

GRG Newsletter

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

Grandparents and Grandchildren in **ACTION!**

The Montana State Fair and MSU Extension, Cascade County hosted the Montana Cattlewomen’s Kids in the Kitchen Beef Cook-off at the Montana State Fair on August 1. The annual Beef Cook-off promotes the Montana’s Beef industry. The teams consisted of one child between the ages of 9-14 and the child’s parent or legal guardian. The teams created a fun beef recipe that promotes nutritional balance, had family appeal, and was the child’s favorite dish. The entries for the contest were prepared in the kitchen of the Family Living Center.

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Katie Stuckey of KRTV interviewed Charles and Alma. Charles explained how he loves to cook with his Grandmother and his aunt.

Charles LaVerdure, a grandson of Mariellen Ritts, who is a member of the Cascade County Grandchildren Raising Grandchildren’s Support group, and his aunt Alma Winberry participated in the Kids in the Kitchen Beef cook-off. Here, Alma assists Charles in preparing a beef pizza.



Charles and Alma display their second place ribbon. Along with the aprons, hats, and ribbon, Charles received a check for \$75.00.

Mental Health Issues of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

-Sandy Bailey, MSU Extension/HHD

Grandparents who step in during a family crisis to rear their grandchildren are often unprepared for their new role. Grandchildren frequently come to live with them bearing scars of abuse and/or neglect that can result in emotional, learning, and behavior problems. Grandparents may have ambivalent feelings about taking on parenting a second time around. This is because they need to make a shift from being grandma and grandpa to being mom and dad. Additionally, navigating the many educational, legal, social, and health care systems can be daunting. It is not surprising given the complex stressful and often tragic circumstances faced by grandparents rearing grandchildren that these caregivers experience more symptoms of depression than grandparents who are not rearing grandchildren.

Stressors reported by many grandparents are the lack of access to support services and financial issues. Many grandparents are retired or nearing retirement and live on limited incomes. When a grandchild enters the household costs can increase significantly, especially if the grandchild has special needs. Some research finds that grandparents with fewer financial resources experience greater depressive symptoms.

Grandparents raising grandchildren often have to choose between their jobs and their families. Some, who are retired, return to work to make ends meet. Others who were working outside the home prior to rearing grandchildren have had to quit their jobs due to the high cost of child care and/or the special needs of the grandchild. These shifts can contribute to grandparent fatigue and depression.

Grandparents who have greater parenting stress are more susceptible to depressive symptoms. Parenting is a tough job in the best of circumstances. Grandparents who are called upon to rear their grandchildren face more challenges than most first-time parents.

Research has found that those grandparents who have more recently taken on the role of caregiver have more depression than those who have been in the role for a longer period of time. The transition to the new family structure takes time. All family members are adjusting to the new situation and roles. Understandably this is a time when grandparents would experience more stress and depression.

If you are a grandparent raising a grandchild, take care of yourself physically and emotionally.

- See your health care provider on a regular basis.
- Consider seeking out mental health services for yourself and your grandchild.
- Recognize that you may be experiencing grief and loss due to your circumstances.
- Consider taking parenting classes for an update on raising children.
- Seek financial assistance through your local social services office.
- Join a support group to broaden your social network.

References:

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- Letiecq, B. L., Bailey, S. J., & Dahlen, P. (2008). *Intergenerational ambivalence and caregiver coping among grandparents raising grandchildren: Implications for clinical intervention. In B. Hayslip & P. L. Kaminski (eds.) Parenting the custodial grandchildren (pp. 3-16). New York: Springer Publishing.*



HEALTH & WELLNESS

WATCH OUT FOR... ...Signs of a Stroke

Three-quarters of a million Americans experience a stroke each year, and at least one in four will have another stroke within their lifetime. Within five years of a first stroke, the risk for another stroke can increase more than 40%. Within five years of a stroke, 24% of women and 42% of men will experience a recurrent stroke.

The National Stroke Association has developed a program called STARS or Steps Against Recurrent Stroke. For a pamphlet or more information go to www.stroke.org or call 1-800-STROKES.

