

October 2003 Empathy.

From MSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences –

The Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

In October, we focus on EMPATHY, the ability to understand another person's circumstances, point of view, thoughts, and feelings.

As Extension professionals, empathy is part of our DNA, and we spend our days working to provide the support and education our area families need to live happier, healthier lives. As we move into the shorter and cooler days of fall, we are reminded that many of our Montana families struggle to prepare nutritious, low-cost meals; stretch their income to cover household expenses; provide a safe and comfortable home; and maintain positive and healthy physical and emotional health. The weather and conditions of the coming months only exacerbate these worries and many families need a bit of extra help.

In the spirit of October's commitment to **EMPATHY**, we, your FCS Specialists, want to do two things for you.

First, we want to spotlight one of our projects, the *Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project*, which strives to positively impact the lives of Montana's grandparent- and kin-headed households. The project is the very definition of empathy, as our ability to help these families hinges on our understanding why these families exist in the first place and what they need to survive and, eventually, thrive.

Second, we recognize that your time and resources often fall short of your desire to understand and help your constituents. In an effort to simplify your communications with GRGs, we want to give you some important resources, from all four of the FCS Programs, to support and educate these families. This list of resources will free you from having to do your own research and hopefully allow you more time for other projects or to devote to your own family.

The Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

According to a 2010 American Community Survey, more than 6,600 grandparents in Montana are responsible for the primary care of their grandchildren. The reasons for this are numerous, are often intertwined, and cut across all socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups. In 2002, Dr. Sandra Bailey developed the GRG Project to identify these families and offer them support to manage the physical and emotional stress of kinship caregiving, education on relevant topics, and information on resources. Currently there are 31 local contacts across Montana where information and support is available to grandparents; over half of these contacts are MSU Extension Agents.

Resources for Grandparent-Headed Households

Family Economics

- Grandparents caring for grandchildren may need to update their estate plans. Read informational MontGuides on wills, estate planning for minor children: <http://www.montana.edu/estateplanning/eppublications.htm>

- Have you filed a homestead declaration to protect your home for creditors? You can protect up to \$250,000 in equity:
<http://msuextension.org/publications/FamilyFinancialManagement/MT199815HR.pdf>
- With an increase in family members, grandparents may need to develop a spending plan for their new situation:
<http://msuextension.org/publications/FamilyFinancialManagement/MT199703HR.pdf>
- Grandparents can help grandchildren learn to save by participating in the Montana Saves program. Montana Saves will connect you to tips, tools and resources to help you set and achieve your goals: <http://www.montanasaves.org/>

Family & Human Development

- Visit the GRG Project website for newsletter back issues, links to national organizations, state-wide contacts, ordering materials, and much more: <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg.html>
- See all family, parenting, and well-being MSU Extension MontGuides at:
http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/msu_montguides.html
- Have legal questions?
 - Grandfamilies.org has kin and grandparent-specific information:
<http://www.grandfamilies.org/>
 - The Montana Supreme Court has state-wide, self-help law centers:
<http://courts.mt.gov/selfhelp/default.mcp>
- Generations United has information on common challenges – education, health, legal, etc. – faced by grandfamilies: <http://www.gu.org/>
- “Grand Resources: A Grandparent’s and Other Relatives Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities” and “Grand Resources: A Resource Directory for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children with Disabilities” are now available for download in their entirety:
<http://www.gu.org/OURWORK/Grandfamilies/GrandResources.aspx>
- Contact Debbie Albin, the GRG Project Manager, at (406) 994-5099 or deborah.albin@montana.edu.

Food & Nutrition

- March is National Nutrition Month. Grandparents learn about the importance of nutrition and can get recipes and activity ideas: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/grg/feature/theme-1303.html>
- See a list of nutrition publications specifically for older adult and grandparents raising grandchildren: <http://fyi.uwex.edu/grandparenting/publications/#8>
- Get Active, Stay Active:
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/article.cfm?ID=5125&IssueID=5215>
- Make Time for Family Meals:
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/article.cfm?ID=5135&IssueID=5215>
- Snacks That Are Good for the Body:
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/article.cfm?ID=5094&IssueID=5215>
- Wake Up to a Healthy Start:
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/article.cfm?ID=5136&IssueID=5215>
- When Your Grandchild is a Picky Eater:
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/grandparents/article.cfm?ID=5140&IssueID=5215>

Housing & Environmental Health

"...more children die in home accidents than from all the childhood diseases combined". Three critical areas of home safety assessment, preparation and training for grandparents raising grandchildren are

home safety, car seat safety, and emergency response (first aid, CPR, poison control). Use these resources to learn about these areas:

- The Consumer Product Safety Commission is widely known for their Safety and Product Alerts that include many child and infant warnings and guides including: Kid and Baby Safety Guides on cribs, toys, tip-over tragedies, and window covering cords: <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/>
- Grandparenting-essentials.com has a great 25-tip Home Safety Checklist specifically targeted to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Their site also includes helpful videos dealing with common home safety issues: <http://www.grandparenting-essentials.com/Childproofing-Grandparents-Home.html>
- BabyCenter.com offer many helpful videos and information guides on these topics:
 - Gadgets galore
 - Safe and sound
 - Scope out the territory
 - Protect outlets
 - Use caution with furniture and fixtures
 - Install gates
 - Check ties on blinds and curtains
 - Secure your windows and doors
 - Prevent poisoning
 - Prevent drowning
 - Prevent fires
 - Prepare for an emergency

http://www.babycenter.com/0_childproofing-around-the-house_460.bc

- Grandparents may be out of touch with emergency response dealing with child injuries, poisoning and CPR. Two great sources of training materials that deal with these topics are the National Safety Council and the Red Cross
 - National Safety Council
http://www.nsc.org/products_training/Training/firstaidandCPR/Pages/FirstAidCPR.aspx and http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/DriverSafety/Pages/driver_safety.aspx, which deals with mature drivers, child safety seats, and children in and around vehicles.
 - American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/program-highlights/cpr-first-aid/workplaces-schools-individuals> and <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/program-highlights/babysitting-caregiving>
- Alzheimer's Proofing Your Home for Safe Caregiving – Checklist: Montana State University Extension Publication ALZ2007/16. NOTE: It may seem odd to include an Alzheimer's publication to the list of resources dealing with "Child-Proofing a Home". The fact is that many home safety issues that apply to individuals with Alzheimer's are also relevant when child-proofing a home. While some tips will not apply to infants and young children, check out this Extension publication and use it develop your own home safety checklist.