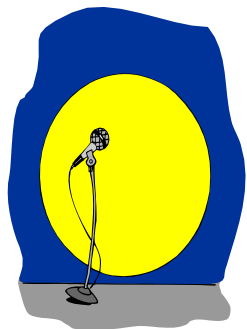


The GRG :

A Newsletter for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Montana State University Extension Service: Family and Human Development



Grandparent Spotlight

Lin and Peg Duffin live in the small community of Chester, MT. Lin and Peg have been raising their grandson, Bill, since he was 2 1/2 years old. Bill is now in the 8th grade, and loves football, basketball and his video games.

Lin and Peg visited their grandson when he was a year old, and they didn't feel that the conditions he was being raised in were appropriate. They worked hard for nearly a year, and finally were granted joint custody of Bill with their son, Bill's father. Bill has not heard from his mother in 8-9 years, but his father contacts him every couple of weeks.

Bill had some words of wisdom for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. "Treat them like they are your own. Don't underestimate what they understand. When you raise your grandchildren, you find out all of the things you didn't know as a parent, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Kids are smarter and more resilient than you think." Lin also said that grandparents raising grandchildren should do what parents do, and get away. "There is little freedom and little space, grandparents need time away too." Lin and Peg, have a daughter who cares for Bill when they want to take a vacation.

Another piece of advice that Lin had for grandparents in similar situations was "don't bad mouth the parents, tell it like it is, but don't bad mouth them." Bill knows why his grandparents are raising him, and Lin and Peg have been straightforward with him from the beginning.

Lin commented about how each grandparent experience is different, and they have been lucky not to have any parental interference which makes things much easier on them as well as Bill. Lin says, "Bill is not nearly as expensive as he used to be, we just buy shoes now, a lot of shoes." Lin was very positive about their family experience and raising their grandson. "We lack nothing because we have him, we don't miss anything. We don't regret it."

Visit the GRG Website & Read the New Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Montguide in April

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren website is still under construction, but there are links to Montguides that might be of interest to grandparents, and eventually all issues of the GRG Newsletter will be on line.

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

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Montguide will be available in April. If you are interested in reading this Montguide, you can access it online at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/indexhomehealthfamily.html>, or you can contact your local County Extension office for a free copy.

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Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Groups in Communities Throughout Montana



Grandparents raising grandchildren is becoming a common occurrence in Montana communities.

Many grandparents feel that they are alone in their efforts, and that no one understands what they are going through.

If you are a grandparent, or even a great-grandparent raising a grandchild in Montana you are NOT alone. Listed to the right are the contact names for support groups across Montana. If you are looking for ideas, support, and peers who are going through similar situations, this may be a place to find support, comfort, and maybe even a few smiles.

If you would like to learn more about support groups, please contact the individuals listed to the right. They can provide you with details about the group, how often they meet and what a typical meeting looks like.

All support groups are different in size, as well as what they discuss. Some are more informal, while others offer resources and educational information at each meeting.

If you feel as though you could benefit from having someone to talk to, and would like the opportunity to meet people who are in similar situations, then please don't hesitate to contact a support group leader today.

No support group in your area? If this is the case, please call us at (406) 994-3395 and we will try to help you get on started in your community. If you are aware of a support group that is not listed, please call the number above.

Billings:

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

Bozeman:

Jeannine Sonnier
Parent Liaison
2435 Annie St.
Bozeman, MT 59718
587-3840

Judy Morrill
Bozeman Senior Center
807 N. Tracy
Bozeman, MT 59715
586-2421

Browning:

Connie Bremner
Eagle Shield Center
PO Box 76
Browning, MT 59417

Charlo:

Jeri Paulk
110 West Main St.
Suite 5
Polson, MT 59860
675-3242

Great Falls:

Claire Del Guerra
1807 Third St. NW
Great Falls, MT 59404-1922
454-6980

Helena:

Jeannette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601

Kalispell:

Melody Domphe
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
756-1414

Missoula:

Miriam Morgan
Casey Family Programs
2510 S 7th West
Missoula, MT 59801
406-543-3632 X218

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Needed

MSU Extension Family and Human Development is currently seeking grandparents who are raising grandchildren (GRG) in Montana to be a part of a study to examine how parenting a second time around affects grandparents and how to best provide support.

To participate, you will be asked to fill out two surveys about your experiences as a grandparent. After four months you will be asked to participate in an interview which will cover some additional questions about your grand-parenting experience.

MSU is seeking any grandparent who helps raise a grandchild across the state of Montana. We need to have grandparents who are attending support groups as well as those who are not in a support group.

Grandparents will receive a \$20 stipend as a thank you for your time and participation in this study.

If you would like to be a part of the GRG study, or if you have questions, please contact Annie Conway at (406) 994-3395, via e-mail at: aconway@montana.edu, or send a letter to the address on the back of this newsletter.



Teach Your Grandchildren Ways to Celebrate Earth Day Every Day

The 34th celebration of Earth Day will be observed on April 22, 2004. Earth day was officially recognized and celebrated in San Francisco and across the United States 1970. The "father" of Earth Day, Gaylord Nelson, wanted a national day of observance of environmental problems.

Although Earth Day has seemingly lost some of its popularity in recent years, the concepts behind Earth Day are important such as energy conservation, recycling, and reducing noise and air pollution. There are many ways that you and your grandchild can participate in observing Earth Day on April 22, and in the future:

Turn off lights when you are not using them, walk to the store, work, or school if it isn't too far, recycle aluminum, newspapers, and glass, pick up litter around your home or in a park nearby, be conscientious about throwing litter away in garbage cans, plant a tree in your yard, use non aerosol products, turn water off when you are brushing your teeth.

As you can see there are many simple ways for you and your grandchild to help keep the environment clean. If each of us does our part to keep our environment clean, even if it is something small, it will make a difference.

