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GRG FOCAL POINT Sharing GRG Journeys

By Kelly Moore , Missoula County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

John Bennett is a grandparent raising a grandchild in Cascade County. Katrin Finch, the Extension Agent and facilitator for the GRG program in Great Falls, suggested that I contact John because he is a “great teller of stories” and he has the vision to understand their purpose. Like most GRGs, he is a very busy man but John graciously answered these questions .

1. How did you become a grandparent raising a grandchild?

My son had his daughter with a lady who was addicted to drugs and alcohol. He refused to marry her unless she gave them up; she chose the drugs. One evening he took her to dinner and she drank a massive amount of alcohol. He took her to his home (she was at that time a resident of the Great Falls Rescue Mission) and she became violent, almost dropping the baby— who was about a month and half old at the time. He had the police remove the lady and called me for advice. I told him to get the baby here as soon as possible. The rest is history.

2. What life experiences helped equip you for the job as grandparent caregiver?

I guess the best answer is raising her father. The first thing you learn is, “There ain’t no instruction manuals.” Take it one day at a time and keep your priorities in order. Just do it.

3. What are the rewards and challenges?

Rewards? What did we ever do to deserve a blessing like her? Every minute we spend together is a blessing. I never knew I could love someone like this!

Challenges? Learning all over again what it means to be a parent. There ain’t no manual for that, either.

4. When and how did you become a part of the Cascade County GRG?

Let me see now, first God created dirt...it must have been around 2012 or 13. It grows on you to the point you can’t seem to remember a time when you weren’t a part of it

5. What advice would you give a new GRG?

Just come in and be yourself. You are among friends. You have no idea how much they have experienced... just like you are. Any question you may have will be received with compassion and the wisdom only their experience can bring. Take advantage of the information and assistance the GRG staff can give you. Understand that you are not becoming part of a “program.” You are entering into a relationship that is much more than that. You will meet people and make friends that last all your life. And then someone new will come in and you will be a part of the process that makes them just as welcome as you have been.



New Law Will Help the Growing Number of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren



Because we're stronger together®

Press release announcing how the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren legislation help grandfamilies.



WASHINGTON, D.C. —July 11, 2018— On Monday, July 9, President Trump signed into The Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, first introduced by Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) in May 2017.

The senators, who serve as Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Senate Aging Committee, introduced the legislation following the committee's hearing on the struggles of grandparents raising grandchildren because of the opioid crisis. Congressional offices have credited Generations United's 2016 state of Grandfamilies report, *Raising the Children of the Opioid Epidemic*, as a key inspiration for the hearing. Our Deputy executive Director Jaia Peterson Lent and GrAND Voice member, Betty Hoxie, were among those who testified.

"Generations United applauds Sens. Collins and Casey for their leadership championing the Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, which is an important step toward supporting the approximately 2.6 million grandparents raising their grandchildren across the country," said **Donna Butts, executive director of generations united**. "This law will provide critical direction to better coordinate federal programs that support grandfamilies to help children thrive."

The new law will establish a Federal Advisory Council to support grandparents and other relatives raising children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will be the lead agency coordinating the work of the council. Its charge is to identify, promote, coordinate, and disseminate information about resources and best practices to help relative caregivers meet the health, educational, nutritional, and other needs of children in their care as well as maintain their own physical and mental health and emotional well-being. The council will also develop a process so the public can provide comments and recommendations. To document its progress, the council will issue a report to Congress in the first six months and again in two years on best practices, resources and other information for grandfamilies—as well as gaps in services to meet families' needs.

Generations United worked with Congressional leaders to give input and feedback on the bill as it moved through the legislative process and was successful at ensuring that the final version required that Council membership include a grandparent caregiver. Our national GrAND Voices Network, which includes relative caregivers in 42 states and 12 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, has reinforced the power and importance of hearing from the caregivers themselves.

