

#GensUnited23

At the end of July, GWT attended [Generation United](#)'s 22nd Global Intergenerational Conference in Washington, DC USA to learn from the US experience and meet a range of people from across the world, working in or interested in intergenerational practice.

GWT delegates, Alison and Bella arrived in time for the pre-events, and an opportunity to meet the Director of Generations United, Donna Butts at their offices in Washington.



Pre-events

The first pre-event to the conference was a briefing breakfast before heading to the Senate buildings on 'Capitol Hill' to meet 'the staffers' (similar to our civil servants) and learn hints and tips on how to work with Congress and be an effective advocate for intergenerational work. As Alison and Bella lived in the UK and not America we were invited to join the session with [The Eisner Foundation](#), which identifies, advocates for and invests in high quality and innovative programs that unite multiple generations. Chelsea Mason, Director of External relations presented the staffer with a pack explaining intergenerational work and grand families along with two asks from Generations United seeking additional funding.

The afternoon session, Creating Your Intergenerational Playbook: Key Skills to Build Quality Intergenerational Initiatives, was delivered by a series of presenters from Generations United, University of Denver, Dorot and Arizona State University, and delivered training on research skills, evaluation, design and preparing participants.

More than 350 people attended the 2023 conference with representatives from 38 states and the District of Columbia, at least four Tribes, and nine countries. This included a broad audience of intergenerational and grandfamilies/kinship professionals from various disciplines and settings.



GWT connected and learned about intergenerational practice, policies and solutions which spans across experiences and social backgrounds.

Bella and Alison received a warm welcome at the International Attendee Meet & Greet which was an informal gathering involving 28 delegates from nine countries represented and a really nice way to informally meet the other delegates. The picture to the right brings together delegates from Australia, Canada, USA, UK and Spain.



GWT enjoyed the exhibits from Generations United, What is / what can be – through the eyes of grandparents and kinship carers as well as hearing from some of the participants who were also involved later in the conference.

Day one



The conference was held in the Hilton hotel, in the l'enfant ballroom. The opening plenary, introduced by Donna Butts, CEO of Generations United, celebrated the grandparent advantage – described as the ability to recycle human knowledge, understanding, culture and experience to benefit future generations. Throughout time older adults have been essential in supporting strong, health families and growing children. The 'grandparent advantage'

illustrates the reciprocity that is intrinsic to intergenerational programmes. Stories were shared and lessons learned, and an interactive panel illustrated the impact. Grand families gave a session on impact they had had on future generations. Annie Levy presented the three grandparents who told their story. Thank you to all the participants who gave such rich experiences in their presentations.

Next was an enjoyable conversation with Juan Williams, a journalist, and grandparents who told their stories which were heartfelt and full of experience. It was really great to hear.

Both Bella and Alison were able to choose workshops that enhanced their own knowledge of intergenerational practice. Bella chose co-generational practice for solving social problems which offered insight across generations to solve some of the most pressing social problems facing the US. Alison went to making the intergenerational case to funders, learning from the perspective of a panel of funders to make the case for intergenerational work. This was a super impressive session with the four funders showing deep intergenerational understanding and knowledge. So much so that Alison hopes to bring the funders together for a webinar during Global IG Week. The session will highlight the importance of funding

intergenerational work and encourage funders to provide more funding opportunities across the globe. This will be an opportunity for country leads to attract their own country funders to hear their experiences first hand.

There was then a workshop on building intergenerational communities through housing, looking at different models which can be used to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Plenary and lunch

After that, all delegates went to the ballroom. Alison was invited onto the stage – to give the international welcome giving the opportunity to introduce GWT and Global Intergenerational Week to the full audience. With 350 people in attendance, all interested in intergenerational work and the work of GWT, it was a great honour and privilege for Alison to talk about GWT's work in Scotland.

Over lunch, six award recipients were honoured at Generations United biennial awards program celebrating the outstanding contributions these individuals and organisations make to the intergenerational field.

Workshops

In the afternoon, there were further workshops. Bella attended one on genuine connections, a virtual intergenerational programme resource, and Alison went to forging the future, intentional design for senior living, childcare and student intergenerational community.

GWT presented at one of the workshops, 'Exploring the Development of Quality Standards within Intergenerational Practice'.

Delegates including four of GWT's online Lottery advisory group academics from Australia, Singapore and USA showed enthusiasm for the subject and were interested in finding out more about quality and how we can measure success in intergenerational work.

Alison then went to 'intergenerational shared space – idea to reality'. Bella went to 'best practices for developing intergenerational connections in communities using the 7Ps'.

Another interesting workshop was on shared site learning network that connect younger and older generations in the same physical environment and looked at programmes that connect them.

Day two

The day started with the Janet Sainer breakfast – a networking breakfast to honour Intergenerational pioneer Janet Sainer who did more than 50 years of work in the intergenerational field. She worked in NYC and Cleveland where she did amazing work to



support national family care givers. She encouraged Generations United to advocate for grandparents.

The first session after breakfast involved 22 roundtable discussions taking place in the



ballroom. GWT hosted two conversations at one of the tables on Global Intergenerational Week with delegates across America and Singapore – this was a fantastic opportunity to encourage more people to take part. Our attendees were really interested and plan to join the campaign in 2023, Bella and Alison were truly impressed and are exciting to see what comes from this session at the next campaign.

Staying in the condo with Alison and Bella was Diana Ganger (pictured to the right) a previous [ICIP student](#) and Director of an intergenerational fellowship programme in Chicago.



Closing remarks



At the closing luncheon Alison was presented with a necklace by Donna Butts, CEO of Generations United which passes on the 'baton' of global intergenerational work to Alison for our international conference in 2026.

During the lunch, a video of Musicians from [Heart of Los Angeles Intergenerational Orchestra](#) (HOLA), aged 14-76 from diverse

backgrounds, was shown. There was a conversation between CEO of HOLA and the Eisner Foundation CEO, Trent Stamp about the inception of the orchestra and their future plans. Two participants from the orchestra, one young and the other older, gave a rendition of trumpet and rhythm.

In all, it was a great experience for Bella and Alison and in fact their learning will reach so many more members of the GWT team and our Scottish membership. The opportunity to

network with those interested in what is happening in Scotland, share ideas and learning and be inspired by some of the things that are happening across the US and indeed, the globe was such a thrill and experience.

Alison and Bella were able to hold additional meetings to catch up, share and learn from some of our international partners and friends from across the globe. The pictures shown below include some members of our working advisory group for the lottery funding including the team at Linkages in Canada, the Director of the Australia Centre AIIIP, Anneke Fitzgerald, Nancy Henkin a Generations United Senior Fellow (bottom picture features) one of Generations United Trustees, Michael and Prof Matt Kaplan, Penn State University.



Read more about the conference – with details of all the workshops and plenaries, at <https://www.gu.org/projects/global-intergenerational-conference/>