

THE HELPING HAND

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GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

BY MICHELLE FELGAR

Six percent of US children under 18 (3.9 million) live in grandparent-headed households (US Census 1997). Since 1990, grandparent-headed households without either parent present has increased the most. The number of these families increased by 53 percent between 1990 and 1998 and now about 1.4 million children are being raised solely by their grandparents.

Grandparents raising grandchildren face specific obstacles not encountered by biological parents. The inability to place the children on their health insurance policies, to obtain affordable housing in which they can live with the children, and to enroll the children in school are all challenges. These obstacles can be even greater if the grandparent is raising the child without legal custody or guardianship. For example, in Delaware a child was kept out of school for six months because her grandmother lacked legal custody.

Although it makes rearing their grandchild more difficult, many grandparents do not want to establish a legal relationship. Many grandparents in this situation sense that they will raise their grandchild until they are adults, yet they hold on to hope that the parents will be capable of taking over at some point. Understandably, this is an emotionally trying situation for grandparents; it is difficult to bring legal proceedings against one's own child in order to establish a legal relationship with the grandchildren. In court, judgments are made regarding the "best interests" of the child and whether or not parents are fit to have custody. These proceedings alone can strain and even break a family.

Some reasons for the increase in numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren include substance abuse, death of a parent, child abuse, child neglect, abandonment, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, incarceration, divorce, mental health problems, family violence, and poverty.



1.4 million children are being raised solely by their grandparents in the U.S.

An AARP survey showed that what these grandparents are asking for is information about legal issues, financial assistance, health insurance, childcare, school enrollment, psychological services, support groups, and resource sites. The following web sites are information resources on grandparents raising grandchildren:

AARP: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:
Where to Find Help
<http://www.aarp.org/contacts/programs/grandraising.html>

Administration on Aging: Grandparents
Raising Grandchildren
<http://www.aoa.gov/factsheets/grandparents.html>

Grand's Place: for Grandparents and Special
Others Raising Children
<http://www.grandsplace.com/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October

25-26 9 am-5 pm; Senior Expo 2002; 468-2480; South Towne Expo Center, SLC

29-30 9 am-5 pm; 9 am-3 pm; Utah Gerontological Society 11th Annual Conference; Grand Summit Hotel & Convention Center at The Canyons, Park City, UT

Other aging-related pro-

"NEIGHBORLY" NEWS

jects of interest in which Nancy Kelley-Gillespie and Dr. Bill Farley are involved:

FlexCare Program

Evaluation

This two year research project was just completed this summer. The focus of the study was to evaluate the FlexCare demonstration initiative and to determine whether perceptions of quality of life of elderly and/or disabled individuals changed when given the opportunity to move from a nursing home setting to an assisted living setting via the FlexCare program. Overall results indicated positive reactions toward FlexCare as well as improvements in quality of life.

Project C.A.R.E.

As members of this Community Action to Reach the Elderly coalition, which serves the central city area, efforts are devoted to addressing senior citizen needs by working together with government, businesses, and community organizations.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first issue of the W.D. Goodwill's Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program newsletter! This is a very exciting stepping stone for the program. This newsletter represents the many changes and growth of the program during the past year.

My name is Nancy Kelley-Gillespie and I am the program director. Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a service project overseen by Dr. Bill Farley who is the director of

the W. D. Goodwill Social Work Initiatives on Aging at the University of Utah's Graduate School of Social Work. Under these auspices, the program is able to promote campus-community connections and offer learning experiences to a wide variety of students.

Plans to develop a newsletter for Neighbors Helping Neighbors have been on the table for some time. The program gives thanks to Clifton Hall, Pete Anderson, and Cole Sondrup for fulfilling this dream as part of their Writing 3400 course. All of their hard work in making this newsletter a success is greatly appreciated.

The plan is for the newsletter to be issued on a quarterly basis (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter). This will be a good way to get the word out about our



Nancy Kelley-Gillespie,
Director of W. D. Goodwill's
Neighbors Helping Neighbors
Program

program and help people to get involved as well as to share major program accomplishments, upcoming events, and valuable aging-related resources and materials. Look for contents such as: profiles of volunteers, program participants, students, or community partners; highlights of community service projects; calendar of events; volunteer opportunities; information/resources section; and

articles on aging-related issues.

This issue profiles one of the social work practicum students from this past school year and gives you a taste for some of the learning opportunities and experiences the program offers for future social workers who have an interest in working with the elderly. Another article is devoted to the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren and offers some helpful resources for these individuals and/or professionals. So, read on and enjoy. Look for the next exciting issue this fall!