Remember the word FAST when you think someone may be having a stroke:

F = Face. Ask the person to smile. If the smile droops on one side then the person may be having a stroke.

A = Arms. Ask the person to raise his arms. If one droops lower than the other the person may be having a stroke.

S = Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple statement. If his words are slurred or he is unable to speak this may be a sign of a stroke.

T = Time. If the person experiences any of the above, call 911.

-Information courtesy of the National Stroke Association, www.stroke.org.

Stay Fit All Year Round With Simple Indoor Exercises

The weather will soon cool down and outdoor exercise may not be an option for many older people, but it is important to remain active. Try these simple indoor exercises to maintain your strength, balance, flexibility and endurance during the fall and winter months.

Circle your arms slowly to stretch the upper body. Sit down and extend your knee straight out. Then, pump your ankle up and down to stretch leg muscles.

Stand at the kitchen counter and do small knee bends.

From a standing position, go up on your toes, then down again.

March on the spot.

Do side leg raises while standing at the kitchen counter.

Balance on one leg (Do this near something you can grab onto if necessary).

Tap step. Move your right foot forward, to the side, to a position behind you, and back to the starting position. Do the same with the left foot.

Keep walking! Apartment hallways and indoor shopping malls are excellent places for walking.

Important Reminder: ALWAYS talk to your health care provider before you begin an exercise regime, even simple, low-impact activities like those above.

-Information courtesy of www.emaxhealth.com

Make GREAT Sack Lunches!

Sending kids back to school means packing lunches. You don't need to buy expensive (and often unhealthy) pre-packaged lunches—make your own nutritious and convenient meals.

- Cold-cut roll ups (lean, low-fat turkey, ham, or roast beef; low-fat cheese; and flour tortillas)
- Cold pizza (shredded mozzarella cheese; pizza sauce; flour tortilla, English muffin, or mini pizza shell)
- Cracker sandwiches (whole-grain crackers filled with cream cheese or peanut butter and jelly)
- Peanut butter and celery sticks
- Veggie sticks with low-fat dip or dressing
- 100% fruit juice box or bottle of water
- Optional dessert (choose one): flavored gelatin, low-fat pudding, oatmeal raisin cookie, graham crackers, fresh fruit

And remember to pack it up right:

- Use a thermos for hot foods.
- Use cold packs or freeze some foods and drinks overnight. They'll thaw in the lunch box.
- Wash out lunch boxes every day or use brown paper lunch bags that can be discarded.
- Toss in some moist towelettes to remind kids to wash their hands before eating and to clean themselves up afterward.



-Information courtesy of <http://kidshealth.org>

Keep Your Family Safe on the Internet

Even if your own family isn't online, the Internet has all sorts of information that cyber criminals can use to stalk kids or parents, or to spoof, phish or bully. Almost all of this personal data is free—and it doesn't take a computer geek to find it.

How to protect your family is only one of the topics in *Internet Safety and Your Family* (Parenting Press, Seattle, ISBN 1884734944, \$9.95), a concise overview that explains how to research what is online about you and your children, how to control spam, hackers, viruses and access to risky and offensive web sites, and how to report cyber harassment. Author Linda Carlson, a former journalist and frequent contributor to Parenting Press's "News for Parent" and "Parenting Educator Practitioner (PEP) Talk," describes virtual worlds, social networking, and how kids can be abused online.

Created as a PDF, *Internet Safety and Your Family* can be downloaded from www.ParentingPress.com any time of the day or night.

Healthy Eating Habits & Fitness Begin at Home

Kids will learn these healthy habits at home and take them to school...

Try it, you'll like it. Kids don't always know that healthy food tastes good until they try it. Making healthy options fun, like "ants on a log" (celery, peanut butter or light cream cheese, and raisins) is another easy way to add nutrition.

Enjoy family meals. Eating dinner is an important time for families to visit and for kids to share what they have learned in school. An even better option is to cook the meal together.

Cook and learn. There are lots of ways for families to integrate math and science in the kitchen, like learning how yeast works in baking bread. And a lot of math goes into cooking too, like using measuring cups and doubling a recipe.

