



Kentucky Seniors4Kids: Raising Our Voices for Quality Pre-k



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We dedicate this report to every older adult in Kentucky who gives a voice to children who cannot advocate for themselves.

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Introduction

In Kentucky, older adults care about high-quality pre-k education. From the retired major general who knows more high school diplomas are needed among new military recruits and the dentist who wants to teach Kentucky's youngest children as early as possible about good health care; to the former legislator who knows that high-quality pre-k benefits the entire Commonwealth and the grandmother who wants every child in Kentucky to have the same early education opportunities her granddaughter had – these older adults recognize pre-k as a strong foundation for academic and lifelong success. They also know these programs are in the best interest of all generations. Pre-k stimulates Kentucky's economy and promotes the state's long-term fiscal health. By mobilizing widespread bipartisan support for high-quality pre-k, older adults are raising their voices for Kentucky's children and communities.

They understand that few public policy options guarantee returns as tangible as high-quality, voluntary pre-k. Just some of the benefits include:

- Children who attend high-quality pre-k do better on standardized tests, require fewer special education services, are less likely to repeat a grade, and more likely to graduate from high school.
- Children who attend high-quality pre-k are less likely to commit crimes and become teen parents.
- Adults who attended pre-k programs as children are more likely to be employed and earn higher incomes.
- Pre-k programs produce a more competitive and capable future workforce and promote long-term fiscal stability and solvency of Social Security.

Expanding access to high-quality pre-k programs is critical for families and communities to realize these benefits. Only 43 percent of Kentucky's three- and four-year-olds attend pre-k or nursery school; enrollment drops to 36 percent in Appalachia. Currently, the state's Kentucky Preschool Program provides pre-k education to all three- and four-year-old children with special needs and four-



Photo credit: Phil McCleary

year-olds whose family incomes are 150% of the poverty level. Despite bipartisan support, pre-k spending per child in Kentucky remains below the national average. Once a model for other states, the decision to flat-fund the state's Kentucky Preschool Program for fiscal years 2009 and 2010 may force programs to either reduce access or cut corners on quality just when families need greater access. As more Kentucky families face job losses and pay cuts in the midst of the difficult economic climate, an increasing number of middle income families find themselves struggling to afford quality pre-k and early care.

Now is the time for older adults in Kentucky to champion high-quality pre-k and encourage public officials to make the needed early education investments that will help Kentucky now and in future. Pre-k programs stabilize communities by employing people, keeping parents in their jobs, and encouraging the purchase of goods and services. Over time, pre-k investments promote savings in government programs, boost revenues, and contribute to Kentucky's long-term fiscal security. With children unable to vote on these issues and parents burdened with balancing work, family time, and the family budget, older adults can mobilize their skills and experience to demonstrate that pre-k has broad public support around the state.

The number of older adults in Kentucky is on the rise. In about 10 years, over 36 percent of the population will be over the age of fifty. Experiencing longer periods of healthy and active retirement or “encore” careers, older adults represent a significant resource for Kentucky’s children and communities. In a recent survey, older adults indicated their top reasons for volunteering include helping others, making a difference, and contributing to causes they care about. They are also concerned about leaving the world a better place for future generations. Civic engagement in causes such as high-quality, voluntary pre-k for every child in Kentucky offers them opportunities to be more active in their communities, continue learning, and enjoy rewarding intergenerational experiences. This kind of advocacy not only helps children and society, but offers personal benefits related to better physical and mental health as well.

With more available time and a strong desire to “give back,” older adults are mobilizing widespread bipartisan support and championing the cause for quality early education. Through the Generations United’s Seniors4Kids initiative, they are encouraging public officials to expand Kentucky’s preschool programs to include all three- and four-year-old children and ensure adequate funding for quality programs. Seniors4Kids advocates are marshaling their communities’ energy and commitment to children by promoting collaboration among schools, community-based programs, private operators, and Head Start to expand preschool while supporting quality childcare programs. With a rich array of personal experience, and from different professions and political perspectives, caring older adults are uniquely positioned to help children and their communities by ensuring a sound start to an education that will benefit all generations.



