



## A Look At Grandparents Raising Grandchildren In Montana

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Many of you participated in the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Project's study over the course of this past year. We would like to take this opportunity to share some of the results of that study. Thank you to all of the grandparents that completed surveys and made time to speak with us about your life experiences. Although this information reflects only those who participated in the study, they give a picture of GRGs across Montana.

### Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Characteristics

- The average age of GRG is 59.9 years.
- 37% of GRGs reported that they were Native American, and 63% reported being White.
- 60.4% of GRGs are married, 14% are divorced/separated, and 6% are widowed/widowers.
- 35.4% of GRGs report have attended high school or earning a high school diploma, while 64.7% report having attended some college or having received a degree.
- Grandparents have been caring for their grandchildren for an average of 6.9 years.
- On average, grandparents provide primary care for 2 children.
- 43.8% of grandparents report an annual household income below \$20,000, 48% report an income between \$20,000 and \$50,000, and 8.4% report incomes above \$50,000.
- Most grandparents told us that they became the caregivers of their grandchildren for a variety of reasons. The ones reported most frequently include drugs/alcohol, economic/job situation, divorce, parental incarceration, parental death, mental illness or a combination of reasons.

### **What will be done with this information?**

We are trying to get the word out that grandparents who raise their grandchildren deserve more attention and services than they are currently offered. We are using the information when we speak to groups and service providers across the state.

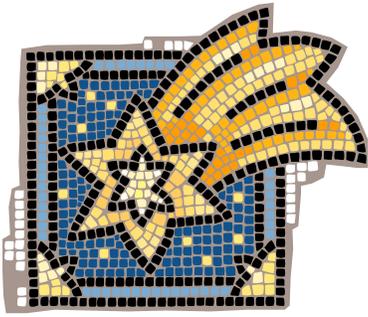
We are also publishing news articles and academic articles to educate the general public and professionals about the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren. The information also helps as we expand the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project.

If you would like to read the full copy of Annie Conway's Master's Thesis, please visit [http://www.montana.edu/etd/available/conway\\_1204.html](http://www.montana.edu/etd/available/conway_1204.html). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office at the number or addresses listed above.

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# Meteor Shower in August

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## What are meteor showers?

“An increase in the number of meteors at a particular time of year is called a meteor shower.

Comets shed the debris that becomes most meteor showers. As comets orbit the Sun, they shed an icy, dusty debris stream along the comet's orbit. If Earth travels through this stream, we will see a meteor shower. Depending on where Earth and the stream meet, meteors appear to fall from a particular place in the sky, maybe within the neighborhood of a constellation.

Meteor showers are named by the constellation from which meteors appear to fall, a spot in the sky astronomers call the radiant. For instance, the radiant for the Leonid meteor shower is located in the constellation Leo. The Perseid meteor shower is so named because meteors appear to fall from a point in the constellation Perseus. In August, there will be a Perseid meteor shower that will peak around August 12th.

## What are shooting stars?

"Shooting stars" and "falling stars" are both names that people have used for many hundreds of years to describe meteors -- intense streaks of light across the night sky caused by small bits of interplanetary rock and debris called meteoroids crashing and burning high in Earth's upper atmosphere. Traveling at thousands of miles an hour, meteoroids quickly ignite in searing friction of the atmosphere, 30 to 80 miles above the ground. Almost all are destroyed in this process; the rare few that survive and hit the ground are known as meteorites.

When a meteor appears, it seems to "shoot" quickly across the sky, and its small size and intense brightness might make you think it is a star. If you're lucky enough to spot a meteorite (a meteor that makes it all the way to the ground), and see where it hits, it's easy to think you just saw a star "fall."

## How can I best view a meteor shower?

If you live near a brightly lit city, drive away from the glow of city lights and toward the constellation from which the meteors will appear to radiate. After you've escaped the city glow, find a dark, secluded spot where oncoming car headlights will not periodically ruin your sensitive night vision. Look for state or city parks or other safe, dark sites. Once you have settled at your observing spot, lay back or position yourself so the horizon appears at the edge of your peripheral vision, with the stars and sky filling your field of view. Meteors will instantly grab your attention as they streak by.

Perseid meteors will appear to "rain" into the atmosphere from the constellation Perseus, which rises in the northeast around 11 p.m. in mid-August.

## What should I pack for meteor watching?

Treat meteor watching like you would the 4th of July fireworks. Pack comfortable chairs, bug spray, food and drinks, blankets, plus a red-filtered flashlight for reading maps and charts without ruining your night vision. Binoculars are not necessary. Your eyes will do just fine.”

