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MontGuide: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: What to do the Second Time Around

A new MontGuide by Sandy Bailey, Family and Human Development Specialist, has arrived! The guide, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: What to do the Second Time Around (MT200706HR), is a guide to common questions and resources for grandparents and other relative caregivers when faced with parenting a second time around. Information on the new Montana laws related to Kincare is also included. To access the MontGuide online please visit www.montana.edu/publications or call your nearest county extension office for a copy.

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Save the Date!

The 3rd Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren conference will be held June 21, 2008 in Bozeman, MT

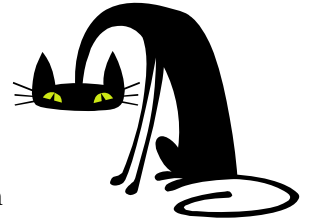
Look for more information in the upcoming newsletters.



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The Therapeutic Value of Animals: by Hannah Cowgill



Recently, I was forced to recognize the age of my dog. Amelia, my sweet and selfless mutt and always an active dog, is 12 years old. About a year ago, my parents offered to “look after” my buddy. Up until that point she had been my running partner, bodyguard, vacuum cleaner, home alarm system and sounding board. When she wasn’t around anymore I felt myself feeling lonely as if one of my best friends had left me. In a lot of ways I had lost a best friend. In an October, 2003 issue of the Counseling and Values journal, Parshall highlighted many of the wonderful benefits pets can offer us. Pets are wonderful sources for companionship and support and have been shown to have positive therapeutic effects such as lowering blood pressure and triglyceride levels, improving mental well-being and decreasing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Parshall demonstrated the following in her article:

- Children owning pets are more likely to be more social and engage more in hobbies, sports and chores.
- Children’s cognitive development can be enhanced with the ownership of a pet.
- Pets decrease the feeling of loneliness and depression.
- Positive self-esteem and increased confidence result in children owning a pet.
- Animals can provide a sense of well-being and comfort.
- Children with pets tend to pay more attention and demonstrate less hyperactivity and oppositional behavior.

If you are interested in adopting a friend into your family visit Montana Pets on the Net at <http://www.montanapets.org/> for a listing of humane societies across the state or call your local humane society listed in the telephone book.

Steps to a New You: by Marla Goodman for MSU News Service

Lynn Paul, Food and Nutrition Specialist, and her cohort Barbara Wheeler of the MSU Wellness Center are involved in a research and education project that helps people look at food, activity and body image in a new way. The two taught the "Steps to a New You" program, developed by Wellness in the Rockies, a three-state university consortium funded by the USDA. The program helps people move toward a healthier lifestyle. The program doesn't prescribe a certain amount of exercise or a particular diet. Rather, it uses discussion, self-monitoring through pedometer use, and real-life demonstrations of concepts like portion size to increase awareness of activity and nutrition. MSU Extension educators will teach the "Steps to a New You" program at 16 locations throughout Montana in January. For a schedule of classes statewide visit <http://www.montana.edu/extensionnutrition/>

You will learn how to:

- Shift your focus from weight to health
- Cope with emotions without using food
- Enjoy physical activity every day
- Respect body-size diversity – yours and others
- Set individual and group activity goals
- Increase self-acceptance/respect, by basing it more on healthy and enjoyable eating and physical activity habits than on body size and shape



Winter events around the state

Now that winter is upon us, grab the whole family and have some fun with these great Montana winter activities. Below, are a few activities of interest that sound fun and entertaining. To view a complete list visit, <http://wintermt.com/other/wevents.htm>. Some may require a small fee and remember to please dress warmly.



- **Ski joring:** Did you know that Bozeman, MT holds the Western Regional ski joring competition and the Red Lodge Ski Joring Association, hosts the National Ski Joring Finals races? Ski joring is an activity where an individual is pulled on cross country skis through a course by either horse or dog. Check it out at <http://wintermt.com/other/wevents.htm> or call 406-446-1718 for more information.
- **Sledding and Tobogganing:** pick snowy hills with gentle slopes, dress warmly and never go down head first.
- **Whitefish Winter Carnival** (Feb 1-3, 2008): A celebration with events such as fireworks and torchlight a parade.
- **Frost Fever** (Missoula, Jan. 26-27, 2008): A celebration of the winter season with events including snow volleyball, broom ball, football, softball and snowshoeing.