Photo credit: Donna Butts

First Lady Jane Beshear

As a former teacher, First Lady Jane Beshear has experienced firsthand how pre-kindergarten prepares students for educational success. Remembering how pre-k personally benefitted her own children prompted her to become involved with Seniors4Kids. "I would like every child in the state of Kentucky to have the same opportunities that my children experienced," explains Mrs. Beshear.

Joining with former First Ladies Charlann Carroll, Glenna Fletcher, Jean Neel Ford, Phyllis George, Libby Jones, Judi Patton, and Martha Wilkinson, First Lady Jane Beshear serves as Honorary Co-Chair of Kentucky's Seniors4Kids. Regardless of their political affiliation, they all care deeply about Kentucky and want what is best for the future of the state as parents, grandparents, sisters, and aunts. Together, they share the goal of encouraging policymakers on both sides of the aisle to understand that investing in high-quality pre-k helps families now and saves taxpayers money in the long-term.

"Developing high-quality pre-kindergarten is the most cost-effective way to decrease the number of unskilled adults in Kentucky's work force," says Beshear. She adds that it is crucial for the future of the Commonwealth that children get a strong start in education because it will provide the opportunity for them to become "happy, thriving adults."

While boomers are reaching the age typically associated with retirement, Beshear says there are many, like the first ladies, who are actively taking a stand for Kentucky's children. "There is so much that we as a group have to offer our education system and our young people and the future of Kentucky," says Beshear. "We can change the world by ensuring that we adequately prepare and educate our three- and four-year-olds."



First Lady of Kentucky Jane Beshear Honorary Co-Chair Seniors4Kids Kentucky Frankfort, Franklin County

Raised in Bowling Green, KY, First Lady Jane Beshear earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky and taught high school students at Woodford County High School. After becoming first lady, Mrs. Beshear now helps students of all ages succeed by working closely with the Department of Education. In addition to serving as Honorary-Co Chair of Seniors4Kids, she is a strong supporter of Reading Recovery and is working with America's Promise Alliance to host a dropout prevention summit in Central Kentucky in September of 2009. She and her husband, Governor Steve Beshear, have two sons and one grandson.

Senator Georgia M. Powers

When Senator Georgia Davis Powers was a little girl, her older brother would come home from kindergarten and review his lessons with her. While she credits her brother with motivating her success in school, today Senator Powers believes that every three- and four-year-old child should receive the opportunity to attend a high-quality pre-kindergarten or early education program.

"I think it's very important that we give our young people a head start, and I think it's important for us to start with them very young," says Powers.

Senator Powers went on to become a leader in America's Civil Rights movement. As the first African American and first female elected to the Kentucky State Senate, Powers was a champion for children, women, the poor and people of color in her 21 years in the Senate.

Always willing to take a stand for those without a voice in government, she recognizes that Kentucky's children need her and other older adults to speak out for them during the current economic crisis. She also thinks pre-k is an issue that resonates with many seniors. "They've had a lot of experience with children," says Powers. "Many have children and grandchildren of their own."

Although retired for twenty years now, the former senator still knows how to get things done in the halls of the Capitol. If Senator Powers were still in office today, she would do whatever it takes to make pre-k available to all of Kentucky's three- and four-year-olds. "Kentucky spends below the national average when it comes to investing in early education. Legislators should do more to try to provide funds," says Powers. "I think it's money well spent."

Over the years, Powers has witnessed how quality education benefits the entire Commonwealth. The sooner children start school, the more likely they are to gain the skills and confidence that make them healthier members of society.

"Pre-k gives a child an advantage by providing the tools and skills required to enter kindergarten ready to learn



and instills in them a sense of accomplishment that will hopefully continue on throughout their life," says Powers.