*Adapted from <http://stardate.org/nightsky/meteors/>*



# What Families Can Do to Keep Children Reading During the Summer

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Summer is a time when most kids play outside from dusk 'till dawn and can't be bothered to sit down with a good book. Reading is an extremely important tool, and one that should not be forgotten in the months between school. Here are some ways to keep kids reading through the summer.

## **Combine activities with books.**

“Summer leaves lots of time for kids to enjoy fun activities such as going to the park, seeing a movie, or going to the beach. Why not also encourage them to read a book about the activity? If you're going to a baseball game, suggest your child read a book about his or her favorite player beforehand. In the car or over a hot dog, you'll have lots of time to talk about the book and the game.

## **Visit the library.**

If your child doesn't have a library card, summer is a great time to sign up. In addition to a wide selection of books to borrow, many libraries have fun, child-friendly summer reading programs. Storybooks aren't the only thing that kids can read for fun. Be sure to have newspapers, magazines, and informational material on hand that might spark the interest of a young reader.

## **Lead by example.**

Read the newspaper at breakfast, pick up a magazine at the doctor's office, and stuff a paperback in your beach bag. If kids see the adults around them reading often, they will understand that literature can be a fun and important part of their summer days. Talking with your kids about what you have read also lets them know that reading is an important part of your life.

## **Help kids find time to read.**

Summer camp, music lessons, baseball games, and videos are all fun things kids like to do during the summer. However, by the end of the day, children may be too tired to pick up a book. When planning summer activities with children, remember to leave some time in their schedules for reading. Some convenient times may be before bedtime or over breakfast.

## **Relax the rules for summer.**

During the school year, children have busy schedules and often have required reading for classes. Summer is a time when children can read what, when, and how they please. Don't set daily minute requirements or determine the number of pages they should read. Instead, make sure they pick up books for fun and help find ways for them to choose to read on their own. You may even want to make bedtime a little bit later if you find that your child can't put down a book.

## **Use books to break the boredom.**

Without the regular school regimen, adults and kids need more activities to fill the hours. Books that teach kids how to make or do something are a great way to get kids reading and keep them occupied. Don't forget to take your kids' favorite reading series along on long road trips.

## **Read aloud with kids.**

Take your children to see a local storyteller or be one yourself. The summer months leave extra time for enthusiastic read-alouds with children no matter what their age. Don't forget to improvise different voices or wear a silly hat to make the story that much more interesting!”

Used with permission from Reading is Fundamental at <http://www.rif.org>

Author: Laura J. Colker, Ed. D.

## Walk In The Footsteps of Lewis & Clark

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Join AARP Idaho and AARP Montana to walk in the footprints of Lewis and Clark!

On September 10th, meet us at the Lolo Pass Visitor Center at 1:00 pm (Highway 12 at the Idaho/Montana border) for a historian guided walking tour. For more information call: 208-855-4004 or 406-457-4703.

Grandparents and grandchildren welcome!

## Tips To Stay Cool In August

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Summer often brings to mind lazy days at the beach, relaxing in hammocks, and visions of sipping lemonade in the cool shade. Here in Montana, you are more likely to find people sweltering in the heat, kids running through sprinklers to stay cool, and a lack of fans at every retail store. Heat related illnesses are a source of major concern each summer. Below are some tips to keep your house, and your self cool this summer.

**Keep your house cool.** Open windows and doors in the evening time (be sure to have screens in place to avoid those bugs and mosquitoes) to allow the cooler air inside. Close windows and shades in the early AM to keep the hot sunlight and air from heating up the house. Try to avoid using the stove, oven, and dryer.

**Keep your self cool.** The average person does not drink the recommended 8 glasses of water each day. You can easily become dehydrated in the heat, so keep water in the fridge to quench that thirst instead of soda pop. When you are outside, use sunscreen with a minimum of SPF 15. Be sure to get those sensitive areas such as nose, ears, lips, and even your toes! When outside, it is advisable to wear clothing that protects you from the sun. Loose fitting, light colored, and tightly woven clothing with the addition of a hat will keep you covered and cool when out in the sun.

### How to know if someone has heat exhaustion:

“Symptoms include: heavy sweating, paleness, nausea, muscle cramps, weakness, headache or fainting. What to do? Help the victim cool down. Get them indoors, into the shade—wherever the sun isn’t. Give them water to drink, and keep a close eye on them. Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke. If symptoms don’t go away or get worse, get medical help immediately.

