

Turner Intergenerational Essay Contest
Current Student – 1st Place
Silas Christensen submitted by David & Clare Christensen

"Hi Colin! Colin! Colin! Hi!"

It's the evening of a summer concert at The Mount. Residents, family and guests enjoy performances outside on the patio, with BBQ and refreshments. My son, Silas, has a best friend in one of the residents, Colin.

"Hi Colin! Colin! Colin! Hi!"

"Hey, Silas! How are you?" Colin calls back from his wheelchair across the courtyard.

Silas runs to Colin and gives him a high-five. He's never seen Colin by the back steps near the parking lot. "What are you doing here?"

"Well, I have a special job right now."

"What job is it?"

"I'm reminding people where they can have a glass of wine. It okay if adults have a drink in the patio area, but not past these stairs."

Silas jumps up and down next to Colin. "Oh, that's sounds like a good job!" He asks Colin many more questions as 4-year-olds are known to do.

The Elvis impersonator starts his routine. Hips are swinging. Silas finds us both a seat on the small patch of grass near Colin's post. We eat hot-dogs and listen to *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Love Me Tender* into the evening.

When we get home, Silas doesn't mention the songs or the sequined jumpsuit of the performer. He only wants to talk about his friend. "Colin would *stop people from eating hotdogs in the parking lot, or he'd have to give them a ticket.*"

Earlier this week, I asked Silas about that concert last summer. He remembered the blueberry muffins we ate after finishing our hot-dogs. He remembered seeing other kids from Bug Room--Ryan, Jake, and Nolan. He remembered somebody was dancing. But most of all, he remembered that Colin was there with an important job to do. His friend.

**Turner Intergenerational Essay Contest
Current Students – 2nd Place
Kieran Lyons submitted by Vivian Lyons**

Providence Mount St. Vincent has played a formative role in my life since I began attending the Intergenerational Learning Center when I was 4 years old. On one of my first days there, I met Miles and Leslie, and inadvertently started a family-wide friendship now almost three decades old. Our parents are still close friends today. I loved reading with the residents, making art, and singing songs together. Going upstairs to spend time with the residents was always a treat.

Because of my time at the ILC, I am comfortable with seniors and people who are differently abled. But most importantly, my time at the Mount drove home just how important it is to include people from multiple generations in the raising of children. This belief is so deeply held for me that when we had my son, Kieran, we asked my parents to move in with us, so that he could grow up in a multi-generational home. We wanted him to benefit from the varied life experiences of his grandparents and have the opportunity to develop deep relationships with his larger family.

From the beginning, my husband and I hoped that Kieran would be able to attend the Mount. While on our prospective parent tour of the ILC, we found hanging in the hallway an old photo from when I was at the ILC! Imagine my surprise seeing myself, my friend Leslie and one of the residents in a photo from the early 1990s. For us, the ILC was not just an amazing child care facility, it felt like home.

Kieran has thrived at the ILC and adores his teachers and classmates in the Young Toddler Room. When we arrive to pick him up, he is always so immersed in playing with friends, teachers and visiting residents that he doesn't want to leave - handing us toys and running back to join his friends. Once we get him out of the classroom, he runs over to the wagons, asking to go on another visit with the residents. He clearly has already begun to make the lifelong friendships like I have from my time at the Mount. When reading books, he points to children on the pages and will say the names of his classroom friends and how they make him feel.

"Luke. Happy. Arianna. Happy. Ever. Happy." he says as he claps his hands and smiles wide.

With the multigenerational approach at home and at the ILC, our dream is that Kieran will grow up believing in the power and value of relationships. That he will know how important it is to stay connected to his elders and through his visits with the residents, be comfortable making new relationships with older adults and differently abled people throughout his life.

Turner Intergenerational Essay Contest
Current Students - 3rd Place
Shilo Stankee submitted by Carrie & Eli Stankee

My husband and I moved to Seattle not knowing a single soul. We chose West Seattle on a whim based on its family friendly appeal and closeness to downtown. We purchased a house, made some friends, but struggled with conceiving a child. This struggle was compounded by the fact that we lived nowhere close to any family. After three years of disappointment, our little boy became reality. Staying at home to raise him was not an option for me, and since we have no family in the area, we knew that only the ILC would fulfill what we desired for our son.

We were certain our son was going to be in great hands, but we did not expect to find OUR community in the process. Since our son joined the ILC, we have become so much more immersed in the Mount. There are still times I wish we lived closer to family, but I never feel like my son is missing out on the opportunity to connect with people of all ages. I feel intense gratitude when I walk through the Mount with him and so many people stop to say hello or call him by his name.

We actually started a cherished tradition, which is one of our favorite parts of the week. At least one day a week, I pick up my son and we intentionally walk through the Mount to visit the wonderful staff and residents. It brings joy to my heart, when I hear a resident say my son's name and then to see the brightness in both the resident's and my son's eyes when they make that connection. I now know so many of the residents by name and feel like my son is beyond blessed to be a part of this community, his Mount family. He pays no mind to age or disability but is guided by his pureness for human connection.

His face lights up every time we pull into the parking lot. I know that each day I drop him off, he is going to be with his extended family. I never imagined that dropping my son off at daycare would bring so much peace to our hearts. My husband and I finally feel fully settled here in Seattle now that we know with all certainty that our son is deeply rooted in this loving Mount community. The intergeneration experience is shaping him to be the most caring, accepting, and loving person, which I have no doubt will be a part of his character throughout his lifetime.

As I am writing this and reading it aloud, I am noticing the theme of gratitude, which in a way, makes this a thank you letter. So, from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU to the Mount and the ILC for this priceless opportunity to be an integral part of this intergenerational community. This experience has helped turned Seattle from a place we happened to settle in, to our chosen home.