

## How Babysitting is Uniting the Colorado Unificationist Community

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January 17, 2022



The pandemic continues to pose a challenge for many families as parents juggle the coronavirus, kids, remote learning, and a host of other life-changing events experienced throughout the world during the past two years. However, Unificationist couples in Colorado recently got an unexpected respite, with community elders organizing a night of babysitting for kids of all ages.

"It was so nice to see a big group of parents - who are normally so domesticated - out in the wild among the hip downtown folks of Denver," said Andrew Love, who helped community members recognize the need for babysitting as they addressed obstacles to family well-being and couples' care. Love said parents weren't getting out enough on their own to focus on each other and their relationship.

"Through babysitting, parents were undisturbed by children or any responsibilities," he said. "I saw a lot of couples laughing and bonding on their night out, which was really nice to observe."

For the parents, an evening away from their kids was truly what they needed.

"Our date night was an awesome experience for both my husband and me and my children," said one local parent of three kids. "Going out has become very hard logistically and financially, and as a result, our time as a couple gets put on the back burner."

"This was our first time out without kids since my baby was born in December 2020," she continued. "It was so fun to finally spend time as a couple with other couples. My kids also got dedicated 'grandparent' time with the uncles and aunts who watched them. I can't say enough about how grateful I am for their willingness to organize this."

A [report](#) from the Institute of Family Studies (IFS) revealed married couples and parents in the U.S. have been hit hard by the pandemic and an unpredictable economy. The study's survey showed 45 percent of married couples reported their relationship faced new stressors. Still, the study also revealed some encouraging news about marriage and parenting during COVID-19: more appreciation and deeper commitment among couples.

"When times are tough, men and women often turn towards family and friends for support, sustenance, and solidarity," the report said. "This is certainly true in [the pandemic] amidst so many trials and tribulations."

The parents, some of whom don't have local grandparents or relatives, enjoyed time away with other couples as several elder community members welcomed 15 children - ages eight months to 15 years old - at the Colorado Family Church.

"We created a consent form for parents to fill in and sign, planned a meal and snacks, listed the children's general information and created groups and activities according to age," said Marjorie Buessing, who was among the babysitters.



"Parents left gleefully to enjoy a meal, fellowship, and fun without the children - freedom!" she said. "We had a Nerf gun play area for the kids, a double-feature movie theater, indoor playground activities, and various games available. Everyone then gathered for sumptuous homemade pizza for dinner."

The evening was a satisfying success for kids, too, who enjoyed spending time together.

"I had a lot of fun," said one nine-year-old girl. "I liked how there were different options for all age groups and you could do what you wanted. I also liked playing with the other kids."

As the pandemic wears on, organizers said they hope to make community babysitting a recurring opportunity for parents to refresh and revive their marriages while providing support for young families.

"Our group is already planning the next event," said Colorado Family Church Pastor Adonia Heinrich. "Hopefully this will become a happy tradition and continue to grow here in our community. We've seen a great benefit of three generations coming together and strengthening our intergenerational heart and connections in our community."