

## **THE SURROGATE GRANDFATHER**

By John F. Hall

There are several definitions of the word surrogate. The easiest to explain is the work substitute. So how did I become a surrogate grandfather to two young girls in a Christian



School? It began in the lunchroom where I was a volunteer. Three of my grandchildren, Andrea, Heather and John-John attended this school. John-John was in kindergarten along with a class mate named Skyler Crisp. Here dad was deployed overseas and she was upset and would not eat her lunch. John-John, on the other hand, just wanted me to warm up his lunch, to give him a dollar and not to embarrass him at his table. So, my challenge was to get Skyer to eat her lunch. I did this by bringing her a brownie, orange candy slices and other treats. I would not let her eat the treats until she had consumed some of the lunch prepared by her mother. I would sit across from her

and her two friends and talk to her. This went on for years. Skyler's younger sister, Lexie had no problem eating her lunch, but I would also sit at her table and talk to her and her friend. Then my grandchildren transferred to public schools in another county.

I was also a friend to Skler and Lexie's parents and I began to come to Grandparent's Day at the Christian school because the grandfather on their dad's side would not come. There are a lot of kids that go to Christian schools that have grandparents who are either deceased or who live far away. There are some grandparents who don't care, one way or other, to take the time to show any affection towards their grandchildren. Regardless of the reasons, Grandparent's Day without the grandparents showing up is rather sad.

I was at a banquet the other day and the new person in charge of the organization said that they needed volunteers to act as surrogate grandparents at Grandparents Day at this other Christian school. He explained, and I knew exactly what he was saying, about being a surrogate grandfather. Ironically, before this person talked, I received a text from John-John that he wanted me to pick up a bag of dog food and drop it off at his house. His dad is out of town and will not return for another day or so.

I am "old school" but I still like to write letters and send pictures to Skyler and Lexie Crisp. We text each other to keep in touch. One day I spent all day at their Christian school watching them scrimmage volleyball games. I wrote a story about that day. I explained that their volleyball coach loved them and that they loved their coach. Perhaps the best thing that grandparents, real or surrogate, can say to their grandchildren is that they love them. Giving them time, whether watching them play, or just holding their hand, or just listening to them, is more meaningful than giving them gifts or money. I'm a surrogate grandfather to Skyler and Lexie Crisp. They love me and I love them.

\*Read more stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajalmbert.com>

