

GRG Newsletter
 Montana
 Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
 Project

Happy Spring!

Taking Time for Yourself

Raising grandchildren is a tough job. The freedom to do activities on the spur of the moment as you may have done in the past is not there due to parenting responsibilities. If you haven't been in the habit of taking time for yourself this winter, now is the time to start! Think about time for yourself in small, medium, and large doses.

- Try taking five minutes a day to refresh yourself such as stepping outside for a few minutes, listening to the birds, or playing your favorite song on the piano.
- Plan for one-hour breaks such as taking a long walk, reading a book, or gardening.
- Organize a day or overnight trip where you can have someone else stay with the grandkids. Go fishing, camping, or sightseeing. Travel to a local hot springs and enjoy a soak.

Often when we think of relaxing ideas we immediately go to those that take time and money. Remember to take those short breaks, it will help!



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**Annual
 Montana
 GRG Conference
 Cancelled for 2009**

Unfortunately, with the tight economic times we are unable to offer a GRG conference this year.

We regret that we won't be able to bring all of you together this year to share the joys and challenges of parenting your grandchildren.

We do hope to continue the conference in the future!

Why Won't My Grandchild Behave?

-By Sandra J. Bailey, MSU Extension/HHD

Grandparents raising grandchildren can become frustrated when children misbehave. Parenting children who have experienced a trauma requires patience. Almost all grandparents raising grandchildren are doing so due to a family crisis or loss. Often the children have experienced abuse, neglect, or loss of a birth parent. Living through such events influences how children develop and regulate their emotions. Children may feel totally out of control of their world and try to have control whenever they can.

Young children may regress on skills they have learned such as toileting. Others may go back to sucking their thumbs or carrying around a blanket. Some may have frequent temper tantrums. This is their way of coping with the chaos in their lives. As a grandparent you may need to let them re-experience this stage in their lives and help them work through the development again.

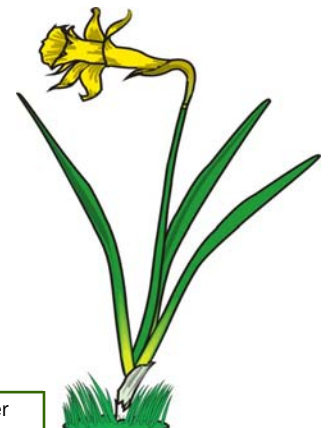
Some children will exhibit behaviors you have not seen before. For example a grandson who hoards food in his bedroom may be doing so because he has not known if there will be food the next day. A granddaughter who lies excessively may have learned that this is acceptable behavior. She may have learned that even small "normal" childhood lies resulted in severe or inconsistent discipline.

Other children will be defiant about everything, straining the patience of the grandparent. These children are responding to life the only way they know how. They have had to learn ways to be safe when they lived in a situation that was not safe. Rather than punishment for such behaviors, these children need added attention, structure, and love.

So what is a grandparent to do? Here are some suggestions:

- ~Watch to see if there is a pattern when your grandchild misbehaves. Does it occur when she is afraid? Does it happen after she has seen or talked to her birth parent? Does she become upset when there is a change? By looking at what is happening prior to the misbehavior you will have a better idea of what the child is feeling and can be proactive in your actions.
- ~Give your grandchild control where possible. Allow a child to make decisions in areas that are appropriate. For example, what clothes to wear, how much and which foods served at dinner he will eat. The "clean plate club" is no longer recommended. For older children, discuss with them what would be appropriate such as curfews. This will help your grandchildren learn a sense of responsibility.
- ~Reflect on your own experiences to see if your reaction triggers misbehavior in your grandchild. Our own emotions around events that have occurred in the past influence how we respond in stressful situations. For example, does defiance in a child remind you of how you were treated when you were young? Does this make it hard for you to respond objectively?
- ~Develop a daily and weekly routine for your grandchildren and try to keep to it as much as possible. When routines need changing, let your grandchild know what will be changed and why. Children may have experienced inconsistent parenting and having a routine will help them have a sense of security.
- ~Reassure your grandchild that you have made arrangements for her care and that she will not be left on her own. The fear of not knowing what will happen if a grandparent becomes ill or dies can be cause for misbehavior.
- ~Use humor in your parenting. We need to be able to laugh and enjoy life. Mistakes are a part of life and where appropriate, laughing at our own mistakes let's children know we are human.
- ~Repair mistakes in parenting when needed. If you blow up and yell because you are frustrated with your grandchild, repair the interaction. When you are calm, let him know that the blow up was not the way to handle the situation.

