

GRG Newsletter

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Receive an Early Christmas Present!



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President Signs Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008

The President signed into law the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoption Act of 2008. The act is a bi-partisan compromise between the House and Senate that includes many of the provisions of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act. There still will be significant work to implement the act fully, but it is nonetheless a historic day for grandfamilies.

The bill will provide support for grandfamilies by:

- Authorizing subsidized guardianship to enable children in the care of grandparents and other relatives to exit foster care into permanency.
- Establishing Kinship navigator programs to help link relative caregivers both inside and outside of the formal child welfare system to a broad range of services and supports that will help them meet the needs of the children in their care.
- Requiring notice be given to adult relatives of a child if he or she is placed in foster care.
- Allowing states in a demonstration program the option to set separate licensing standards for relative foster parents and non-relative foster parents.

The bill also supports permanent families by:

- Extending direct Title IV-E funding to tribal governments.
- Reauthorizing the Adoption Incentives Program, a critical tool in helping children become adopted.
- Allowing states to receive federal reimbursement for support provided to foster youth up to age 21.
- Requiring reasonable efforts to keep siblings together

For more information on the Act, go to <http://www.gu.org/Polc7231752.asp>.

Making A Holiday Budget

Jona K Anderson-McNamee
Family and Consumer Science Agent, Cascade County

The holiday season is supposed to bring cheer and good times to all. For many grandparents, however, the cheer and good times end up resulting in a heavy debt burden when the New Year rolls around. It does not have to be this way. Taking the time to plan your holiday activities and spending will keep the holidays from being a budget breaker. While gifts are a major expense for the holidays, they are by no means the only expense. Holiday decorating, entertainment, food, wrapping and cards are other areas that will quickly add up if you do not take some time to forecast their costs. *SavingAdvice.com* has put together some holiday money-saving hints and tips that will help you retain the cheer while keeping your pocket book financially healthy during the holiday season.

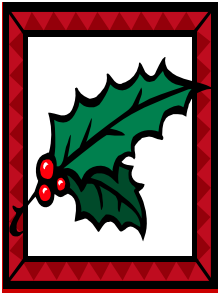
If you have not yet thought about or planned a holiday budget, today is the day to begin! A budget will help you consider what gifts you want to give and who will receive them. Planning gift giving will save you money but it also allows you time to find the perfect gifts for friends and family. Consider asking your grandchildren to make a list of the three special gifts that they would like to receive. Remind them that asking for a gift does not necessarily mean that they are going to receive it. When preparing a budget consider the expenses that are likely to happen with the holidays. Include in your budget: gift-wrapping, cards, entertainment, food, inside decorating, tree, ornaments, outside decorating, lights, travel and lodging, clothing, and drink. By taking the initiative early and understanding where your money is likely to go, you can consider ways to reduce expenses or avoid them all together. Writing down your expenses will give you guidelines that you can follow when the holiday rush is upon you.

While gifts are an obvious expense during this season, chances are you have not worked out the cost. If you are like most, you have an estimate in the back of your mind that you hope you will come in under. Instead of hoping, sit down and make a list of friends and family members with whom you regularly exchange gifts. Once complete, go through your list and designate an approximate price you want to spend on each person on the list. With a price in mind for each recipient, you have a much better chance of remaining within your gift giving holiday budget.

Since every grandparent's situation is different, the best way to forecast this year's expenses is to think back to last year and all the things you did during the holiday season while adding in any new ones you have already planned for this year. Once you have finished this, you will have a number. If that number is within the amount of money you can afford to spend for the holiday season, you are in great shape and just need to keep it at hand so you do not stray too far from the numbers. If you look at the amount and feels like it is too much, then you need to consider ways to reduce your anticipated costs. If the holidays seem to be overwhelming, invite friends, family and your community to help.

Keeping a holiday journal that lists names, gifts purchased, and amount spent will give you a head start on next year's holiday budget. And remember to watch the credit card spending during the holiday season. Pay credit card statements in full at the end of each month. If you are carrying a balance from one month to the next, it would be wise to revisit your credit card spending.

**Remember that time is the best present we can give our families.
Take time to enjoy your grandchildren!**



T I S T H E S E A S O N

The Holidays DON'T Have to be a Stressful Time!

As you enter the holiday season don't let yourself get run down and stressed out—this is the time to enjoy your family and friends. Follow these simple guidelines to keep yourself happy and healthy.

Celebrate Your Talents Now is the perfect time to indulge in your talents for cooking, crafts, helping others and organizing. Not only will you calm yourself but you can get ready for the holidays and make gifts.

Learn to Rely on Supportive Relationships Draw strength from your family and friends and allow them to help you make decisions. Call them, talk to them, tell them how you feel.

Find Peace Take time to fill your spiritual reservoir each day. Different things work for different people—some use meditation, thought or pondering inspirational writings.

Enjoy a Diversion The holidays are a great time to take a bit of “me time”. Go see a movie, read a good book, go out with friends, take up a hobby and do it often, volunteer.

Help a Worthy Cause Sometimes we worry too much about our own problems that we can't see anything else. Invest yourself meaningfully in a church or community group—helping others can bring us peace and satisfaction.

