

# Honoring 'second time' parents on Grandparents Day



## Your Turn

Michelle Talsma Everson  
Guest columnist

National Grandparents Day is Sunday, Sept. 9. The holiday has special significance for the thousands of local grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

A few years ago, CeCe Wilson was single and an empty nester. She had raised her three adult sons, and although she enjoyed her role as "Nana" to her 12 grandchildren, she was ready for this next chapter in her life. God, she says, had other plans.

Wilson found out that her son and his then-girlfriend, who battled substance-abuse issues and were in and out of jail, had a child on the way. They reached out to her and asked if she would take in the little boy, now 3, named Titus.

"They signed over their rights to me; they wanted him to be raised by me," she explains. "The mom wanted a better life for her son than she had."

In the blink of an eye, Wilson was rushing out of state to take in an infant.

"I've always been an advocate for kids; after all, I was a teen mom myself and a single mom too," she says.

Fast-forward, and like many parents of busy toddlers, Wilson will admit that she hasn't had a full night's sleep in three years. She and her new husband, Marvin, have sacrificed a lot to give Titus the best life possible.

"We were determined to keep the baby with us, even though my other two sons thought of taking him in at first," she explains. "While I appreciate the family support and help, God saw a plan for Marvin, Titus and me. There was a reason he was placed in my arms."

Wilson admits that "the first two and a half years were the hardest; I was completely drained." She changed her career path to be able to be there more for Titus; she's now an entrepreneur and stay-at-home mom.

"Of course, it took a lot of work — and will continue to take a lot of work — to protect the baby I gave up our way of life for," she says.

Now that Titus is older, Wilson feels like she's on more solid ground because



Marvin and CeCe Wilson are raising CeCe's grandson Titus. DUET

she has found a support network of other grandparents like herself. Her husband also encouraged her to share her own story, so she started her own organization called 2nd Time Parenting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, which connects other grandparents like herself with resources that can help them in their new roles.

"Children being raised by their grandparents experience greater stability than those in traditional foster care," Wilson says. "However, many 'grand-families' do not receive the support or resources that they need to survive. Across the United States, more than 13 million children are living in homes with their grandparents."

In addition to starting her own venture, Wilson receives support from local non-profit Duet: Partners In Health & Aging. Duet offers support for grandparents raising grandchildren through free support groups, legal guidance and assistance, funds for extracurricular activities, information and guided assistance, educational workshops and outings.

"I find that it's important to have help and support from other grandparents raising grandchildren because no one else understands it unless you're in it," she says. "We all just want to give our grandchildren the best lives possible."

**Details:** [2ndtimeparenting.org](http://2ndtimeparenting.org), [duetaz.org](http://duetaz.org) and 602-274-5022.

*Michelle Talsma Everson is public relations coordinator for Duet.*

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