

## Grandparents Day

*Highlands Elementary School  
Naperville, Illinois*

A genealogical research project united students and grandparents during the annual Grandparents Day celebration at Highland Elementary School. More than 425 students and adults participated.

As in past years, the School Family Community Partnership (SFCP) team undertook this year's event to bring generations together to share stories and to research family histories. In addition to providing a good time for children and adults, the program helped improve students' self-directed learning and critical thinking skills. The school had hosted grandparent events in the past during the school day, but as participation increased, space decreased. The partnership team decided that an after-school event would allow staff to pool resources, people, and spaces—allowing for more hands-on learning experiences for students and families.

The SFCP started planning the event in the spring of the previous school year. Team members recruited two local authors to give a talk on historical research. One parent, who is a professional photographer, volunteered his services. The SFCP team also worked with the building's maintenance team to coordinate services.

The October event featured two sessions. The crowd was quickly divided into two groups. The first group heard two local authors speak about the process of researching their latest book, *Postmark Naperville: An A to Z History*. They discussed how their historical research might be applied to students' own family trees. After the presentation, they handed each student-and-grandparent pair a guidebook to research their own families. Using questions in the book, students quizzed their relatives about great-grandparents, uncles and aunts, to fill in their own family trees. Other activities in the book, which the students took home, showed the youngsters how to create acrostic poems about their grandparents.

While the first half of the crowd listened to the authors, the others toured the school, led by their own grandchild. Students and seniors visited classrooms, computer centers, and the library. On the tour, students stopped at a display of United States and world maps so grandparents could show students where they were born. They also stopped to have their photos taken.

The groups then switched activities so everyone participated in both.

All in all, students and seniors were pleased by the opportunity to spend time together. "The mapping was really fun. Our grandchildren learned something new about us!" one grandparent said. A student added, "We liked getting our picture taken!"

The planning team publicized the event through fliers sent home, including a postcard invitation that students could send to their grandparents or other senior family members or friends.

Grandparents Day is already on the Highland calendar for the 2008-09 school year. Next year's activities may include a craft table, where grandparents and students could work together. Whatever the activity, it's sure to be a happy, productive afternoon.

*Leslie Cameli and Lynn Gissler*

*SFCP Parent Co-Chairs*

*(630) 357-3150 / (630) 717-6837*

*lacameli@wideopenwest.com/lynnpatton@aol.com*