Federal employees representing various agencies and departments whose work impacts grandfamilies will comprise the other members of the council. This includes agencies like Administration for Community Living, Administration for Children and Families, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Mental Health and Substance Use. Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) and Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), introduced the companion bill in the house. The Act received support from approximately 40 leading older adult child advocacy groups.



Food & Nutrition

Black Bean & Corn Salad



Yield: 3 Serv./serv. Size 1 C.

Ingredients: Salad

1/2 c. chopped onion
1/2 c. chopped red or green pepper
1 hot chili pepper (jalapeno or serrano) finely chopped
1 c. corn (fresh, frozen, or canned) drained
1 1/2 C. cooked black beans or 1 /15 oz. can drained

Dressing:

1/4 C. red wine vinegar or cider vinegar or lemon juice
1 tsp. chili powder
1 clove garlic finely chopped or 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 T. canola or vegetable oil

Directions:

Use caution when handling hot peppers; the oils can cause burning and skin irritation.

1. In mixing bowl, mix together onion, peppers, corn, and beans.
2. In a jar with tight fitting lid, add vinegar, chili powder, garlic, salt, pepper, and oil. Shake until evenly mixed.
3. Pour dressing over bean mixture and stir. Chill for 1 hr. serve cold.

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size 2 Tablespoons
(56g)

Amount per serving

Calories 80

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 2.5g	3%
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Saturated Fat 0g	0%
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Trans Fat 0g	
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Cholesterol 0mg	0%
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Sodium 160mg	7%
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Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
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Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
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Total Sugars 3g	
-----------------	--

Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
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Protein 4g	
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Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
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Calcium 49mg	4%
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Iron 1mg	6%
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Potassium 111mg	2%
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*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.





School and Homework Tips for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

**Cheri Burcham -Extension Educator, Family Life
University of Illinois Extension (Reprinted with permission)**

August is the time of year when parents are busy getting their children ready to go back to school. Registering, shopping for school supplies, and providing emotional support. But what about grandparents that are raising their grandchildren? It might have been awhile since they raised their own children and for their "second time around" I have some practical ideas and tips from U of I Extension "Parenting Again" website that will help make the school year a success! <https://extension.illinois.edu/grandparents/>

Prepare your grandchildren for school. Make sure they go to school fed and well rested. Limit your outside activities to avoid burnout. Children can only do so much. If they have too many extra-curricular activities, they may be too tired to do homework.

Take time to read. Children are more likely to read if adults around them read. Take your grandkids to the library and bring home some books for them and yourself. Also, read together aloud. Ask the children what the book was about and why the characters acted as they did.

Encourage sharing. Ask your grandchildren about school. Listen closely and respond with empathy when things aren't going well. This interaction fosters better students and stronger relationships.

Monitor screen time. Limit the amount of hours that the television and video game devices are on. Choose TV shows and watch together – use it as an opportunity to share your family values.

We all know that home life affects children's success at school. So, what can you do to help ensure that your grandchildren succeed? Start by creating an environment that encourages learning. Provide a special space for homework that is quiet and away from distractions. Keep the area supplied with frequently needed items like paper, pencils, tape, paper clips, ruler, calculator, and a dictionary. If a separate desk or table isn't feasible, use part of the dining room or kitchen table. A box with school supplies can be brought to the table when it's study time. Talk about homework. Help the children manage the homework by breaking it into smaller segments. Help them to learn how to pace their work. Check homework for completeness but don't do the assignments for them. Complete one or two examples together and let them do the rest. If they don't do their own work, they won't do well on tests and other assignments. Have the grandchildren write down the name and phone number of one student in each class to call for help or missed class notes.

Pay attention to how your grandchildren learn. Some need a quiet private area, but others need coaching. If the children aren't doing well in school, ask for help. Early diagnosis of learning difficulties, vision problems, or hearing loss reduces their risk of failure in school.

Establish a homework routine to make it part of everyday activities. Emphasize that homework is not "optional." Study time could be when the children get home from school before supper, or before television or playtime. Let them help set the time.