Parenting is difficult in the best of circumstances. Parenting children who have experienced trauma in their lives is even harder. Learning why a child might be misbehaving is the first step in preventing unpleasant situations.





Why Won't My Grandchild Behave? References:



Ambert, A. (2001). *The effect of children on parents*. (2nd ed.). New York: The Hawthorn Press, Inc.



Golombok, S. (2000). *Parenting: What really counts?* New York: Taylor & Francis, Inc.



Greene, R. W. (2005). *The explosive child*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.



Keck, G. C. & Kupecky, R. M. (2002). *Parenting the hurt child: Helping adoptive families heal and grow*. Colorado Springs, CO: Pinon Press.



Siegel, D. J. & Hartzell, M. (2003). *Parenting from the inside out: How a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive*. New York: Penguin Group, Inc.



Steinberg, L. (2004). *The 10 basic principles of good parenting*. New York: Simon & Schuster.



Update: Grandparents Legislature Bills

-By Jona K Anderson-McNamee, MSU Extension, Cascade County

Grandparents from Great Falls are working to change the lives of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren all over the state of Montana by introducing legislative reforms. The grandparents contacted Deborah Kottel, D-Great Falls, to assist them in writing and presenting legislative bills. The grandparents have visited the Capital several times over the past few months to testify on behalf of the grandparents-rights bills presented at the 2009 Montana Legislature.

Deb Kottel presented legislators with three bills representing the concerns of grandparents. Kottel's **House Bill 397** establishes a close-relative registry so close relatives, such as grandparents, can sign up to be notified if the state removes a child from his or her home. **House Bill 403** asks the court to consider a child's need for continuity of care along with the other criteria when determining whether the child should be placed with someone other than a parent. The bill asks the court to look at whether the child will remain in the same area, continue at the same school and other such issues when making the judgment. Sen. John Esp, R-Big Timber, carried a bill to revise the grandparent-grandchild contact law, which currently states that for a court to give visitation to grandparents over the parents' objections, the parents have to be deemed unfit. The new law fitness must be based on whether the parent adequately cares for the child.

Both bills currently have passed the third reading and need the governor's signature in order to become law.

GRG Will Miss Longtime Supporter Al Ward

The economic downturn that is affecting us all has claimed one of Montana GRG's biggest supporters. AARP is making budget adjustments to ensure their financial integrity and to maintain their ability to successfully fulfill their mission. Unfortunately, these adjustments include staff reductions and our friend, Al Ward, Associate Director for Community Outreach, is one of those in the reductions.

Al left AARP Montana on March 20, 2009. He had been with AARP for over 10 years beginning in the West Region Office. He is known across the country for his training, community outreach, and consumer protection skills. In 2007 he was presented an Indian Name by the Blackfeet Nation, "Kind Heart", for his work with Native American elders and families. His plans are to stay in the Helena area for now and possibly do volunteer work. He will be missed by volunteers, community partners and staff in being part of the AARP Montana team. And he will especially be missed by Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

AARP remains a financially sound and strong organization with the capacity to serve their members and advance critical priorities for the long term. Working together, AARP staff and volunteers - and our country - will get through these tough times.

-Reprinted with permission from AARP Montana

The American Academy of Pediatrics invites children to enter its 2009 National Art Contest with a chance to win a trip to Washington, DC!

The contest is open to boys and girls in three groups, grades 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12, and the theme is "Protecting Children from Tobacco Smoke."

Group winners and their parents/guardians will be invited to a presentation ceremony before several thousand pediatricians at the 2009 AAP National Conference & Exhibition in Washington, DC, on Saturday, October 17. Each first-place winner will receive \$500 and up to \$1,000 for travel-related expenses. The three second-place winners will each receive \$250. The six winners' schools will be awarded matching cash amounts.

Winners will have their artwork featured on the AAP Web site and in promotional materials. "There are still far too many young people who smoke and many pick up this deadly habit while they are at school," warns AAP President David Tayloe, Jr, MD, FAAP. "This is an opportunity for children to exercise their creative side to alert other children – and parents – to the dangers of tobacco and second-hand smoke."