Holiday Celebrations around the World



Fiesta of our Lady Guadalupe (Dec. 12th)-An important religious and social festival in Mexico commemorating the miraculous appearance of Mary, the mother of Jesus, to a peasant asking for a church to be built so that she could be close to her people.

Hanukkah-A Jewish festival for eight days commemorating the miraculous use of one day's worth of oil needed to light the menorah that lasted for eight days.

Kwanzaa (Dec 26th-Jan 1)-A non-religious holiday celebrating the African-American community, family and culture. Kwanzaa is derived from a Swahili phrase meaning "first fruits" which represents the original stalk from which we came, our ancestry.

Boxing Day (Dec 26th)-Traditionally, it is on this day when the money in the alms boxes in the back of the church are distributed to the poor. Commonly, Boxing Day is celebrated in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Omisoka (Dec 31st)-A Japanese tradition celebrating the final day of the old year on the eve of a new one. Omisoka is traditionally celebrated by striking a cast bell 108 times, intended to drive away all of the previous new years sins and ensuring a new start.

Holiday Thriftiness: Enjoying the holidays without spending a lot of money

The holidays can be a time of joy and excitement. However, they can also be a time of stress and aggravation. Here a few ideas to cut down on the expenses during the holidays. Remember, it's the thought that counts, not the present itself.

- Consider hand-made gifts. Take the time and opportunity to make cookies with your grandchildren or get creative with homemade Christmas cards and decorations.
- If you are celebrating with a lot of people, share the burden by have dinner potluck style. Ask those invited to help out and bring a side dish or dessert.

- When shopping for gifts, make a list and only bring cash. By only bringing cash, you can only spend what you have. And, by making a list this allows you to only buy what is on the list without making unplanned purchases.
- Watch before-Christmas sales. Often times, sales before Christmas will offer discounts. This can relieve the stress of shopping up until the last minute as well as, save you money.

Five Tips for Enjoying the Holidays

The holiday season is upon us. While the season is meant to be a time for family, faith, and friendship it can be a time that is hectic and for some a time of sadness. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind during this time.

Keep your celebrations simple. Media coverage of the holidays makes it easy to get excited and want to do more and purchase more. Try cutting back on both gifts and activities. Limit the stimulation your grandchildren receive by avoiding shopping malls during the height of shopping season.

Remember that holiday excitement can bring out difficult behaviors in children. Even the best-behaved children can forget their manners during the activity and excitement of the holidays. If your child is misbehaving try taking him to a quiet area to help him calm down. Avoid yelling or threatening punishment as this will only make the problem worse. Chances are the behaviors are related to the excitement and/or a feeling of sadness and loss related to the celebration.

Forgive yourself. You are parenting your grandchild because of a family crisis. Although it may be hard not think about the “what ifs,” try to concentrate on what is going well for you and your grandchildren.

Set realistic holiday expectations. If your adult son or daughter makes promises that he or she doesn't keep during the year, don't expect him or her to keep holiday promises. Plan to include those family and friends who you know will come through for you and your grandchild.

Ask for help if you need it. The holidays are time for sharing and giving. As a grandparent raising your grandchild you have already given so much. Call the local Food Bank if you need help with your holiday meal and reach out to organizations such as those sponsoring Toys for Tots if you need assistance in providing a gift for your grandchild.

May you have a peaceful holiday season.

From the staff of the Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project



Grandparent Support Groups Across Montana

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"I am still determined to be cheerful and happy, in whatever situation I may be; for I have also learned from experience that the greater part of our happiness or misery depends upon our dispositions, and not upon our circumstances."
- Martha Washington