School is not only stressful for children, but it can also be stressful for you. Memories of past school experiences may cause a bias. Realize that schoolwork has changed and may cause you to feel uncomfortable. Remember that it's ok to tell the children you don't know the answer but then work to find the answer. What you then teach the children are valuable problem-solving skills.

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Spotlight Resource: New Mont-Guides

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Learning to Advocate for Your Grandchild

A family crisis is often the reason that grandparents are called upon to raise their grandchildren, prompting the need for emotional, financial, and educational information. One task that grandparents face, is advocating for the needs of their grandchildren. In this new Mont-Guide, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Learning to Advocate for Your Grandchild*, grandparents can learn effective ways to interact with family members and professionals as they parent their grandchildren.

<http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/mt201812HR.pdf>

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Navigating the Resources

When asking for help or resources often we get sent from one place to the next with no specific answer. Raising a grandchild presents challenges but the new Mont-Guide, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Navigating the Resources*, aims to provide information on some of the resources available to grandparents such as legal, financial, healthcare and medical, education, childcare, social support, and grandparent rights. This Mont-Guide also includes two charts that will make it a little easier to know what resources are available in a specific area. Helping grandparents connect the dots, is a good way to reduce stress in an already stressful situation.

<http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/mt201813HR.pdf>

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: Incarceration and Grandfamilies

MSU Extension has developed a Mont-Guide to help kinship caregivers and their families who have experienced the loss of a loved one to incarceration. Becoming a kinship caregiver is often unexpected and having an incarcerated loved one can make this situation more difficult to navigate. From working with the correctional system to dealing with other's judgement of your family, kinship caregiving can become more complicated. This new resource will discuss grieving the loss of someone to incarceration. It also provides options and tools for communicating and maintaining family connections while a loved one is incarcerated. (Publication available soon.)

(Funding to complete these Mont-Guides is provided in part by, The Montana Children's Trust Fund)

(School continued from Page 4)

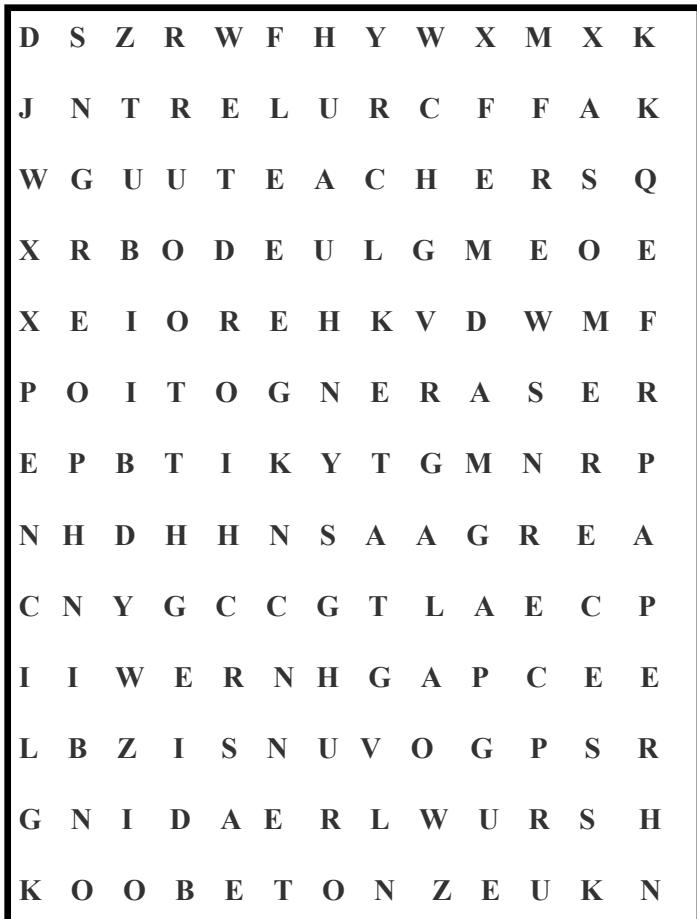
Support the teachers. If you think teachers are giving too much homework, make an appointment to discuss the matter, without the children. If you complain to the teacher in front of the children, it encourages them to question the teacher's authority and that can lead to discipline problems. And last but not least, be a role model. When children see you enrolling in an adult education class, they get the message that learning is important. Visit the public library as a family and take advantage of the books, videos, audio tapes, Internet access, and educational programs that are available. Just remember reading, writing, and math are important skills. But skills like setting priorities, managing time, and solving problems also impact children's ability to succeed in school and life.