If legislators don't heed the appeal to make pre-k accessible to all, Powers will personally call on policy makers. "I might have a little influence with the legislature in Kentucky," Powers says.

Senator Georgia M. Powers **Former Senator, Kentucky State Legislature** **Louisville, Jefferson County**

Born in Springfield, KY, Senator Georgia M. Powers was the only girl in a family of nine children. During the early 1960s, she organized and lead marches promoting equality in public accommodations, fair employment laws and other civil rights. In 1968 Powers became the first African American and the first woman elected to office in the Kentucky State Senate, where she served as a champion for people of color, women, children, and the poor during her 21 year career there. She also sponsored legislation providing educational opportunities for children with disabilities. Today, Senator Powers continues to serve actively in her local chapter of the NAACP.

Major General James B. Baylor, USA

Major General James B. Baylor has a battle plan to help children in Kentucky. If early childhood education is made available to all three- and four-year-olds, Baylor says that both families and our national security will benefit. He sees two fronts from which to lead his offensive. The first is the statehouse. The second is in the hearts and minds of older adults across Kentucky.

Major General Baylor witnessed how pre-k benefited his own grandchildren and would like to see every child have the opportunity to access quality early education. At age three, his grandson struggled with language skills. After attending pre-k, the boy tested with the speech capabilities of a five-year-old.

"That experience convinced me that pre-k is positive for the educational system," Baylor recalls. "When you have six grandchildren, you develop a second interest in life, and you get motivated in their direction. When asked to join Generations United's Seniors4Kids, I thought about how pre-k related to me and my grandchildren."

As a retired military officer, Baylor is also excited about the research that demonstrates pre-k improves a student's chance for earning a high school diploma. "It was much more difficult to work with the non-high school graduates. It became quite evident to me that we really needed people who had completed high school for the military to succeed," Baylor says.

Today, a recruit must become a high school graduate within a year after joining the military. Major General Baylor thinks that time and resources could be spent on other training. He recognizes that income has long been a barrier for a lot of families who would like to send their children to pre-k but can't afford a private program. This often includes families who live on military bases.

"I can see where any and every military post should have a pre-k program. I can see the benefits there as much as anywhere else in our communities," Baylor says. "Many of those who come in as 'buck privates,' they're not making the money to be able to afford to send their children to a contracted program."



Baylor says that experts have proven the importance of early childhood education and Kentucky shouldn't wait any longer to make pre-k available to every child in the state. "I think the longer we delay it, the more it will cost us in terms of results from the children as they

grow up. Now that the educational community has pointed out these factors to us and we've become understanding of why it's beneficial, that to me points in the direction we should be headed," Baylor says. "Particularly in times where the economy is not so great and people don't have a lot of extra money in their pockets."

It is Major General Baylor's hope that other retired persons will help bring his fight for pre-k to Frankfort so that state legislators will also see how important this issue is to the public.

Major General James B. Baylor Lexington, Fayette County

Major General James B. Baylor served in the U.S. Army for 38 years, both in Active Duty and the Army Reserve. As Senior Vice President of Valvoline Oil Company, he traveled around the world. Major General Baylor is originally from West Virginia where he attended Marshall University. Each academic year, the university awards the Major General James B. Baylor scholarship to an undergraduate student who is an ROTC cadet and enrolled in the Business College. Major General Baylor and his wife are retired and have lived in Lexington, Kentucky for almost 30 years, where they are dedicated to their community and church. They raised four children and have six grandsons.

Janet Carrico

Janet Carrico, the former Kentucky Education Association (KEA) president, believes that family income or circumstances should not determine a child's chance for success. She wants other older adults to join her in the effort to bring high quality pre-kindergarten to every three- and four-year-old in Kentucky.

"We need to narrow Kentucky's pre-k enrollment gap" Carrico says. "Those who can't afford to pay for high-quality pre-kindergarten need it just as much as those who can."

