

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

GRG Newsletter

April, 2010

Volume 7, Issue 1

Notes From the Montana GRG Project Director:

Spring seems to have arrived in Montana after a long winter! Although we know more snow will fall before we see long days and warmer weather, the sunshine has been a welcome relief.

Once again, we will not be able to hold a statewide conference for grandparents raising grandchildren. I am hopeful however that we will be able to resume the conferences in the near future. I would like your feedback on how we might make it possible to hold the conferences with limited resources. Please think about the following questions and respond to us at grg@montana.edu or call us at 406-994-3395.

- Would you be willing and able to pay a fee of \$30 to attend a conference?
- Would you be able to attend a conference without having travel expenses paid?
- Would you be able to attend a conference without having child care available?
- Where would you suggest that we hold the conference?
- Other comments

Although bringing folks together from around the state is not possible this year, we are able to hold some regional seminars. If you are interested in hosting a regional seminar, please contact me at baileys@montana.edu or at 406-994-6745. Some potential seminar topics include: brain development in children; setting boundaries with adult children; managing stress; navigating adolescence; and managing children's behavior. The seminars would be two to four hours in length. Your thoughts and ideas would be appreciated.

Through a generous contribution to the MSU College of Education Health & Human Development we were able to hold a support group facilitators' training in Great Falls in February. We had 19 participants and seven communities will receive funding to start new support groups in their areas. I do have funding for two to three more new groups if you are interested in expanding your efforts. Please contact me if this is of interest to you.

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Have a wonderful spring!

Sandy Bailey

The Benefits of Growing a Backyard Garden

-By Melody Dykstra, Graduate Assistant
Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project



The idea of planting a garden can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Even if you don't have big backyard—or any yard for that matter—you can still grow food. Consider container gardening if you have a sunny balcony or patio or an indoor herb garden on a windowsill. You'll be amazed at how many tomatoes or peppers can grow out of one pot. You could “garden-share” with a neighbor, splitting the work and the cost of seeds. Or find out if your city has a community garden, where you can tend to your very own plot.

- **Improve your health:** Eating fresh fruits and vegetables is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy. When you grow them in your backyard, the whole family is more likely to eat them. Their vitamin content is higher when vegetables are picked straight from the garden. Preparing soil and planting seeds is a great way for all of you to be active together. A pre-dinner trip to the garden to harvest some vegetables is a fantastic way to involve children in making healthy food choices. These visits can also provide a nice escape into the often peaceful and colorful world of your garden.
- **Save Money:** The cost of food has risen over the last several years and doesn't seem to be coming down. Growing your own fruits and vegetables can save you money all year long. Canning, freezing and storing your garden produce is a great way to make sure your family eats well during the winter and spends less at the grocery store. If you have surplus produce you can try taking it to a Farmer's Market or local grocery store to sell it. A packet of seeds can cost less than a dollar. If you buy heirloom, non-hybrid species, you can save the seeds from the best producers, dry them, and use them again next year.
- **Environmental:** Fifty years ago, 70 percent of food consumed in Montana was grown in Montana. Today it is less than 10 percent. Much of our food has to travel many miles to get to us using large amounts of energy in the process. The only energy consumed by eating food from your backyard is the energy it takes to walk to your garden and pick it! Composting is also a powerful way to reduce your impact on landfills. Plus it adds to the health of your garden soil!
- **Educational:** We know that one of the most powerful ways to learn is by “doing.” Gardening is full of wonderful opportunities for problem solving. Planning a place for plants that have different heights and widths is a challenge, but a great way to help them learn. Hands-on experience with planting, caring for and harvesting fruits and vegetables helps children understand the life cycle.

Whatever your motivation for taking the leap into backyard gardening, chances are good that you and your family will enjoy this new healthy hobby. Your wallet, the environment, your body, and your taste buds will thank you.

There are many resources for Montana gardeners, both new and experienced.

- Montana State Extension has many wonderful resources for home gardeners, including great information on composting, at <http://www.msuextension.org/yard.asp>
- 1,000 New Gardens is a Montana organization that helps gardeners connect with one another and share resources and expertise. Their website is <http://1000newgardens.ning.com/>
- The Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., founded in 1938, is a non-profit educational organization with members statewide. <http://www.mtfgc.org/>

April Spotlight Organization

MAFTI

Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration

-By Marty Smith, MAFTI Coordinator

Several years ago people across our state began hearing the cries of an invisible group of Montana children left behind by incarcerated parents. In 2006 the Montana Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents Group (BOR) was formed. This group was composed of state government agencies, non-profit agencies and private individuals who saw the need to begin addressing issues faced by the increasing number of Montana children who have at least one parent involved in the Criminal Justice System.

