

April 2008



GRG Newsletter

Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

Volume 4, Issue 11

GRG Conference June 21st in Bozeman

This year's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference is bound to be something GRGs will not want to miss. The conference is going to be held on Saturday, June 21st, at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman. There are qualified speakers from around the state who will help Grandparents Raising Grandchildren with some of the issues they face, such as stress, grief, sleep tactics, children and technology, and marriage. The keynote speaker is James W. Ramsey, M.A., M.Div., LCPC, Director of Aletheia Counseling and Stress Management. He will be speaking on stress management and why marriages succeed or fail.

Sharon Hanton is a licensed clinical social worker who has been a clinical therapist in Bozeman for twenty-four years. Hanton will help grandparents deal with the stresses of raising grandchildren by focusing on being present with oneself, actively listening to children, not being too hard on oneself, finding hobbies to do with children, and managing or abstaining from alcohol and drugs.

Judy Maris will also be speaking. Judy is a licensed counselor in private practice in Bozeman. She holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Montana State University and a master's degree in Humanities from Florida State University. As a Certified Hakomi Therapist she incorporates mindfulness, psychodynamic psychology and the mind-body connection into her practice. She has attended 3- and 10-day silent retreats as part of her training in mindfulness and meditation.

Others speakers who will provide resources for grandparents raising grandchildren are Mimi Hood, therapist in private practice, and Dawn S. Tarabochia, adjunct instructor for the Health and Human Development Department of Montana State University.

This year's conference will provide grandparents raising grandchildren with valuable information and resources that they can take back to their households. The GRG conference is also a great way to network with other grandparents who are going through similar trials. Don't miss this amazing chance to gain resources and network with other grandparents raising grandchildren! Scholarships and childcare are available. If you are interested call Deborah Albin at 994-6546 to request a brochure, or register online at <http://eu.montana.edu/grg/register>.

Inside this issue:

<i>New Grants Available</i>	2
<i>The Power of Tears</i>	3
<i>Spring Activities for Children</i>	4
<i>A Place of Our Own —PBS Series</i>	4
<i>Kinship Caregiver Support Act</i>	5
<i>Kinship Caregiver Support Act</i>	6
<i>Grandparent Support Groups</i>	7

New Grants Available for Families Struggling with Child Health-Related Expenses

- *United Healthcare Children's Foundation accepting applicants for 2008 grant program*
- *Families can apply for assistance grants online at www.uhccf.org*

United Healthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF) announced that new grants are available to help children who need critical health care treatment, services or equipment not covered or not fully covered by their parents' health benefit plans.

UHCCF provides grants to families to help pay for child health care services such as speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy sessions, prescriptions, and medical equipment such as wheelchairs, orthotics and eyeglasses. Parents and legal guardians may apply for grants of up to \$5,000 for child medical services and equipment by completing an online application at www.uhccf.org. Tax-deductible donations can also be made online. To be eligible for grants, children must be 16 years of age or younger. Families must meet economic guidelines, reside in the United States and be covered by a commercial health benefit plan.

"We are taking action to improve access to health care in America and are dedicated to helping more children and families this year and beyond," said Matt Peterson, UHCCF president. "We encourage families who need assistance paying for their child's medical needs to visit the United Healthcare Children's Foundation Web site and apply today."

"My son Bryson was born with Down syndrome and a heart defect, which would require open heart surgery," said Jane Baker. "With the stress of knowing that our precious son was going to need major surgery, along came the worry of medical bills. Our caseworker told us about the United Healthcare Children's Foundation. We were

given a generous grant to help with our medical expenses. What a blessing United Healthcare Children’s Foundation has been for us. I am so thankful that there are people out there willing to help and give in times of need.”

Reference: United Healthcare Children’s Foundation News Release, April 10th, 2008

Wait! Don’t Wipe those Tears Away!

As children, many people are taught to shun tears. Although tears are generally more sociably accepted if one is a girl rather than a boy, an abundance of tears from either gender is usually met with resistance. People attempt various things to stop themselves from crying. Some fan their face as if the forced air will make tears miraculously disappear back into their eyes—this is my choice move. Some squeeze their eyes shut as tightly as they can to stop the flow. Some—well they’ve learned to let the tears flow freely. As it turns out, the latter option may be the best of the three choices.