Family Activity Back to School Word Search



BOOKS	PLAYGROUND
DESK	READING
ERASER	RECESS
GLUE	RULER
LUNCHBOX	STUDENT
MATH	TEACHER
NOTEBOOK	WRITING
PAPER	
PENCIL	



For more family fun, create your own word searches from books you've read together.

Thank You, Grandparents

Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana—By County

Blaine County—Harlem & Fort Belknap Indian Reservation
Barbara Skoyen, RN
(406) 353-3157
MSU Extension
(406) 353-2656

Big Horn County—Hardin
Holly Jay
MSU Extension
(406) 665-9772

Cascade County—Great Falls
Katrín Finch
MSU Extension
(406) 454-6980

Tammy Phelps
Family Connections
(406) 761-6010

Chouteau County—Ft. Benton
Janell Barber
MSU Extension
(406) 622-3036

Dawson County—Glendive
Family Life Institute
(406) 939-5591

Fergus County—Lewistown
Denise Seilstad
MSU Extension
(406) 535-3919

Flathead County—KalisPELL
Kalie Andoretti
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
(406) 756-1414

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

Glacier County—Browning & Blackfeet Indian Reservation
Carrie Bear Chief-Evans
Eagle Shield Center
(406) 338-7257

Hill County—Havre
Jasmine Carbajal
MSU Extension
(406) 265-5481

Hill County—Rocky Boys Indian Reservation
Mary St. Pierre
Stone Child College &
MSU Extension
(406) 395-4875

Lake County—Ronan & Flathead Indian Reservation
Nori Pearce
MSU Extension
(406) 676-4271

Lincoln County—Troy
Jennifer Higgins
WF Morrison Elementary
(406) 295-4321

Missoula County—Missoula
Kelly Moore
MSU Extension
(406) 258-4206

Pondera County—Conrad
Wendy Wedum
MSU Extension
(406) 271-4052

Ravalli County—Hamilton & Bitterroot Valley
Jo Ann Wilson
(406) 926-1711
MSU Extension
(406) 375-6611

Richland County—Sidney
Carrie Krug
MSU Extension
(406) 433-1206

Roosevelt County—Culbertson
Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
(406) 787-5312

Roosevelt County—Fort Peck Indian Reservation
Carol Bemer
(406) 768-2430

Rosebud County—Forsyth
Jennifer Anderson
MSU Extension
(406) 346-7320

Rosebud County—Lame Deer & Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation
Kay Medicine Bull
Boys & Girls Club of the Northern Cheyenne Nation
(406) 477-6654

Sanders County—Thompson Falls
Juli Thurston
MSU Extension
(406) 827-6934

Silver Bow County—Butte
Brenda Hergott
Butte 4-C's
(406) 723-4019
1-800-794-4061

Stillwater County—Columbus
Lisa Terry
MSU Extension
(406) 322-8035

Teton County—Choteau
Jane Wolery
MSU Extension
(406) 466-2491

Valley County—Glasgow
Roubie Younkin
MSU Extension
(406) 228-6239

Yellowstone County—Billings
Jackie Rumph
MSU Extension
(406) 256-2828

You can find many more parenting resources and Montguides on the MSU Extension Family & Human Development website:
<http://msuextension.org/family/>



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www.montanagrandparents.org



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

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

*"Call it a clan, call it a network,
call it a tribe, call it a family.*

*Whatever you are, whoever you are,
you need one."*

~Jane Howard