In 2008 The Parenting Place of Missoula (a non-profit agency actively involved with the BOR group) received a grant from the Montana Children's Trust Fund to develop a statewide Family Resource Center designed to strengthen families touched by incarceration. The BOR group has expanded its vision and is now operating as **The Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration (MAFTI)**. This group is dedicated to providing support and advocacy to families as they navigate through the Criminal Justice System. In support of the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents we have developed a "toolkit" designed to help adults talk with children about incarceration answering their questions and lessening their fears.

The publication titled *Family Members Behind Bars* is available through the Family Resource Center.

The Montana Children's Trust Fund Family Resource Center has a web site www.mafti.org, a warm line **1-800-520-2996** and a database of resources to provide information to family members and service providers throughout Montana. Families touched by incarceration face several barriers and our goal is to provide the needed services and support to strengthen these families.

When children are grieving the loss of a parent it is sometimes difficult for them to focus on anything else. They often struggle in the classroom, at home and with their friends. Children process grief in different ways resulting in behavioral changes ranging from withdrawal to aggression. MAFTI identifies programs that will offer these children support in the home, support in the school and an opportunity to correspond or even visit with their incarcerated parent, lessening the impact of separation. If you would like more information about MAFTI or would like to become actively involved in the group please contact marty@parentingplace.net.



Elderly Homeowners Tax Credit

Taxpayers who are 65 or older and have a household income of less than \$45,000 may be eligible for the elderly homeowner credit/renter credit. The credit refunds part or all of the property tax a homeowner pays directly or a renter pays indirectly that is more than a certain percentage of their household income. For a household with income between \$12,000 and \$45,000, this percentage is 5%. For households with lower incomes, the percentage is lower. The credit is limited to a maximum of \$1,000 per household. The credit phases out for households with income between \$35,000 and \$45,000.

This credit provides a subsidy for older taxpayers who own their own home and whose income is no longer proportional to the value of their home to stay in their home. For older taxpayers who rent, it subsidizes the rent they pay. In 2007, 16,000 elders filing for the tax credit received \$7,606,510.

For more information, contact the Department of Revenue toll-free at **1-866-859-2254**.

-Information courtesy of the Montana Department of Revenue, <http://revenue.mt.gov/revenue/>



MSU Exercise Program Improves Health and Strength

-By Lynn Paul, Ed.D., R.D.
Food & Nutrition FCS Agent, MSU Extension

The **Strong Women™** program is designed for women to increase muscle strength by strength training for 2-3 sessions per week. These trainings are provided by Montana Extension agents certified to teach this popular program. Women begin to show muscle decline beginning at age 30. If women do not specifically strength train past this age, this decline continues resulting in poor physical strength and other health problems such as loss of balance, osteoporosis, and even poorer memory.

MSU Extension has been offering *Strong Women* throughout the state with women reporting extraordinary results. Research from MSU Extension has documented a variety of benefits from this program. All participants increased the weight they can lift; however, participants are more interested in what that strength lets them do.

Deb Archer from Power River County thought running a ranch would keep a woman strong, but says she couldn't have gotten through lambing and calving if she hadn't participated in a Montana State University Extension strength-training program first. "In previous years, I was sore all the time while lambing and calving, but after I did all of the class it really made a difference for me. My strength, it was amazing to me. I was able to pick up a calf and I've never been able to do that. I didn't even think about it. I just picked up the calf and put it in the barn."

Beside increased strength, the *Strong Women* program has helped women relieve pain and improve their sleep, flexibility, endurance, confidence and balance.

MSU Fergus County Extension Agent Denise Seilstad said the program has helped her, too. Seilstad broke her neck six years ago. "Now that I'm leading *Strong Women*, I don't have to use heat on my neck at night anymore," Seilstad said. "This is the one Extension program we do that we (the agents) benefit from too, because we are there doing it with the students."