To enter, children should submit an original piece of artwork to: National Art Contest, American Academy of Pediatrics, 141, Northwest Point Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Rules, official entry forms and consent forms must accompany all entries and are available online at <http://www.aap.org/artcontest/>. Entries must be postmarked by July 31, 2009. Winning entries will be selected by a panel of judges including pediatricians, and announced in the summer.



Save the Date! FREE Webinar!



What: Family Communication 101: Get the message!



Communication is the key to all positive family interactions. But how do you know if you're communicating effectively? Many grandparents have complicated family relationships, and often communication is a pivotal factor that can either help families manage better, or create additional conflict. Strengthening communication skills can lead to better relationships. Join the experts at Grandparents.com to learn how to:



- Identify your communication style
- Discover new ways to resolve family conflict
- Learn valuable listening skills
- Understand how others perceive you



When: May 14, 2009 at 8pm EST



Where: From the comfort of your own home – for this free online seminar (webinar) all you need is a phone and internet connection!



Call For Photos: Rural Grandfamilies

The University of Maine's Center on Aging RAPP program, with the support of the Brookdale Foundation, is developing a manual to improve the services to rural kinship caregivers and their families provided by Relatives as Parents Programs and other similar organizations across the country.

The program would like to include photographs depicting rural grandfamilies. If you have any photographs of rural scenery, rural life, grandparents raising grandchildren, or other relative caregivers and their families, please email melissa.adle@umit.maine.edu.

Credit will be given to photographs that are included (name of photographer and program or agency name). Please make sure that you have permission from the photographer and from any identifiable individuals in the photograph before submitting any photos. (Individuals pictured will not be identified by name in the manual). Due to space limitations, only a limited number of photographs submitted can be included in the manual.

The Benefits of Gardening: Healthy Body and Mind

Spring is here and Summer is right around the corner! Celebrate by planting a garden that will nourish both your body and mind. Want to join the hottest food trend of the year? A GYO (Grow Your Own) habit can be good for the budget, good for the body, and good for the soul!

Here are some tips for successful gardening:

Pick the right site. Three critical elements are necessary to start a successful vegetable garden: (1) **Sunlight**, at least 6 hours a day throughout the growing season; (2) **Water**, the closer to a faucet or hose the better; and (3) **Soil**, something between rock-hard clay and soft sand. Fortunately, soil is something that you can improve over time. A home compost pile is one of the best and easiest ways to do this - by recycling kitchen and yard waste into rich organic matter that is good for any garden soil.

Start small, grow over time. Great big gardens can overwhelm the best intentions of anyone. The smartest strategy is to grow your garden slowly, as you learn what works best in your location and what your family likes to eat the most. You can start with a few containers on a deck or patio. Small theme gardens are fun for everyone: Try a **salad garden** (lettuce and other greens, herbs, tiny tomatoes, and maybe radishes) or a **pizza garden** (Roma tomatoes, onions, garlic, basil, oregano, and a pepper or two).

Pick the right seeds or plants. Some backyard veggies grow well from seeds (carrots, radishes, beans, and peas, for example). Others do best with an indoor or greenhouse start, such as tomatoes, peppers, and herbs. While most garden varieties will do just fine anywhere, you may want to choose specialized seeds, such as plants for your specific latitude (e.g., northern mountains or central plains), heirloom varieties (generally non-hybrid, like your grandmother used to grow), organic, or open-pollinated.

Feed and water with care. Throughout the growing season, your vegetable plants will need the right amount of moisture and the right balance of nutrients. Getting both right will depend on your soil and the weather. Too much water or fertilizer can be as big a problem as too little. The instructions on the seed packets or seedlings are always a good place to start. However, your best bet is to chat with a local garden 'coach' - a green-thumbed family member, friend, neighbor, or Master Gardener.