Play Together. Take a family walk after supper or in the morning to start your day. Incorporate fun exercise, count how many steps are around your house, measure your stride and multiply

-Information courtesy of "Eat Right Montana", August 2008, www.eatrightmontana.org.



BACK TO SCHOOL

Helping Your Grandchildren Be Ready for School

*-Jona McNamee, MSU Extension Service,
Cascade County*

Helping children get ready for school does not have to be a difficult. Children need to feel confident that they can succeed in school. We can help them by practicing self-help skills such as tying shoes, getting dressed, cleaning up after themselves, being responsible for taking care of their things. Encourage your grandchild to try new things at home. Congratulate them when they accomplish the task and assist them when they seem to be getting frustrated. Praise them for their efforts.

Children who feel good about themselves are less afraid to ask questions in school or attempt a new skill. Talk positively about school. Let your grandchild know that going to school is exciting. Talking positively helps children to be eager about school and learning. Take your grandchild to school on the first day, visit the classroom, meet the teacher, and volunteer to work in the classroom. If you are working, volunteer to assist the teacher with projects that you can do in the evening at home such as cutting out letters, stapling booklets together, coloring pictures, or phoning other parents in the classroom for special events.

Read to your child daily. Every child, no matter the age, loves to have an adult read to them. Make time for reading, turn off the television, cuddle in a comfortable chair and enjoy a book. For older grandchildren, model the skills of reading by sharing your favorite book with them. Remember that good readers become good writers. Children who are read to and read themselves gather story ideas and creative ways to use language skills. Reading develops concentration skills as children recognize words that they see in books.

Make sure that your grandchildren get plenty of rest. Set appropriate bedtimes and stick to them. Practice bedtimes a few days before school begins; remember this can be a time of adjustment for everyone in the house.

Plan well balanced meals for your grandchildren. Breakfast can be challenging for some grandparents but with some creative ideas such as a breakfast smoothie, breakfast can be enjoyable as well as nutritious.

Preparing children for school can be fun and exciting. By exposing your grandchildren to new things, reading aloud everyday, providing nutritious meal and plenty of rest everyone will have a successful year at school.

Auto Safety For Adults....

The AARP Driver Safety program offers you an extra measure of safety by providing classroom and online refresher courses for drivers age 50 and older. These courses help you learn defensive driving techniques, new traffic laws, rules of the road and much more. This 8-hour course can be very beneficial—you will have fewer traffic tickets, accidents or injuries as a result of what you learn. You may also be eligible for a discount on your automobile insurance. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org/families/driver_safety.

And For Kids...

Every state has laws requiring children be restrained in a car safety seat, but many grandparents have questions about which seat is appropriate for their grandchild.

Here's what the experts recommend...

- Infants should be in a rear-facing car seat until they reach age one and 20 pounds.
- Toddlers need a forward-facing car seat (convertible or combo seat) until the harness no longer fits properly.
- Younger children should use a booster seat with lap and shoulder safety belts until they are tall enough to use just a safety belt.
- Older children should always wear a seat belt.

Visit www.seatcheck.org or call 1-866-SEAT-CHECK for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) listing of locations where you can have your child safety seat inspected.

-Information courtesy of "AARP Foundation Grandcare News", Volume 2, Issue 1.

Get Your New GrandFacts State Fact Sheet Today

Finding information about the support and services you need to help you raise your grandchild isn't easy. *GrandFacts: State Fact Sheets for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children* are available to help you. A joint production of the AARP Foundation, the Brookdale Foundation, Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, and Generations United, a fact sheet is available for each state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

These fact sheets are updated and contain Census data, services, program, laws and policies for each state. There is also a national fact sheet. To access this useful resource, visit www.grandfactsheets.org.

-Information courtesy of "AARP Foundation Grandcare News", Volume 2, Issue 1.

Get Your MontGuides!

Remember there are many helpful MSU Extension MontGuides available to you. Topics include parenting, financial planning and retirement. Visit <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/montguides.html> for a full list of MontGuides and information on how to order them.



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S**

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings

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Be sure to check out all the GRG Newsletter back issues at
<http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/grg/newsletters.htm>

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*Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family.
Whatever you are, who ever you are, you need one.*

~ Jane Howard



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