Jean Matthews, a participant in Yellowstone County's class, said she had a mastectomy followed by radiation and chemotherapy in 2006. After that, she said she had little strength or flexibility in her left arm -- until she took the *Strong Women* program led by the county's MSU Extension Agent, Bernice Mason.

Participants also felt more comfortable being active, with less aches and pains. Many increased their exercise and considered they were getting as much physical activity as needed. One of the best benefits felt was they were in good health!

To find out if a program will be starting near you, contact or visit your local MSU Extension office. A list of scheduled locations is available as an Acrobat Reader file on the MSU Extension website at:

<http://www.msuextension.org/nutrition/Strong%20women.html>

To listen to Lynn Paul, MSU Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist discussing the benefits of the program, go to: <http://www.montanafamilies.info/radio.html> and look for "Strength Training for Women" link toward the bottom of the page.

To read more about how Montana women benefited from this program, go to:

<http://www.montana.edu/cpa/news/nwview.php?article=7249>

GARDEN POTATO SALAD

Low-fat cottage cheese is the secret to the dressing in this delicious low fat and saturated fat, low cholesterol, low sodium mixture of vegetables and herbs.

3 lb (about 6 large) potatoes, boiled in jackets, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes

- 1 C chopped celery
- 1/2 C sliced green onion
- 2 Tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 C low-fat cottage cheese
- 3/4 C skim milk
- 3 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp celery seed
- 1/2 tsp dill weed
- 1/2 tsp dry mustard
- 1/2 tsp white pepper

1. In a large bowl, place potatoes, celery, green onion, and parsley.
2. Meanwhile, in a blender or food processor, blend cottage cheese, milk, lemon juice, vinegar, celery seed, dill weed, dry mustard, and white pepper until smooth. Chill for 1 hour.
3. Pour chilled cottage cheese mixture over vegetables; mix well. Chill at least 30 minutes before serving.

Yield: 10 servings
Serving Size: 1 cup

Each serving provides:
Calories: 151
Total fat: less than 1 g
Saturated fat: less than 1 g
Cholesterol: 2 mg
Sodium: 118 mg



**Treat Your Family to
These Mouth-Watering
and Heart-Healthy
Favorites!**

*-Recipes courtesy of National Agricultural Library,
Agricultural Research Service,
U.S. Department of Agriculture;
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/syah/>*

HOMEMADE TURKEY SOUP

To make this popular soup lower in saturated fat, prepare it ahead of time to cool and skim off the fat that rises to the top.

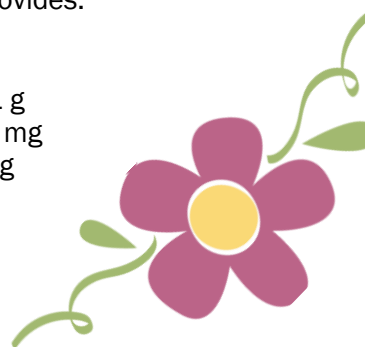
6 lb turkey breast. It should have some meat (at least 2 cups) remaining on it to make a good, rich soup.

- 2 medium onions
- 3 stalks of celery
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp dried rosemary
- 1/2 tsp dried sage
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 tsp dried marjoram
- 1/2 tsp dried tarragon
- 1/2 tsp salt
- to taste, black pepper
- 1/2 lb Italian pastina or pasta

1. Place turkey breast in a large 6-quart pot. Cover with water, at least 3/4 full.
2. Peel onions, cut in large pieces, and add to pot. Wash celery stalks, slice, and add to pot also.
3. Simmer covered for about 2-1/2 hours.
4. Remove carcass from pot. Divide soup into smaller, shallower containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
5. After cooling, skim off fat.
6. While soup is cooling, remove remaining meat from turkey carcass. Cut into pieces.
7. Add turkey meat to skimmed soup along with herbs and spices.
8. Bring to a boil and add pastina. Continue cooking on low boil for about 20 minutes until pastina is done. Serve at once or refrigerate for later reheating.

Yield: About 4 quarts of soup (16 servings)
Serving Size: 1 cup

Each serving provides:
Calories: 226
Total fat: 5 g
Saturated fat: 1 g
Cholesterol: 93 mg
Sodium: 217 mg



UPDATE & REMINDER: Close Relative Registry

-By Shirley Brown, Administrator, DPHHS Child and Family Services Division

ED NOTE: The December, 2009 GRG newsletter featured an article about the recent implementation of the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Close Relative Registry. (Access the original article at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/NEW%202009%20documents/2009%20Dec%20Newsletter.pdf>) This Registry is an important development in kinship care and the following update and reminder is offered.

