

# GRG NEWSLETTER



## Montana's 1st GRG Conference a Success

Montana's first Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference was a success thanks to all the speakers, grandparents, and Montana professionals who came to support and learn from each other. The topics covered at the conferences included meth addiction, legal and financial issues, nutrition, resources from Department of Health and Human Services, and transitioning into parenting for the second time. We were also visited by some Montana policy-makers who expressed their interest in grandfamily issues.

Both conferences were well-attended. A total of approximately 120 grandparents and professionals were at the conferences. We know there are a lot of people out there who could not attend, but they will get another chance at the *Second Annual Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference* in 2007.

We received several suggestions for future topics to be covered; if there are other topics that you would like to see addressed at the next conference, please contact the Project and let us know.

Thank you to all who attended and openly shared your stories with us. We could not have made the conferences a success without the grandparents, some who traveled long distances to participate in this historic event.

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## ***Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project***

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS



## **Are you looking for an outdoor activity for you and your grandkids?**

AARP will be hosting four hiking events this summer that combine education with exercise. Costs for the park entrance (Big Hole) and the guided hikes will be picked up by AARP. *Please register for the hikes at least a couple of days in advance.* For more information, contact Al Ward at 457- 4703. The dates and locations are as follows:

- July 29**                      **Big Hole Battlefield National Park**                      **10 a.m.—1 p.m.**  
The Nez Perce Camp Trail, 1.2 miles round trip, to the site where the Nez Perce were camped and attacked by the United States Army soldiers and civilian volunteers on the night of August 9, 1887. Followed by the Siege Trail, 1 mile round trip.
- August 9**                      **Ulm Pishkun Coups State Park**                      **10 a.m.—2 p.m.**  
3 mile guided hike including a half hour presentation on the Buffalo Jump itself and how it was used by the Indians.
- August 12**                      **Chief Plenty Coups State Park**                      **10 a.m.—2 p.m.**  
Tyler Medicine Horse will take the group on a 3/4 mile hike of the grounds including Chief Plenty Coups' House, his medicine spring and a sweat lodge that is still being used by tribal members. There will be a light lunch served. The final hour will be a presentation at the house which will include native flute music.
- September 7**                      **Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park**                      **10 a.m.—3 p.m.**  
2 mile guided hike of the lower part of the park. This is a rather basic hike and shouldn't be a problem for most people. There is also a 3/4 mile hike at the top near the upper visitor center that will be available to hike. Finally, there is an other, much longer and steeper hike that is available to more hearty individuals.

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## Do you know an outstanding volunteer in your community?

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AARP is accepting nominations for the Andrus Award for Community Service. AARP was founded in 1958 by Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus. Today, the AARP Andrus Award for Community Service, established in her name, recognizes outstanding AARP volunteers and members who are making a powerful difference in their communities in ways that support AARP's mission, vision and strategic direction and that inspire others to volunteer. The award was created in 2002 and each year honors one individual from each state as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Nominees must be current AARP volunteers or AARP members; or must have been AARP volunteers or members within the time period defined for each year's award. Couples or partners who performed service together are eligible; however teams are not eligible. Nominations are due by *July 15th*. Contact Al Ward for a nomination form at 457- 4703.



## Legislative Update: MT Legislative Committee Drafts Bills for Grandfamilies

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Grandfamilies are coming into the policy spotlight both locally and nationally. The Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee is currently working on legislation geared towards helping grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. There are three bills being drafted; the first bill will give grandparents the ability to enroll their grandchildren in school. The second bill will give grandparents the right to medical consent over their grandchildren. The third bill is cutting-edge in giving grandparents rights over their grandchildren.

Several states have already passed relative-headed household legislation; 24 states have Medical Consent legislation, 11 states have Education Consent Legislation, and 3 states have De Facto Custodianship legislation. Montana's policymakers are behind grandfamilies and are working on solutions to your concerns.

The policymakers need to hear from you, the grandparents, to learn more about your needs. "Contact your local legislators and let us know what you need. That's why we are here." said Senator Trudi Schmidt of Great Falls who made a surprise visit to the Great Falls conference.

"Grandparents are doing a great job and I have the utmost respect them for stepping up and taking care of their grandchildren", said Bozeman Representative Bill Warden. Sen. Schmidt and Rep. Warden both serve on the Children, Families, Health & Human Services Committee of the Montana Legislature and are concerned for the safety of Montana's children and the rights of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

For more information and the latest news on grandfamilies across the country, visit the AARP Grandparent Information Center website at [www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/](http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/) or visit Generations United's website at [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org).

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## Parenting Adolescents

*By: Aimee Kissel*

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As any parent of an adolescent will testify, teenagers can be a great source of frustration as well as a great source of joy and pride. Finding a balance between the two and bringing out the best in your adolescent is one of the biggest challenges in parenting. As a child grows older, they yearn for more independence and feel an increasing need to feel powerful and in control. Helping your teen make good decisions can be one of the most valuable tools you can give them.

