

*Katy families share their thoughts on*

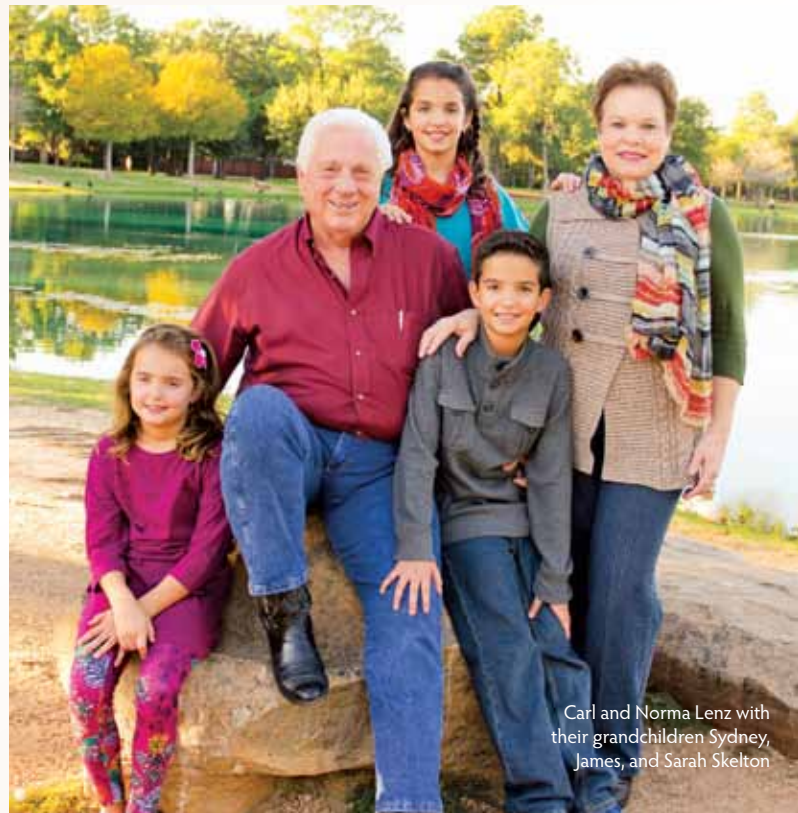
# *The Importance of Grandparents*

Four ways they enrich the lives of their grandchildren

*Written by Heather Lowrie | Select photography by Sara Isola*



Jean and Pat Connor with their grandsons Ryder, Drake, Rodney, and Nicholas



Carl and Norma Lenz with their grandchildren Sydney, James, and Sarah Skelton

A grandparent inspires, educates, and loves unconditionally. This special relationship is created in love and forged by family ties that can't be broken. Carl and Norma Lenz remember how they felt when they got the wonderful news that they would be grandparents. "An overwhelming feeling of excitement and awe came over us," says Norma. "That was shortly followed by an awareness of the responsibility to be the best grandparents we knew how to be." Whether you have been a grandparent for years, or you are waiting for the arrival of a new grandbaby any minute now, the unique relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is something that must be experienced to truly understand.

## **1. Creating Meaningful Moments**

A hug when you need it, a shoulder to cry on, a special treat baked with love - grandparents know exactly what their grandchildren need, and precious memories are created when those needs are met. Pat and Jean Conner have created wonderful traditions with their grandchildren. They enjoy grandpa's "fried mush" on Christmas mornings, going on motorhome trips, and traveling to different countries. Jean says, "We want to be there for them when they need us, to teach them and show them things they might not otherwise learn or see." Grandparents not only create new memories, but also help kids connect to the past in ways that parents and other relatives sometimes can't.



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## 2. Leaving a Legacy

Grandchildren grow up quickly, which means that the life lessons a grandparent shares early on are extremely valuable. The Connors want to make sure they leave a legacy based on keeping God first, and then helping to instill two key values in their grandchildren's lives: integrity and honesty. The Lenzes agree. "We want our grandchildren to know the love of God more than anything else," says Norma. "We want them to grow to be kind, loving, caring people who are respectful of others and themselves." Because grandparents are often removed from the daily grind of parenting, they can take the time to pass down old stories and connect with family heritage. The most important legacy they leave, though, is the unconditional love they have for their grandchildren.

## 3. Share Special Times

Regardless of how many grandchildren a person has, one thing they all agree on is spoiling them. That is the fun part of this phase of life. Spoiling them isn't always about giving them material things, though. Making time to be with grandchildren for special moments at school or sporting events, baking cookies together, or even just cuddling on the couch and watching a movie are all simple ways for grandparents to bond with their grandchildren. These moments are precious because time is spent showing kids the love that only a grandparent has to give.

## 4. Models and Mentors

Grandparents have two important luxuries in their relationship with their grandchildren: the luxury of time and of experience. In a society where parents are often running to and fro between work and home, shuttling kids to school and other activities, grandparents often live at a slower pace. They have time to really sit around the table and listen or to engage in uninterrupted play time. Grandparents also have an abundance of life experiences to share. Any time a grandparent shares their time, skills, or memories, they are teaching their grandchildren through their actions and words.

## The Love Continues

Living the life of a grandparent is rewarding because of the unspoken bond that carries on from generation to generation. One day, these grandchildren will grow up and become grandparents themselves, and the cycle of love will continue. They will realize what their grandparents already know - enjoying life, sharing love, and making memories (and maybe spoiling the grandkids, too) are what being a grandparent is all about. **KM**



*HEATHER LOWRIE and her husband have three children. She dedicates this article to their amazing Mimi and Papa.*

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