Before serving as the KEA president for four years, Carrico spent several decades helping children learn as a middle school English teacher. She knows the significance early childhood education can play in a child's achievement and how they grow up. "It can make all the difference in a child's opportunity to succeed in school, to get a good job, and to break the cycle of poverty," says Carrico.

According to Carrico, when a child develops good work habits and social skills at a young age, everyone will benefit from their contributions to society. She adds that policy makers don't always make that connection. But if legislators are unwilling to pay for programs like pre-k today, Kentucky taxpayers will end up paying more for it tomorrow.

"The money that can help children and their families access pre-k now is much less than we would need to spend later when a student drops out of school or becomes involved in crime," Carrico says. "The children really are our future. They are the ones who are going to become the workforce and the providers for us when we age."

It is for that reason that Carrico thinks it makes sense for older adults to become Captains4Kids. She believes that older adults have the time and experience to lend to children's issues.

"We're passing the torch on to those younger ones and if we're going to continue to be a strong nation, we have to



realize that it's not too late for us to do our part," Carrico says. "It really doesn't matter whether we have our own children in school or not. They are the children of our community. They are the ones who will be doing the things in the future that are going to be important to us."

Janet Carrico **Retired Educator and Former KEA President** **Austin, Barren County**

Janet Carrico was a middle school English teacher for several years before becoming the Kentucky Education Association president. She is retired now but remains very active as a member of the Kentucky Education Association Retired and as a volunteer with her church and local community groups. Carrico has two grandchildren, ages 9 and 11. She lives on Barren River Lake south of Glasgow in the farming community of Austin.

Shirley Caudill

What if instead of toys and stocking stuffers, Santa Claus brought high quality pre-k for all, giving Kentucky's children a head start at success? If Shirley Caudill gets her way, that just might happen.

"My husband and I have been Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus in this town for 30 years," Mrs. Caudill says. Her rosy smile and her husband Jeff's long white beard are part of the reason for the Caudills' nicknames. But the generous gift of their time for the children of London, Kentucky is just as likely the reason.

"We've devoted our retirement years to other people's children," says Mrs. Caudill.

Their experience volunteering with children motivated their decision to become Captains4Kids and advocate for high-quality pre-k in Kentucky. The Caudills write letters to newspapers, attend events, and tell their friends about the need for pre-k in the state.

"I believe that early childhood development is of utmost importance," explains Caudill. "The first three to five years are the most important year in terms of development. I believe character is built then."

Mrs. Caudill says there is an urgent need for accessible pre-k in Kentucky because investing in education today will produce self-sufficient citizens in the future, and that is good for all Kentuckians.

"It's a wonderful investment. They must reach their potential. They are the future of this country. And we need to impress on people how important it is to start in the first five years."

Mrs. Caudill adds that seniors are the perfect fit when it comes to speaking up on behalf of children. "When your hair turns to grey and you think you've outlived your usefulness, there's plenty to do with pre-school children. And there's nothing that makes you happier than bright-eyed excited children who are anxious to learn."



Mrs. Caudill also says she would like to see other older adults get active in the fight to bring high quality pre-k to every child in Kentucky. "Most people do not realize that there is a need out there. But there is a lot of work to be done, and they need to step forward and do it."

Shirley Caudill
Retired Editor/Publisher and Freelance
Columnist
London, Laurel County

Originally from Nashville, Tennessee, Shirley Caudill has lived in Kentucky for 40 years. She taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten before becoming the editor and publisher of her local newspaper. After retiring, she continues to work today as a freelance columnist and appears regularly in area newspapers. Every weekday morning, she gets up early to drive a bus for children with special needs to school. Raised in Hazard, Kentucky, Jeff Caudill spent 22 years in the military. Since retiring, he devotes most of his time to teaching young children how to swim and fish. The Caudills have six children, fourteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Laura Cooper

Grandparents usually have the glorious job of spoiling grandchildren; but they must handle all of the responsibilities of parents when they are raising their grandchildren. This includes making sure the kids eat right, are disciplined, and ensuring they receive a good education.

