

Grandparents raising grandchildren may qualify for Duet respite funds

Michelle Talsma Everson

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When asked how many grandchildren she has, Michele Morgan doesn't know whether to answer "11" or "nine," as both are true.

This is because Morgan is raising two of her grandchildren — Jordyn, 9, and Olivia, 15 — while their parents aren't able to care of them. It's an unexpected role that has come with many sacrifices.

"Sometimes they (her granddaughters) call me 'Mom,' other times they call me 'Grandma,'" Morgan says. "Becoming a parent again later in life was a shocking experience — I sacrificed my whole life to do this. But, we're on the other end of the tunnel now.

"While raising grandchildren is challenging, God is with us."

Part of what has made the journey easier for this non-traditional family is support.

"It's helpful to get support in any way



Duet: Partners In Health & Aging can help grandparents raising grandchildren cover the cost of after-school activities or summer camps.

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you can," Morgan says. "Reach out to any and every one you can find, so you're not so alone."

One non-profit that serves grandparents raising grandchildren like Morgan is Duet: Partners In Health & Aging. Morgan has been connected with the organization for more than eight years, attending support groups and events throughout the year. One area where the non-profit has been most helpful to her and her family is through respite funds assistance.

For grandparents raising grandchildren who may want to enroll them in camps or after-school activities, Duet may be able to help through its available respite funds, which may pay for part or all of the registration fees.

To do so, the grandparent must call Duet for an appointment, provide proof of a type of custody (guardianship, non-parent custody, etc.), and participate in a short intake process. The grandparent is responsible for selecting the respite activity (for example, the summer camp), and providing Duet with all per-

tinent details. If approved, the request is processed within 10 business days.

With Duet's help, Morgan's granddaughters have been to a variety of summer camps and after-school programs she says that, due to a limited income, they would not have been able to attend otherwise.

"My hope is that both girls gain a greater sense of independence being nurtured by the community and not just me," Morgan says. She adds that the camps allow her grandchildren to experience developmental leaps every summer while giving her well-deserved breaks.

"The respite funds assistance help from Duet helps me to manage my life," Morgan says.

Jordin and Olivia agree that their favorite camps so far have been Girl Scout camps, which they do each summer.

Details: 602-274-5022 and dominiguez@duetaz.org.

Michelle Talsma Everson is a public relations coordinator for Duet.

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