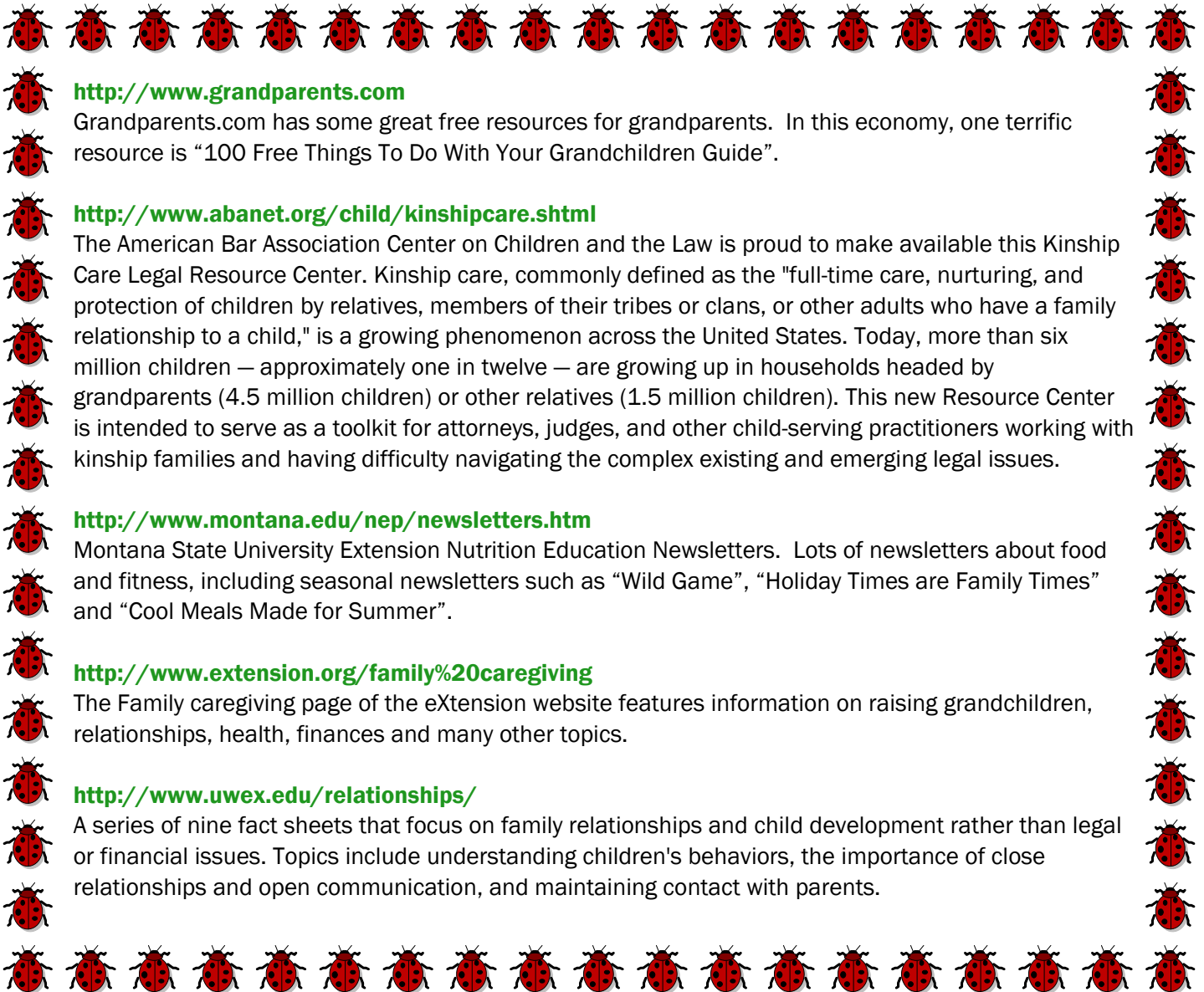
Pick the fruits and veggies of your labor. While planting, weeding, and watering can be fun family activities, harvesting is obviously the tastiest part of the season. Freshly picked veggies can be so delicious (and nutritious) that they never make it to the kitchen or to the table! Want to grow your garden successfully from year to year? Keeping a simple garden journal can help you remember exactly what you planted, how well it grew, when you picked the veggies, and what your family enjoyed eating the most.

Want to spring into fitness, but short on cash for a gym membership? Love to be active outside, but not a fan of running, biking, or team sports? Here's an easy, inexpensive solution: Turn your yard and garden into a personal fitness center! Getting down and dirty in your garden can help you grow nutrient-rich produce for your family and help you grow a healthier body at the same time. Add the stress-reducing benefits of fresh air and sunshine - and you've got a win-win for your budget, your body, and your brain.

For more details on how to get great physical benefits from gardening visit www.gardenfitness.com/ or check out *Get Fit Through Gardening*, by Jeffrey Restuccio at a bookstore or your local library.

*-Information courtesy of Eat Right Montana, www.eatrightmontana.org
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<http://www.grandparents.com>

Grandparents.com has some great free resources for grandparents. In this economy, one terrific resource is "100 Free Things To Do With Your Grandchildren Guide".