Laura and Dana Cooper have raised their grandchild Amber since she was a baby. They adopted Amber and consider her their daughter. Although tough at times, the Coopers have done their job well. Amber is now a junior in high school on the honor roll and pursued by colleges to accept a swimming scholarship.

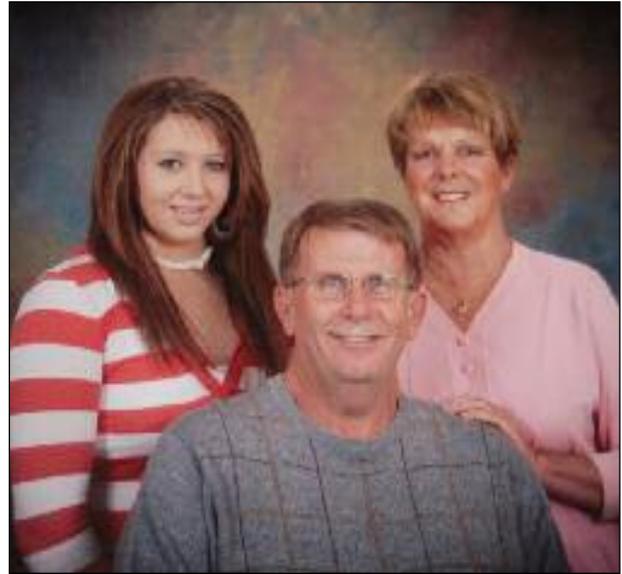
Amber's successful education started by attending pre-k. Although her family was different than most of the other kids, going to pre-k helped Amber to develop an early love of learning. "She needed to interact with other kids her age and to learn with them," Cooper says about the decision to send Amber to pre-k. "The first five years is the time to fill their brains with as much as you possibly can."

For the past eleven years, Laura Cooper has led a support group for grandparents who are raising grandchildren. The importance of getting the children enrolled in school is the first thing Cooper tells the members of the support group.

She sees pre-k as the key to moving Kentucky closer to the top of the list when it comes to state's education success. Cooper thinks that older adults are powerful champions for the value of early childhood education because seniors know what worked and what did not work for their own children and grandchildren.

"Our legislators need to make sure that funding is available for early education. They need to see how very, very important education is to all of our kids," warns Cooper.

She has a 'trickle up' theory about education. Cooper believes that when you provide children with a solid learning experience at a young age, the entire education



system will improve because students will enter K-12 more prepared to learn and succeed. This will lead to a stronger work force and a better Kentucky overall.

"Improving access to quality education just makes everything else better," says Cooper.

Laura Cooper
Founder Open Arms of Hardin County
Grandfamilies Support Group
Elizabethtown, Hardin County

Laura Cooper has lived in Elizabethtown, Kentucky with her husband Dana and daughter Amber, for eleven years. She and her husband also have two grown children and three grandchildren. The Coopers co-lead a support group for grandparents raising grandchildren that provide older adults with the education and encouragement needed for the loving task they have undertaken.

Jackie Holman

“To me the most important thing is to show them love,” says Jackie Holman, about the children she works with at the Oak and Acorn Intergenerational Center in Louisville. “To show them that they are loved, and they are somebody, and they can do anything.”

Holman is a Foster Grandparent and works twenty hours a week in the baby room at Oak and Acorn where she feeds, rocks, and looks after kids ages six weeks to one year.

She says that reaching kids when they are young is crucial because that is when they are the most receptive to learning. Holman has seen how much better kids do in school who have been nurtured early and thinks that when children have access to pre-kindergarten by age three and four, they have a much better chance at success.

“The earliest years of childhood are the main ones,” Holman says. “They need to know the fundamentals of life to get them around. Know how to write their name, how to count money, know their colors.”