Enjoy Natural Beauties watch a sunrise or sunset, take a walk in the snow, sit outside at night and enjoy the sounds of nature.

Use Time Efficiently Name your time wasters and get rid of them. Then, do your essential tasks at the time of day when you are most alert and creative. Keep a log for a week detailing how you use your time and use it to improve the next week.

-Adapted from *50 Stress Busting Ideas for your Well-Being*, Montana State University, Extension MontGuide

Creative and Thoughtful Gifts on a Budget

Remember these helpful tips and your holiday dollars will stretch...



Gather all the sale advertisements in the newspaper and make a list of the things you need and where you can find them. You will save time—and gas—by not having to visit the same store many times.



Give a gift a whole family can enjoy. Not only will you save money by not buying multiple gifts but the family will be able to enjoy lots of “together time”. Some great ideas are games, puzzles and family movies.



Form a gift exchange between family members or close friends. Remember to designate a minimum and maximum amount for the gift. Or don't buy gifts at all—put together a luncheon or party and give each other the gift of togetherness.



Think about homemade gifts. A basket of homemade cookies and candies is appreciated by everyone and framed photos or albums are a favorite.



Give the gift of your time. Offer to do chores around the house, help with child care or take someone out to lunch or to the movies. Giving a gift of coupons to be redeemed throughout the year is a great idea because those things that do cost money can be spaced out over the course of the year.

Eat Right During the Holidays

During the holidays, nobody is on their best eating behavior; sugary and fatty foods are everywhere and they are just too tempting! *Eat Right Montana* offers these helpful hints on how to eat healthy but still indulge in your favorite holiday foods.

Make Every Bite of Food Count Taste is the number one reason why we make the choice to eat one food rather than another. So, here is the key to healthy holiday eating. Stop imagining that you have to give up your favorite holidays treats, like those once-a-year cookies made by a special relative. As soon as you even imagine being deprived, you want to eat more. Instead, plan to enjoy one or two cookies rather than a whole plate. To get the most flavor and pleasure from any food, slow down and savor every bite.

Make Over a Favorite Recipe Many of our favorite holidays recipes could be enhanced with a nutrition makeover. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways to lighten up the typical recipe without sacrificing taste or texture. The Mayo Clinic offers a basic guide to redoing recipes with your health in mind at www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-recipes/NU00584. For foods that you want just the way they are, reduce the portion size. Cut your usual serving in half, eat slowly, and savor every bite.

Make Lean Protein a Priority Holiday meals, snacks, and treats tend to be high in sugar and fat, but low on protein - which is a serious nutrition shame. High quality protein provides satiety (the feeling of fullness), along with important health benefits (maintaining muscle mass, blood sugar, and healthy bones, etc.). Include some lean protein every time you eat, especially at breakfast and snacks. Protein possibilities: 8 ounces of low-fat yogurt, a string cheese stick, a handful of nuts, and 1-2 slices of lean deli meat.

Make smart snacks a daily habit Snacks can have two important roles in a healthy lifestyle. First, smart snacks are a key way to fill in nutrient gaps. (Many Americans aren't getting enough calcium, fiber, potassium, or vitamins A and C.) Also, a well-timed snack - before a big buffet or holiday party - helps tame your appetite so you aren't tempted to eat everything in sight. Fruits, veggies, and lean protein always make smart snacks. Try an apple with cheese slices or baby carrots with a stick of beef jerky.

*Information courtesy of Eat Right Montana,
November, 2008 Newsletter
www.eatrightmontana.org*

Helpful Hint: Holiday Cooking

*Submitted by
Jona K
Anderson-McNamee
Family and
Consumer
Science Agent,
Cascade County*

People of all ages remember baking for the holidays with their Grandmothers. Many of us will begin our holiday baking this month using tried and true family recipes. Some of us are experiencing difficulty with cookie recipes that calls for margarine or oleo. The baking experts give the following advice. Instead of using margarine, try using shortening and butter. The ratio is two parts shortening to one part butter. An example would be if a recipe calls for three tablespoons of margarine, use two tablespoons of shortening and one tablespoon of butter.

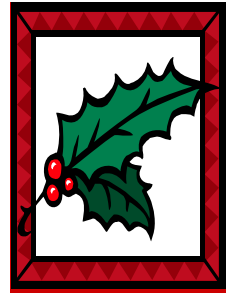
Margarine is acceptable when baking biscuits and piecrusts. Reduced calorie margarine is not recommended for baking because it contains too little fat to tenderize baked goods. Butter is the best choice for baking shortbread plain cookies and pound cakes. Butter results in the richest flavor and most tender texture. Unsalted sweet butter is preferred in baked goods. If using a grade-A salted butter reduce the amount of salt in the recipe.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Why join a grandparent support group?

- **Friendship & Camaraderie**
- **Support & Understanding**
- **Hints, Techniques & Services**
- **Social Events & Community Activism**



Here's what two Montana support groups have been doing lately...

Kalispell In the past year they've had...