Nancy Kelley-Gillespie

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND HELPFUL WEBSITES

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group--7 week sessions sponsored by Jewish Family Services and the Goodwill's Social Work Initiatives on Aging. 581-1330.

2-1-1 Information and Referral Services. Dial 2-1-1 to receive information about human service programs and other services and agencies throughout the community. Service is free of charge and can answer requests in up to 140 different languages.

www.seniors.gov — government information for seniors.

www.aarp.org — American Association of Retired Persons

www.benefitscheckup.com — provides information on eligibility for statewide benefits and services.

www.slcap.org — Community Action Program and weatherization information.

PERSONAL SPOTLIGHT

The W.D. Goodwill's Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge one outstanding person within the service program. This issue's personal spotlight is Brittani Allred.

Brittani worked as an intern with the program throughout the 2001-2002 school year and loved the opportunity that it gave her to interact with the elderly in the community. Brittani appreciated the opportunity to be with the organization and says that the great part about working with it is the way that the program brings the community together. She enjoyed seeing how the elderly were helped in everything from providing companionship to house cleaning and maintenance. "The program helps people of all ages help the elderly," Brittani states, "it really connects the community to the elderly."

Brittani is from Farmington, New Mexico. She received a bachelors degree in Family Science at Brigham Young University just over a year ago. Brittani has been



Brittani Allred with program participant Pauline Campbell.

studying at the University of Utah for the past year and hopes to earn her Masters degree in Social Work in 2003. She loves the department and the opportunity it gives her to serve.

When asked to provide an interesting fact about herself, Brittani states that she has lived outside of the U.S. for more than two years. She spent a semester studying in the middle east and lived in Holland for about a year and a half. Brittani plans to continue studying and working in the field of social welfare.

Brittani's final remarks are regarding the importance of the volunteers within the community. She states that the Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program is based on volunteers and community support, and more of both is always needed. She, like others involved, hopes that this newsletter will help increase awareness for the program and demonstrate the significant need for community support.

VOLUNTEER CORNER

The Neighbors Helping Neighbors Program is always looking for additional volunteers and help. We have various projects that are either on-going or on an as-needed basis. Here is a list of individual and/or group volunteer opportunities.

On-going Activities

- Befriend participants; provide home visits and companionship
- Telephone reassurance
- Accompany participants on walks
- Run errands/shopping
- Care for pets
- Light housekeeping
- Provide transportation
- Conduct recreation and leisure activities

As-Needed Activities

- Spring cleaning
- Seasonal yard work
- Home repairs, maintenance, and safety modifications
- Interior/exterior painting
- Provide holiday/birthday visits
- Make special purchases/donations
- Provide special entertainment

Administrative Activities

- Maintain newspaper ads, volunteer websites, church bulletin inserts, and other PR efforts
- Distribute flyers, brochures, and other program materials throughout the program's catchment area
- Maintain a community resource file/loan library
- Filing and data entry
- Organize and maintain picture files and scrapbook

WAYS YOU CAN LEND A HELPING HAND

Below is a list of specific participant needs that volunteers can fulfill.

- Wash walls, ceilings, and windows
- Donate a lift chair
- Replace A/C bearings
- Paint the exterior of two homes
- Paint a front porch
- Paint the trim of a house
- Paint a fence and a gazebo
- Paint a kitchen and a bathroom
- Paint a kitchen
- Paint a living room, hallway, and dining room
- Do light housekeeping (vacuuming, dusting, etc.)
- Yard work (raking, weeding, mowing, planting, trimming, etc.)
- Mow lawns/shovel snow routinely

To help meet these needs or refer other people and their needs, call 581-5162.

**W.D. Goodwill's Neighbors
Helping Neighbors**



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ABOUT NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

The mission of Neighbors Helping Neighbors is to improve the health, safety, and quality of life of community-dwelling elders through the promotion and maintenance of independent living by building community partnerships among neighbors, local businesses, groups, and organizations.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors recognizes the gap between formal aging service networks and the needs of elderly people residing in the community. In an effort to fill this gap, the program is designed to link older people in need with formal aging services as well as tap into valuable resources within the informal support networks of their own neighborhood by creating partnerships with community leaders and members.

SPECIAL THANKS TO SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

Neighbors Helping Neighbors would like to thank the following sponsors and community partners for their time and contributions.

Sponsors:

- W.D. Goodwill Family Foundation
- University of Utah's Graduate School of Social Work

Partners:

- Lowell Bennion Community Services Center
- LifeCare
- Valley Mental Health Services
- Salt Lake County Aging Services
- Friendly Neighborhood Senior Center
- Jewish Family Services

“Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”
-Margaret Mead