### How to know if someone has heat stroke:

Symptoms include: high body temperature, ruddy skin with no perspiration, headache, rapid heartbeat, nausea, disorientation or unconsciousness. What to do? Get medical help immediately. Bring their body temperature down by moving them indoors and bathing them in cool water. If you can’t get them indoors, move them to the shade and spray them (gently!) with a garden hose. “

Adapted from [http://www.medstar911.com/publicSafetyTips/staying\\_cool\\_this\\_summer.htm](http://www.medstar911.com/publicSafetyTips/staying_cool_this_summer.htm)



# Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

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## Billings:

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

The support group will be meeting the first Monday of the month. There is an educational portion of the meeting and a time to share and discuss special concerns.

## Bozeman:

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

This support group meets once per semester for an hour and a half. Child care is provided.

## Judy Morrill

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

This group meets once a month at the Bozeman Senior Center for coffee and informal discussions.

## Browning:

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

This support group is located on the Blackfeet Reservation. The Native American Elder Family Caregiver Support Program offers Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Support group meetings once a month, usually on Tuesday from 10:00 to 12:00. They also have their meal site located at Eagle Shield Center; therefore after the meeting the grandparents enjoy a free luncheon.

## Butte:

**Jeff Jensen**  
**Butte 4C's**  
**101 E. Broadway**  
**Butte, MT 59701**  
**723-4019**  
**800-794-4061**  
**www.butte4-cs.org**

This support group meets every other Tuesday at 6:00 pm and childcare is provided by Americorps volunteers.

## Great Falls:

**Geri Laubnetz**  
**Partnership Project**  
**1101 7th Ave So.**  
**Great Falls, MT 59403**

The support group meets from 11:30-1 PM one Tuesday per month. Lunch is served, and grandparents share experiences, and have a brief educational, sharing session based on grandparent needs.

## Helena:

**Jeannette B. Mattfeldt**  
**562 Broadway**  
**Helena, MT 59601**

This group meets the 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month at 6:30 in the State AARP office. This group provides educational, social, and informal meetings. They also try to incorporate a speaker once a month. This group is also open to anyone helping raise someone else's children.

## Joliet

**Merrylee Vukonich**  
**MSU Extension Agent**  
**Carbon County**  
**PO Box 230**  
**Joliet, MT 59041**  
**962-3522**

This support group is new and just starting up in Carbon County.

## Kalispell:

**Melody Domphe**  
**The Nurturing Center, Inc.**  
**146 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. W.**  
**Kalispell, MT 59901**  
**756-1414**

This group meets once a month, usually on the 3rd Friday and usually evening 7-9 pm. They have had a variety of speakers on Grief & Loss, Legal Issues, and Healthy Discipline.

## Missoula:

**Kathy Revello, MSU Extension**  
**Missoula County Agent**  
**Amy Westereng**  
**Families First Parenting Program**  
**815 E. Front St. Suite 3**  
**Missoula, MT 59802**

This support group meets the second Tuesday of each month, October-June, 6:30 – 8 pm. It is co-sponsored by MSU Extension.

## Poplar:

**Ardis Oelkers**  
**MSU Extension**  
**Culbertson, MT 59218**  
**787-5312**

This support group is just starting up, contact Ardis for more information.

## Rocky Boy Reservation:

**Evelyn Gopher**  
**Rocky Boy Elementary School**  
**Box Elder, MT**  
**395-4474 ext 229**

The support group meets at 4:45 pm 1-2 times per month. In March, Tribal Court will be giving another training session on child custody laws to grandparents in the support group. If you would like more information about the support group or this training session, please contact Evelyn Gopher.



## **GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN PROJECT**

316 Herrick Hall  
Bozeman, MT 59715

Phone: (406) 994-3395  
Fax: (406) 994-2013  
Email: [aconway@montana.edu](mailto:aconway@montana.edu)

### **We're on the Web!**

[http://www.montana.edu/  
wwwhd/grg/index.htm](http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/index.htm)

## **New Resources For Grandparents**

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Today, there are several agencies that are working on behalf of grandparents raising grandchildren across the nation. Many of these agencies have websites that are easy to access once online. For those of you who may not have access to the internet, or may not be comfortable with computers, several resources are available for free through the mail. The Children's Defense Fund offers the following publications for grandparents raising grandchildren:

*Healthy Ties: The Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guide to Health Insurance for Children.*

*The Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities.*

*The Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guide to Food and Nutrition Programs for Children.*

All publications are available online at [www.childrensdefensefund.org](http://www.childrensdefensefund.org), or you can write to Children's Defense Fund, 25 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

The Brookdale Foundation also has several publications as well. For a copy of *Relatives Raising Children: A Guide to Finding Help and Hope*, you can visit [www.brookdalefoundation.org](http://www.brookdalefoundation.org), or write to

The Brookdale Foundation Group, 950 Third Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10022,  
or call 212-308-7355.