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POSTED: Thursday, Jul. 16, 2009

# Grandparents bond with their grandchildren through Western program

Gabrielle Nomura - THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM - June Hartstra's family roots run deep in Western Washington University's history.

Her mother attended Western when it was still the Washington State Normal School, Hartstra graduated from Western in 1952 with a degree in art and a minor in recreational science and Hartstra's son graduated in 1990.

This summer, Hartstra, who is 79 and now lives in California, is sharing her love of Western and Bellingham with her grandchildren, Scott Davis, 7, and Clairra Davis, 11. The trio are participants in Grandparents U, a program by Western's Extended Education and Summer Programs.



Now in its second summer, Grandparents U is an intergenerational program designed for grandparents and grandchildren, ages 7 to 12, to have fun, bond and experience hands-on-learning from Western faculty. For \$195, participants in the two-day event select one of several classes designed to help different generations find common ground and connect. They include art focusing on watercolor techniques, fossils and dinosaurs, earthquakes and volcanoes and marine biology in Whatcom County.

Standing in front of 100 grandchildren and grandparents during Thursday's orientation, Hartstra told the crowd how excited she was to bring her grandchildren to her alma mater.

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"We're priming the two little ones for Western someday," Hartstra said. "We think they'll like it a lot."

Hartstra wasn't the only one with hopes for a grandchild to attend Western. When asked to identify themselves as alumni at the orientation, about one-third of the grandparents raised their hands.

That included Marilyn Klose, 66, of Mill Creek, whose father and daughter attended Western and who brought her granddaughter Kinsale Sproule, 8, to Grandparents U. Ron Kleinknecht, who just retired from Western's psychology department and was the founding dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, attended the program with his 8-year-old grandson, Ryan Kennedy.

The grandparents and their grandchildren will continue with their classes Friday. Some of them stayed overnight in Western's dorms.

For participants like Hartstra, this will not be the last time they sign up. Hartstra said it's a very special thing to show her descendants where she went to college and share with them a part of their family history. She can't wait to sign them up next summer.