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The Caregiving Challenge Hits Gen X

Slackers. Latch key kids. Gen X. I am proudly part of this cohort born between 1965 and 1979. Gen Xers straddled the shift from vinyl to compact disc, from analog to digital. We're as comfortable with smart phones as we are with "land lines". For many Gen Xers, we're at the peak of our earning power. As a matter of fact, according to the World Data Lab, Gen X is the "richest and most spend-ready generation in developed markets globally." But there's a new nickname for Gen X that's hitting our bottom line. We're also increasingly known as the "sandwich" generation.



Ed Moore
VP of Content
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[The sandwich generation](#) refers to those acting as caregivers for both children and aging parents. According to the University of New Hampshire, "50% of Gen Xers in their 40s and 33% in their 50s are a segment of the sandwich generation." For most Gen Xers, their parents belong to the Baby Boom generation – one of the largest segments of the overall U.S. population. Born between 1946 and 1964, the oldest Boomers are turning 80 this year, and in just a few years, they'll all be over 65. When you look at the demographics, it's not surprising that caregiving is now a part of life for at least one out of every five Michigan residents.

Caregiving, especially for the sandwich generation, can be stressful. Many common stressors include not only a crunch in finances, but also a lack of personal time or self-care and guilty feelings triggered by what the caregiver perceives as social expectations. All of these are driven by the isolation, loneliness, and burnout that caregiving too often creates in our society.

This is where storytelling can help. The act of sharing stories is the act of sharing information, of breaking down barriers that create the isolation. Sometimes just knowing that as caregivers we're having similar emotions and experiences can help us feel

less alone. At Detroit PBS, we know from interviewing caregivers that while their role can be hard, there's joy in being able to bond more closely with a loved one and hear stories from their lives.

The video links in this month's newsletter demonstrate how that magic happens.

CAREGIVING WATCH LIST



One Detroit continues to collect stories of individual caregivers, as part of our new "Caregiver Conversations" series. In this first episode, we hear the voice of a caregiver who was inspired by her experience within her family to help as many people as she could.

[Watch Now](#)



Caregiving is often described in terms of medical support or daily assistance. But for many, its powerful impact includes something far simpler: listening. In this segment, One Detroit contributor Sarah Zientarski sits down with caregivers and senior citizens at American House in Livonia to explore the role of compassion, conversation, and community.

[Watch Now](#)



Studies show deeper conversations and storytelling helps seniors and their caregivers. Experts say it helps with loneliness and provides other benefits for seniors' mental and physical health. One Detroit's Bill Kubota talked to a psychologist specializing in the well-being of aging Americans and a doctor and professor who's made it her mission to bring the benefits of storytelling into her Harvard Medical School classroom.

[Watch Now](#)



This month, Detroit PBS was proud to broadcast segments from the "Caregiving" documentary produced in collaboration with the actor Bradley Cooper. The broadcast was made possible by a station partnership with IMPART Alliance, an initiative at Michigan State University to address the shortage of trained caregivers sought by both families and senior living centers. As part of that special broadcast, Fred Nahhat sat down with Clare Luz, the Executive Director of IMPART Alliance to talk about their work.

[Watch Now](#)

SPECIAL EVENTS

March 25th: The Ann Arbor Film Festival will feature the film "TheyDream" at the Michigan Theater. The film tells the story of the mother of Puerto Rican director William David Cabellero as she copes with the loss of various family members for whom she was the caregiver. The film won a Sundance Special Jury Award for Creative expression.



[Reserve Tickets](#)

March 26th: Join Detroit PBS at St. Patrick's Senior Center at 58 Parsons Street in Detroit as the station's reporters showcase their work featuring the remarkable people who tend to our older adults and others needing care. Members of the audience will also have an opportunity to ask questions and talk about their own experiences.

The event is free and open to the public beginning at 7:00 p.m. Advance registration is encouraged.





A FINAL NOTE



A growing series of butterfly gardens around Michigan showcase the creativity and reflections of caregivers who contribute handmade butterflies to the displays. Each butterfly represents a personal story or moment of caregiving, and together they form vibrant, collaborative garden installations. Two of these gardens can currently be seen at the Ishpeming Multi-Purpose Senior Center and the Hannah Community Center in East Lansing, offering spaces for reflection and community connection.

[Learn More](#)

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