Here is an example of how long some of the more common household items last in a land fill.

glass bottle — 1 million years
 aluminum can — 80-100 years
 plastic bag — 10-20 years
 newspaper — 6 months
 banana peel — 2-5 weeks





Tips for Reading With Children

- ◆ **Read the book yourself. Knowing the story will help you know what comes next.**
Ask your child questions about the story as you read, ask what might happen next.
- ◆ **Choose a regular story time. Quiet times are great!**
Try reading together after dinner or before bed time. Try to keep the same reading time each day.
- ◆ **Find a cozy, quiet place to read the story. Call it your reading spot.**
Cuddle on the couch together or ask your child to sit on your lap. Reading aloud is a great way to spend quality time with your child.
- ◆ **Make sure the children can see the pictures. Hold the book up or lay it in your lap.**
Talk about the pictures or characters in the book. Read with expression in your voice! If the story is scary, read with a spooky voice. Give each character his or her own voice. This may make reading more interactive and fun.
- ◆ **Keep the story time short enough to leave them wanting more later.**
When your child asks for more, allow them to choose the story. If your child picks the same story over and over, don't worry, it means that they are becoming more familiar with language.
- ◆ **Look for ways during the day to add messages in the story.**
Watch for opportunities to relate everyday experiences to what your child has read.
- ◆ **Continue to read aloud together once your child can read alone.**
Keep the fun going by taking turns. The more people your child sees and hears reading aloud, the more they will be turned on to books and learning.

www.unce.unr.edu

“The Montana Medical Care Savings Account Act allows Montanans to save money for medical expenses and long-term health care”

Montana Medical Care Savings Accounts

The Montana Medical Care Savings Account Act allows Montanans to save money for medical expenses and long-term health care. The law permits a Montana resident to establish a medical care savings account (MSA) that can reduce Montana state income taxes.

An MSA must be separate from other checking and savings accounts. In other words, only the account holder can have access to the funds. The money that is placed in an MSA is not subject to Montana income taxation if left in the account or used for medical expenses for the account holder or his/her dependents. If an account holder gets through the year without needing to use any of the money in the MSA, it remains in the account and earns tax-free interest.

A Montana resident taxpayer can contribute any amount into an MSA. However, the **maximum** amount that can be used to reduce Montana taxable income is limited to \$3,000 annually for each taxpayer. As long as the money is left in the MSA (or withdrawn for eligible medical expenses), it is not subject to income taxation at the state level. However, the amount is subject to taxation at the federal level.

For more information on Montana Medical Care Savings Accounts including eligible medical care expenses, eligible dependents, administration of accounts, withdrawals from the account, and penalties, please visit the MSU Extension web page and the Montana Medical Care Savings Account Montguide. <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt9817.html>



Teaching Children To Save Money



On March 9th, the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project, and MSU Extension provided an informational session for grandparents and grandparent support group leaders.

Marsha Goetting, Family Finance Specialist with MSU Extension, presented creative ways to teach children the tools and techniques they will need to save money in the future. This session was

held to prepare grandparents for Teach Children to Save Day on April 22, 2004. The presentation used the Money on the Bookshelf curriculum from the state of Nevada Extension. Ten participants ranging from grandparents to representatives from community agencies were in attendance.

The curriculum makes use of several children's books to teach children important ideas such as: allocating resources, decision making, goal setting, positive interactions, prioritizing, problem solving, recognizing resources, recognizing success and saving.

Resources handed out to the participants, as well as the list of books that the curriculum draws from can be downloaded by accessing the following website:

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/Western/SubWebs/MoneyOnTheBookshelf/Index.htm>

Gloria Old Person and her grandson Nolan Old Person attended Tools & Techniques for Helping Children Save Money in Missoula on March 9th.

Just 15 Minutes A Day: Positive Effects of Reading with Children

Doing well in school depends on being able to read, write, talk and listen. Reading with children helps them:

- ◆ Be better readers
- ◆ Do better in school
- ◆ Like reading
- ◆ Be better writers
- ◆ Have stronger imaginations
- ◆ Be better listeners
- ◆ Have longer attention spans
- ◆ Be better spellers
- ◆ Not be held back
- ◆ Reading together:
 - ◆ Strengthens the bond between parents and children
 - ◆ Creates feelings of love
- ◆ Lets children know they are important
- ◆ Gives time together
- ◆ Gives attention
- ◆ Creates fun
- ◆ Better Understanding of Stories Help Children:
 - ◆ Learn about themselves
 - ◆ Understand feelings
 - ◆ Accept others
 - ◆ Become interested in new subjects
 - ◆ Understand life
 - ◆ Build dreams





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PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

Phone: 406.994.3395
Fax: 406.994.2013
Email: aconway@montana.edu
<http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/>

The Montana State University Extension Service is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and educational outreach provider.

Ideas Corner: Earth Day Promise Tree



The following activity is designed to help kids understand the concept of Earth Day and to encourage them to take an active role in keeping their environment clean.

Using construction paper, have them make a tree trunk with branches. Have them design leaves that they can paste on the tree.

Talk with them about Earth Day and the ways that they can save energy or help clean up their environment. Some examples might be: I will ride my bike to school, I will pick up trash when I walk around my neighborhood, I will plant a tree every year, I will recycle newspapers, I will print

homework on both sides of the paper to reduce paper waste, I will turn the lights off when I am not in the room.

Have them write their promises on the leaves, and then paste them onto the tree that they created. Place the promise tree in a place where everyone can see it .

There are many ways for kids of all ages to contribute to keeping the Earth clean. Kids have great energy, and they might be interested in starting a recycling club in their neighborhood. This activity would be a great way to teach them organizational skills, communication, the importance of recycling, and possibly money management.