- Program on caring for the caretaker.
- Program on reading to children.
- Presentation by those who attended the GRG state conference.
- Presentation by a legislator/paralegal.
- Presentation on children's issues by an educator and grandmother of 21 grandchildren.
- Fun social events including a picnic, chili dinner and a Christmas party with Santa Claus.

**Cascade
County
(Great Falls)**

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Picnic The Grandparents in Cascade County hosted an educational picnic for the residents of Great Falls and surrounding counties. Topics covered at the picnic included legal, financial and parenting concerns. One hundred twelve people attended the picnic as well as local agencies, legislative representatives and support group members. Local newspaper, TV and radio stations covered the event. The impact of the picnic included fourteen new grandparents joining the support group. Opportunities Links awarded the Grandparents a \$1200.00 grant during the picnic.

Make a Difference Day *Make a Difference Day* is the most encompassing national day of helping others – a celebration of neighbors helping neighbors. On October 25, Retired Senior Volunteer Program and AmeriCorps VISTA, collected food donations to make a difference in the lives of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren's support group. Together with many local partners, RSVP gathered thirty boxes of food and treats for Thanksgiving. The food baskets included donations of canned vegetables, boxed stuffing, rolls, potatoes, packets of gravy, pies, and turkeys. Gift cards and cash donations were also accepted.

Volunteers sorted and boxed the donated food. For many grandparents raising their grandchildren can be difficult. The hope of the project is that the grandparents had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

See page seven for a list of Montana GRG support groups.

**GRG
GROUP
SUPPORT
TOGETHER**

Grandfamilies Get Access to Financial Assistance

“Finding public benefits can be a big help, but grandparents don’t realize that it’s out there. They need help filling out forms and even knowing what to apply for.”

There is a new, easy way to find public benefits with *Benefits QuickLINK*, a free online screening tool run by Benefits Check Up, a service of the national Council on Aging and supported by the AARP Foundation. This tool makes it easy for grandparents to find out if their family may qualify for 15 of the most valuable public benefits programs for older adults and/or children.

You can access *Benefits QuickLINK* at <http://www.aarp.org/quicklink>

Benefits QuickLINK can help you find information about:

- State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- TANF-Child Only Grant
- Medicaid for Children and for Aged, Blind and Disabled
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for Children and Adults
- Medicare Savings Programs, Prescription Drug Coverage & Rx Extra Help
- State Prescription Drug Assistance Programs
- Food Stamps Program
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- State Property Tax Relief/Rebates
- Telephone Assistance (Link-Up and Lifeline)

Information Courtesy of
Together, The Generations United Magazine,
volume 12, number 2, 2008

More Useful Links...

State fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children.
www.grandfactsheets.org

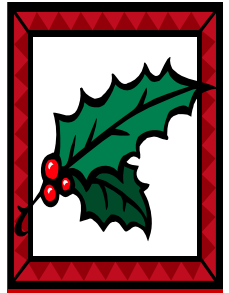
National website to locate specific mental health programs in your area.
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

Montana Legal Services Association offers legal assistance in many areas including public benefits and family law.
www.mtlsa.org or call the hotline at (800) 666-6899

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.

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



HELP & SERVICES

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings

Bernie Mason
P.O. Box 35021
Billings, MT 59107
(406) 256-2828

Bozeman

MSU Extension Family &
Human Development
316 Herrick Hall
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Browning

Carrie Jackson
Eagle Shield Center
P.O. Box 76
Browning, MT 59417
(406) 338-7257

Colstrip

Jennifer Anderson
P.O. Box 65
Forsyth, MT 59327
(406) 346-7320

Glendive

Pete Bruno
Parents Resource Center
200 S. Kendrick
Glendive, MT 59330
(406) 377-7515

Great Falls

Jona McNamee
Cascade County Extension
454-6980
Mariellen Ritts
(406) 453-3554

Helena

Jeanette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 442-8207

Kalispell

Marylane Pannell
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 257-5793

Lewistown

Denise Seilstad
712 W. Main
Lewistown, MT 59457
(406) 535-3919

Missoula

Lara Mattson Radle
Families First
Parenting Programs
(406) 721-7690, Ext. 202

Poplar and Wolf Point

Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
Culbertson, MT 59218
(406) 787-5312

Ravalli County

Brenda Fisher
Family Services
108 Pinckney
Hamilton, MT 59840
(406) 363-1961 ext. 107

Rocky Boy Reservation

Stone Child College
Mary St. Pierre
(406) 395-4875

Townsend

Nancy Marks (406) 226-3710
Jerri Paulk (406) 266-4249

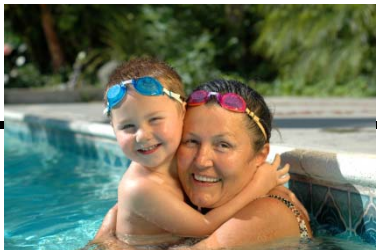


Department of Health & Human Development
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Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

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Bozeman, MT
59715

**The Montana
GRG Project**

*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*



**Montana
Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
Project**

316 Herrick Hall, PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

<http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/index.htm>
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