Holman is retired and has the time to do whatever she wants. It would be easy to just stay home and take it easy, but she has too much to offer the world. That is true for Kentucky’s kids as well.

“I think it’s a waste of a child’s mind, sitting home when they can be in school learning,” Holman says. “All the kids should be able, who live in Kentucky, to go to school.”

Holman would like to see the laws changed to give each young person a chance to reach their potential by attending a high quality pre-k program.

“I think every child, I don’t care who they are, should be able to have the opportunity to learn. They want to learn,” says Holman.

The children give her a great deal of joy, and Holman wants to help provide the best future possible for them. She believes other older adults like her fellow Foster Grandparents have influential voices that will demand



lawmakers provide quality early childhood education for all of Kentucky’s children.

“If I can go out and make a child happy and they make me happy, that’s what I’m doing,” Holman says. “We grannies, we have to stick together because we come here for one purpose and one purpose only—to take care of the kids.”

Jackie Holman
Foster Grandparent
Louisville, Jefferson County

Jackie Holman is a Foster Grandparent at Oak and Acorn Intergenerational Center in Louisville. The Foster Grandparent program engages adults ages 55 and older to volunteer their services to children with special or exceptional needs; offer emotional support to child victims of abuse or neglect; tutor children who lag behind in reading; mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers; and care for premature infants, and children with physical disabilities and severe illnesses. Ms. Holman was born and raised in Kentucky. She has three grown children and one granddaughter who is now in college.

Dr. Harold Lester

Dr. Harold Lester thinks Kentucky should give pre-kindergarten a check-up. As part of the University of Kentucky mobile dental clinic that provides care to some of Appalachia's poorest school children, he sees the ways high quality pre-k can help even more kids.

"With pre-school you can reach kids early in order to enhance their knowledge and education of what good health care is," says Dr. Lester. "By the time they get to kindergarten, it's almost too late."

The children that Dr. Lester treats often have very serious dental problems. For example, last year Dr. Lester took care of a seven-year-old with five abscessed primary teeth. He says that when kids are healthy they can participate fully in school activities and do better academically. Dental problems are one of the main reasons young children miss school.

"We see a lot of kids who by the time they are in kindergarten have gross decay. We'll see some kids with as many as 20 teeth decayed. And that's really sad," says Lester.

But when children start school as young as three or four, Dr. Lester says it is much easier to communicate with parents about ways to keep their kids healthy such as educating them about tooth brushing and the importance of regular check-ups. "Not only have we changed the attitudes of children toward dentistry," says Lester. "But we've also changed the attitude of the parents so that their children won't have to lose their teeth in their twenties like many of them did."

Dr. Lester believes now is the time to make pre-k accessible for all kids in Kentucky because "if you wait ten years to start, you're ten years behind."

He adds that it is up to lawmakers in Frankfort to increase the availability and quality of pre-k. He wants every child in Kentucky to have an equal chance to grow up healthy and successful.



"Education is part of the state's duty," Lester says. "If you try to do it by counties alone, it's not going to work because some counties could afford it and some couldn't even start to."

Dr. Harold Lester **Pediatric Dentist** **Lexington, Fayette County**

Dr. Harold Lester was born in a farmhouse in Parksville, KY. As a pediatric dentist he operated a private practice in Louisville for 35 years. He served in the U.S. Navy and is married with two grown children. Dr. Lester and his wife have two grandchildren.

Dr. Lester began working with the University of Kentucky College of Dentistry mobile clinic in 1999. The clinic provides prevention and treatment services for approximately 1,600 children in 18 Kentucky counties.

Susan Gay Taylor

People often say that the children are the future. Susan Gay Taylor, a Captain4Kids with Generations United's Seniors4Kids initiative, reminds us that older adults are the key to a better tomorrow. She emphasizes the crucial role older adults can play in bringing quality pre-kindergarten to Kentucky's children. With children unable to advocate for themselves and working parents busy with work and childcare, there is a need for older adults to speak up on their behalf.