The Registry was implemented effective October 1, 2009, so close relatives (defined as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and adult siblings) of a child who may be placed in foster care can register with the Child and Family Services Division. The close relative can then be considered as a placement for the child if the child is placed in foster care.

To register, close relatives may call (toll-free) **866-820-5437(KIDS)**. When registering, the close relative must provide the name of the child and the child's parent(s), the contact information for the child and the child's parent(s), the name of the relative registering, and any of the relatives whose names may appear in the registry.

As of March 2, 2010, a total of 42 relatives have been registered for 58 different children. The Registry includes groups of up to 4 children who have one relative registered for them and other groups of 1 or 2 who have 2 different relatives registered for possible placement. The most relatives registered for any child is two separate relatives, for example, grandparents and a maternal aunt.

The placement of a child outside his/her birth home because of abuse or neglect is a traumatic event in that child's life. The degree of trauma the child experiences can be decreased if the child can be placed with a known, loving relative. Therefore, relatives are encouraged to call and register if he or she believes his or her grandchild, niece, nephew, or minor sibling may be placed in foster care.

Remember These Great Resources...

Get Your Fact Sheets!

State fact sheets are available for grandparents and other relatives raising children.

www.grandfactsheets.org

Get Your Back Issues!

Be sure to check out all the GRG Newsletter back issues.

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

Get Your MontGuides!

There are many helpful MSU Extension MontGuides available to you. Topics include parenting, financial planning, retirement and many more.

<http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/montguides.html>



Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana

Western Region

Flathead County

The Nurturing Center, Inc.
Kalispell
(406) 257-1414

Lake County

Nori Pearce
Ronan
(406) 676-4271

Lewis & Clark County

Dorothy Dilman
Helena
(406) 442-0938
(406) 439-5676 (cell)

Missoula County

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

Ravalli County

Brenda Fisher
Family Services
Hamilton
(406) 363-1961 ext. 107

Allison Dunne
WORD—Local Living Family
Center
Florence
(406) 273-0142

Central Region

Cascade County

Jona McNamee
Great Falls
(406) 454-6980
Mariellen Ritts
(406) 453-3554

Fergus County

Denise Seilstad
Lewistown
(406) 535-3919

Gallatin County

MSU Extension Family &
Human Development
Bozeman
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Glacier County

Carrie Jackson/
Connie Bremner
Eagle Shield Center
Browning
(406) 338-7257

Hill County

Rocky Boy Reservation
Stone Child College
Box Elder
Mary St. Pierre
(406) 395-4875

Phillips/Blaine Counties

Fort Belknap Reservation
Paula Enkerud
Harlem
(406) 353-2656

Central Region, cont...

Stillwater County

Lisa Terry
Columbus
(406) 322-8035

Teton County

Jane Wolery
Choteau
(406) 466-2491

Eastern Region

Dawson County

Pete Bruno
Parents Resource Center
Glendive
(406) 377-7515

Roosevelt County

Ardis Oelkers
Culbertson
(406) 787-5312

Rosebud County

Jennifer Anderson
Forsyth
(406) 346-7320

Yellowstone County

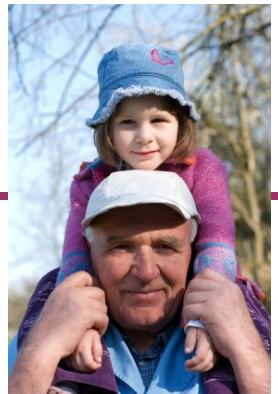
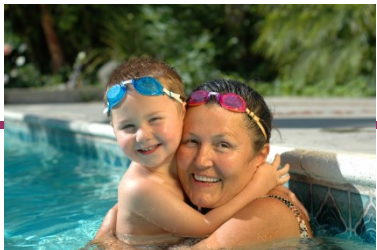
Bernie Mason
Billings
(406) 256-2828

Department of Health & Human Development
316 Herrick Hall
P.O. Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

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**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*



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Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

<http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/index.htm>
grg@montana.edu
(406) 994-3395