come over and sit with me on our patio. It is there that we have deep talks about life-the latest Happy Meal toy and the adventures we will take. No amount of money can equal that.

There is no better job than being a grandfather.