"Older adults have had a lifetime of working and knowing where the pitfalls are and knowing where the opportunities are. We see the big picture," says Taylor. "Each generation must be educated in order to be good citizens for America."

Taylor is a retired Title I teacher who specialized in reading and math. Education runs in her blood. Taylor's father was a school superintendent and her grandfather, mother and sister were all teachers. She says that her own pre-k experience in the small town of Mayfield, KY helped to shape her life.

"I learned socialization skills, how to share and be apart of a group, problem solving and how to be in front of the public in our little plays. It was a wonderful experience of growth," Taylor recalls.

Even as America faces a tough economic crisis today, Taylor sees a future in Kentucky with a strong workforce. When children attend pre-k, they learn about reliability and good attendance. She says pre-k also teaches kids how to communicate and get along with others. These are all attributes that will help set the foundation for educational success that will help them secure and keep jobs later in life.

"They are learning things that are life skills and survival skills. For example, they are learning anger management and learning to be responsible," Taylor says.

It is hard work being the future of Kentucky, but Taylor would like to see other retired adults get involved in the fight for pre-k because "volunteering is good for the soul" and it's fun too.



"They're like little sponges," Taylor says about young children. "It's so much fun to watch them gather in knowledge."

Susan Gay Taylor **Retired Teacher and Captain4Kids** **Richmond, Madison County**

Susan Gay Taylor is from a family of educators dating back to the Civil War days. She began her career in education as a librarian. She is a retired teacher from Daniel Boone Elementary School in Richmond, Kentucky, where she was a Title I reading and math specialist. Taylor has enjoyed volunteering as a Captain4Kids since the program's launch in Kentucky in 2008.

Dr. George Zack and Kerry Zack

With a lifetime dedicated to arts education in both visual and musical arts, George and Kerry Zack have lived the philosophy they hope will resonate with all Kentuckians. As music director and conductor of the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra for 37 years, Dr. Zack has devoted countless hours to planning and performing for children of all ages—his favorite being the youngest kids who come to music with an absence of prejudice about what they “ought” to love and enjoy.

Kerry Zack, as founder of the docent program at the University of Kentucky Art Museum and later as the manager of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership, has focused on what amazing results come from exposing children to the visual arts in all kinds of settings. She was instrumental in helping parents design programs in their children's schools to enhance student achievement by using the arts as a tool for learning.

The Zacks know and have observed first-hand that the earlier children are exposed to art and other fields of knowledge, the better they do in school and even later in life. They believe that without high quality pre-K, children won't have the opportunity to be exposed to life changing experiences, like the arts, during their most formative years.

Dr. Zack still hears from students whose lives were shaped by attending children's concerts performed by the symphony at a young age. “I'm about to retire, and I find I'm meeting young people in their 20s and early 30s who were so influenced by their educational experience that they are now music school teachers or performing musicians. In some cases they express longing to get back into music that they've had to give up to pursue their careers. Some report that their children are now deeply involved in music.”

When children are exposed to the arts as early as pre-k, says Dr. Zack, they naturally become more creative in their lives. As a result of that outlet, kids will find an entirely different way of viewing their society, and as they grow older, see the importance of art and how it shapes the mind.



“Just watch a child. They are most natural when they are singing, drawing, or dancing,” says Dr. Zack. “Whatever you give them the option to do, they will do it with creativity. Quality early education programs enhance that natural spark. By training and exposing them to the creative arts, quality pre-k helps to develop a more well-rounded personality.”

The Zacks say they are fortunate because they could expose their own children to a variety of experiences early by sending them to a Montessori pre-school. They want all Kentucky children to have similar opportunities to learn and succeed in life.

“Now that we have two grandsons, it just brings it all back to us. Our state would benefit ten-fold from an investment in putting kids in an educational experience as early as possible,” says Mrs. Zack. She believes that by investing in kids today, everyone in Kentucky will benefit for years to come.