William Frey, who has done research on the affects of tears, found evidence that points to the benefits of crying. Frey’s research revealed that when people cry because of life

situations such as stress, anger, and grief, toxins are present in the tears. These same toxins are not present when a person cries while cutting an onion or has an eye irritation. Not only has research linked crying to the release of toxins, but crying may also share a connection with better overall health. Researchers are discovering that those who cry more frequently have better overall health. So next time you feel tears coming on, don’t feel weak or ashamed—remember that crying may just be your bodies natural, and healthy, defense.



References: Parachin, Victor M. Have a Good Cry. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from Miscellaneous Musings Web site: http://www.cyquest.com/good_cry.html

Randall, K Crying: A gift for the grieving. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from Willow House News Web site: <http://home.willowhouse.org/services/old/winter.htm>

Spring Activity Ideas for Children



Carrot Plant

Place pebbles in a shallow dish. Cut a carrot down to the base, right before the sprout. Fill the dish with water until it just covers the bottom of the carrot. Place in a sunny window and watch it grow!

Rain Sticks

What you need:

- Cardboard tubes (wrapping paper or paper towel)
- Dried Peas
- Masking Tape
- 1/2 inch nails



Directions: Cover one end of the cardboard tube with masking tape. Poke the 1/2 inch nails all throughout the cardboard tube. Pour about 1/2 a cup of dried peas into the tube and cover the other end with masking tape. Now when you tip the rain stick different directions, it sounds like spring rain!

Reference: The Child Fun Family Website

<http://www.childfun.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=164>

A Place of Our Own

A Place of Our Own is a PBS (public television) series that presents information for child care providers that deals with everyday issues—from obesity to conflict resolution to literacy. Chris Seifert of Montana PBS has funding to come show your GRG group how to use this information (it is way more than just a TV program!) and would even tailor her presentation to specific needs, if your group wants that. She taught child development at MSU for 12 years and has lots of materials for you to use—she will even bring books for you to use with your children! If you are interested, please call Chris Seifert at 994-6217.

Kinship Caregiver Support Act

Kinship Caregiver Support Act Facts

This is just a basic overview of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act. There is a wealth of information available on the Act and we encourage you to pursue how the act pertains to you. Some websites to check out that contain information on the Kinship Caregiver Support Act are www.childrensdefense.org; www.gu.org; and www.cwla.org

What is the Kinship Caregiver Support Act?

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act is legislation presented to both the House and Senate to help millions of children who are being raised by their grandparents and other relatives.

Components of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act

Establishes a Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program

Establishes a Kinship Navigator Program

Requires written notice to relatives when children enter foster care

Establishes separate caregiver licensing standards for relatives

Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program

This program would allow states to use federal funding to give relatives raising kin the same amount of money that non-relative foster-families would receive. This would support more grandparents to raise their grandchildren instead of having them placed in non-relative foster families.

Kinship Navigator Program

Many grandparents raising grandchildren say that one of their main problems in raising their grandchildren is getting accurate and up-to-date information on benefits and services available. The purpose of The Kinship Navigator Program is to link grandparents to respite care programs, support groups, and services for grandparents who have incarcerated children. The program also would provide information to grandparents about mental health and substance abuse treatment, child support, housing assistance, and legal assistance.

Kinship Caregiver Support Act continued...

Written Notice to Relatives when Children Enter Foster Care

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act would require that state child welfare agencies provide notice to relatives within 60 days of the removal of a child from his or her parent ' s custody. This would be beneficial as grandparents could decide if they would like to raise their grandchildren before the children form a bond with a non-relative foster family.

Differing Licensing Standards for Relative Caregivers

Under the current laws, relative caregivers can only receive federal support for children if they become licensed as caregivers in the same way that non-relative foster parents are required to become licensed. Many times, becoming a licensed caregiver is not feasible for a relative caregiver. Many states have laws which govern the amount of square footage required for each foster child in the home. States also may have laws stating that one spare bedroom must be available for each foster child. These policies may be beneficial for children living in non-relative foster homes, but do not make as much sense when a grandmother wants her two grandsons who live with her to share a room. Easing the licensing standards for relative caregivers could help reduce some of the financial burdens grandparents raising children face.

References for Article:

Summary of the kinship caregiver support act (S. 985). Retrieved March 18, 2008, from Child Welfare League of America Web site: <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/summarykinshipact.htm>

Questions and answers about the kinship caregiver support act. Retrieved March 18, 2008, from Children's Defense Fund Web site: http://www.childrensdefense.org/site/PageNavigator/policy_cw_kinship



Newsletter Information

After this month's edition of the GRG newsletter, we will be publishing the newsletter three times a year instead of bi-monthly. New newsletters will be sent out in August, December, and April of each year.

Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

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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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