Maureen McInnis from Families in Transition recently spoke about parenting adolescents at the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference. Maureen spoke about the need to create a predictable and consistent environment for your child so that trust and attachment can follow. Children need to feel safe and attached to their caregiver(s) before they can move on to the developmental landmarks that eventually lead to a healthy functioning adult. The child must also feel accepted for the circle of trust and attachment to continue and grow.

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# Parenting Adolescents Continued

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Discovering patterns that develop between you and your adolescent is a helpful way to understand how to lessen the battles between you. A hand-out provided by Maureen from Redirecting Children's Behavior asks questions that may shed some light on how negative patterns may be broken. Take a moment to think over the following questions and write down your answers to mull over next time the battles begin.

- 1) What are our fights usually about?
- 2) What is the pattern? (Consider when the fights start, are there other people around, is it usually at a certain time of day, etc.)
- 3) How do I usually end the conflicts?
- 4) How do I usually feel in the end?
- 5) How do my (grand) children usually feel in the end?
- 6) What do I do to make it not work?
- 7) What do I want my (grand) children to feel in the end?
- 8) What might be my hidden agenda (to be right, to be a better parent than my spouse, etc.)?
- 9) What will I do to break the pattern?

You can't change your (grand) children or your spouse, but you can change you! Knowing the patterns of behavior that we all fall into can help us to break free and realize that a subtle change may be all that is needed to break the spell.

Obviously, one quick article cannot fully prepare anyone for the challenges and joys of raising an adolescent, but luckily there are many more resources available to help you along the way. The GRG web-site has many such resources listed through the extension library. These videos and DVD's are available through your local extension agent. Browse on-line through the video titles to see what will best suit your needs. MontGuides, Extension publications, are available on a myriad of subjects. For a list of MontGuides visit <http://www.montana.edu/publications/>. If you don't have access to the internet, just give us a call at the GRG project and we would be happy to mail some information to you.

Some of the towns in Montana also have non-profit organizations dedicated to helping caregivers navigate the hurdles of parenting. For example, Bozeman has an Adolescent Resource Center (586-5908) that offers a free weekly skill building session for the caregivers of teens. PLUK (Parents, Let's Unite for Kids) is a wonderful online resource with information on special needs and disabilities. Visit their website at [www.pluk.org](http://www.pluk.org). If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out and realize you are not alone!

*Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

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## Billings:

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

## Bozeman:

Shayna Lemke  
316 A Herrick Hall  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
994-3395 or  
994-3833

## Browning:

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

## Butte:

Jeff Jensen  
Butte 4C's  
101 E. Broadway  
Butte, MT 59701  
723-4019  
800-794-4061  
jjensen@butte-4cs.com

## Colstrip:

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

## Dillon:

Jeff Jensen  
723-4019  
800-794-4061

## Glendive:

Carol Fuqua  
Parents Resource Center  
200 S. Kendrick  
Glendive, MT 59330  
377-7515

## Great Falls:

Geri Laubunetz  
Partnership Project  
1100 6th Avenue South  
Great Falls, MT 59403  
268-6762  
Claire Delguerra  
Cascade Extension  
454-6980

## Helena:

Jeannette B. Mattfeldt  
562 Broadway  
Helena, MT 59601  
442-8207

## Lewistown:

Denise Seilstadt  
712 W. Main  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
538-3919

## Kalispell:

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

## Missoula:

Kathy Revello, MSU Extension  
Missoula County Agent  
256-4208  
Barb Cowen  
721-7690

## Poplar and Wolf Point:

Ardis Oelkers  
MSU Extension  
Culbertson, MT 59218  
787-5312

## Rocky Boy Reservation/ Box Elder:

Peggy Riotar-Aquino  
395-4875

## Rocky Boy Reservation/ Agency

Evelyn Gopher  
395-4875

## Townsend:

Nancy Marks 2263710  
Jerri Paulk 266-4249

## A Special Mother

A foster mother is SPECIAL  
She has no greed

Only love for other children  
Trying to fill their needs.

She is always willing to take them in  
Hoping someday their hearts she will win.

She isn't fake or put on, Her love rings true.  
She has SPECIAL meanings, for things she might do.

She knows how to comfort & take away fears,  
Put laughter in children & take away tears.

She gives reassurance & wisdom of old  
And always keeps warm, these children so cold.

For those who are bitter, she gives understanding  
She's a guardian angel who's never demanding

She has a SPECIAL talent o flove for them all  
Teaching them to stand & not to ever fall.

Even thought someday they'll all go away  
She keeps giving her love all year around, everyday

She holds back her feelings her heart that's inside  
She smiles when they leave buy inside her heart does cry.

She really has nothing to soay as far as law books go  
She's only a foster mother with no authority, no feel-  
ings can she show.

In my eyes she's a joy, a woman so full of love  
And I know she'll be a SAINT when GOD takes her  
up above.