“To attract industry, we need a highly educated work force for the kinds of twenty-first century jobs required to increase Kentucky's economic competitiveness,” says Mrs. Zack. “It seems to me that we need to begin in pre-k to get kids ready to learn.” Mrs. Zack adds that state

lawmakers need to hear from the public about how important high-quality pre-K is to Kentucky. As a grandparent, she thinks older adults are a logical choice for speaking up on behalf of children.

"I think we need to be very proactive in influencing our legislators. It's part of our responsibility but it's also our pleasure because having had kids we know how much it means when an adult gets involved with a child."

Dr. George Zack
Music Director and Conductor
and Kerry Zack
Education Curator, Manager and Volunteer
Tutor
Lexington, Fayette County

As the music director for the Lexington Philharmonic for 37 years, Dr. George Zack is often referred to as the "people's maestro" for his ability to make classical music accessible to the public. He introduced the first children's concerts in Central Kentucky nearly three decades ago, despite resistance on the part of the superintendent of schools and the School Board. Mrs. Zack was the Education Curator of the University of Kentucky Art Museum and later the Manager of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership at the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. She has served as a volunteer tutor in a first grade classroom. The Zacks have raised two daughters and now have two grandchildren. They reside in Lexington.

Ten Ways You Can Get Involved

-  **BECOME** a Captain4Kids and **LEARN** more about the state of pre-k in Kentucky from Generations United's Seniors4Kids at www.seniors4kids.org or the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence at www.prichardcommittee.org.
-  **ATTEND** an upcoming Seniors4Kids events and **RAISE** your voice on behalf of children.
-  **MONITOR** your local newspaper for articles on early education and **WRITE** letters to the editor expressing older adult support.
-  **FAX, EMAIL, or SEND** a letter to your elected officials telling them why you support increasing the availability and quality of pre-k.
-  **LOOK** for intergenerational volunteer opportunities such as assisting in your local school or early education center, becoming a Kentucky State Foster Grandparent, and many other activities that you can find in your local community either on-line or through your volunteer center.
-  **VISIT** with your local representatives at their local offices or in Frankfort.
-  **HELP RECRUIT** more Captains4Kids.
-  **REACH** out to older adult organizations and clubs to partner for key activities.
-  **LEND** your wisdom and skills by participating in advisory capacity as a **LEAD CAPTAIN**.
-  **TELL** your story and why you think pre-k matters.

Participating in Seniors4Kids won't take a lot of your time. But raising our voices together, Captains4Kids can make a big difference in the lives of Kentucky's children.

What is Seniors4Kids?

Generation United's Seniors4Kids (www.seniors4kids.org) is a civic engagement initiative that demonstrates the important role older adults can play in support of issues that directly benefit children and youth. Currently, we help adults age 50+ create statewide networks of community leaders and grassroots volunteers who work to increase access to and improve the quality of pre-k programs. Seniors4Kids goals are to increase public and political awareness of the powerful role adults play in youth advocacy; present an effective model for older adult engagement on behalf of children's issue; and provide inspiration and technical assistance for state and local organizations to implement effective programs connecting older adults, children, and youth. Seniors4Kids is currently active in Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The initiative started as a pilot program in Florida and operated previously in Ohio.



About Generations United

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations, providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

GU's Mission:

To improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

Vision:

A world that values and engages all generations.

Core Beliefs:

GU is the catalyst that brings single-age focused groups together to build and support a common agenda while providing a unique voice in public debate. GU honors, supports, and engages all ages. Further, we believe:

- Intergenerational collaboration will unite and improve our communities.
- Intergenerational approaches have a positive relationship to economic growth and value creation.
- Public policies should meet the needs of all generations.
- Resources are more wisely used when they connect the generations, rather than separate them.
- Discrimination in any form limits a person's potential to contribute to the development of his or her community.
- Grandparents and other adults who step forward to raise children are providing an economic service to families and the country.

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united**

Because we're stronger together

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