<http://www.abanet.org/child/kinshipcare.shtml>

The American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law is proud to make available this Kinship Care Legal Resource Center. Kinship care, commonly defined as the "full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, or other adults who have a family relationship to a child," is a growing phenomenon across the United States. Today, more than six million children – approximately one in twelve – are growing up in households headed by grandparents (4.5 million children) or other relatives (1.5 million children). This new Resource Center is intended to serve as a toolkit for attorneys, judges, and other child-serving practitioners working with kinship families and having difficulty navigating the complex existing and emerging legal issues.

<http://www.montana.edu/nep/newsletters.htm>

Montana State University Extension Nutrition Education Newsletters. Lots of newsletters about food and fitness, including seasonal newsletters such as "Wild Game", "Holiday Times are Family Times" and "Cool Meals Made for Summer".

<http://www.extension.org/family%20caregiving>

The Family caregiving page of the eXtension website features information on raising grandchildren, relationships, health, finances and many other topics.

<http://www.uwex.edu/relationships/>

A series of nine fact sheets that focus on family relationships and child development rather than legal or financial issues. Topics include understanding children's behaviors, the importance of close relationships and open communication, and maintaining contact with parents.

More Useful Links...

State fact sheets for grandparents and other relatives raising children.

www.grandfactsheets.org

Get Your MontGuides!

Remember there are many helpful MSU Extension MontGuides available to you. Topics include parenting, financial planning and retirement. Visit <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/montguides.html> for a full list of MontGuides and information on how to order them.

Be sure to check out all the GRG Newsletter back issues at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/grg/newsletters.htm>

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

Billings

Bernie Mason
P.O. Box 35021
Billings, MT 59107
(406) 256-2828

Bozeman

MSU Extension Family &
Human Development
316 Herrick Hall
Bozeman, MT 59715
(406) 994-3395
grg@montana.edu

Browning

Carrie Jackson
Eagle Shield Center
P.O. Box 76
Browning, MT 59417
(406) 338-7257

Colstrip

Jennifer Anderson
P.O. Box 65
Forsyth, MT 59327
(406) 346-7320

Glendive

Pete Bruno
Parents Resource Center
200 S. Kendrick
Glendive, MT 59330
(406) 377-7515

Great Falls

Jona McNamee
Cascade County Extension
454-6980
Mariellen Ritts
(406) 453-3554

Helena

Jeanette B. Mattfeldt
562 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 442-8207

Kalispell

Marylane Pannell
The Nurturing Center, Inc.
146 3rd Ave. W.
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 257-5793

Lewistown

Denise Seilstad
712 W. Main
Lewistown, MT 59457
(406) 535-3919

Missoula

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

Poplar and Wolf Point

Ardis Oelkers
MSU Extension
Culbertson, MT 59218
(406) 787-5312

Ravalli County

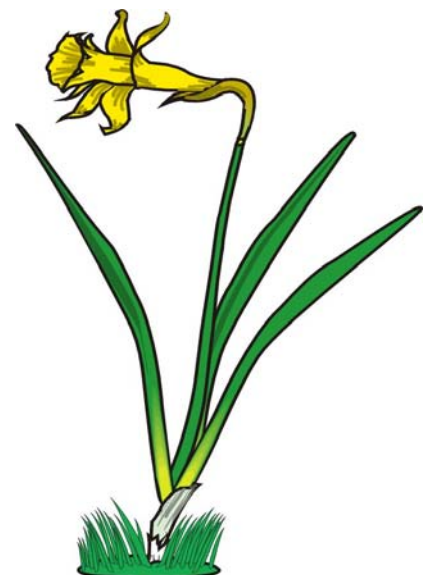
Brenda Fisher
Family Services
108 Pinckney
Hamilton, MT 59840
(406) 363-1961 ext. 107

Rocky Boy Reservation

Stone Child College
Mary St. Pierre
(406) 395-4875

Townsend

Nancy Marks (406) 226-3710
Jerri Paulk (406) 266-4249

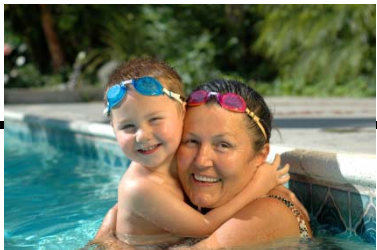


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**The Montana
GRG Project**

*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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