

Grandparents, Special Parents and Guardian's Club Newsletter

Volume I, Issue I Editor, Lisa Tabb, Director of Programs

Spring 2007

Grandparents, Special Parents and Guardians Club

Charter Members

Fanny Brooks
Philip & Roberta Deutch
Dorothy Hirsh
Selma Hirschberg
Ellen Levitt
Randall & Rebecca Lewis
Donald & Helen Miller
Jane Pane
Bob & Rochelle Sacket
Barbara Sielaff
David & Ginny Smith
Richard & Leah Snyder
Bob Teel & Vivian White
Jordan & Carole Wolanow

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group Gets a Great Start

According to the 2000 Census, 4.5 million American children are being reared by their grandparents. This is a 30% increase from 1990. Though there are various reasons for this trend, substance abuse, mental illness, incarceration and death of a parent are the leading causes. More and more grandparents are assuming responsibility for raising their grandchildren, rather than allowing them to be raised by strangers in the foster care system. Even though this saves taxpayers more than \$6.5 billion per year, it causes many problems and obstacles for these unprepared grandparents.

In some of these grandparent-led households, a biological parent is in the house. In many cases, the intermittent presence of the biological parent is disruptive. The biological parent may dismiss the grandparents' authority, make unmet promises to the children, and totally disregard the child's need for structure. These grandparents need special coping skills for handling these three-generational family crises.

Though research and subsequent outreach efforts have been conducted about grandparents raising grandchildren, much has been centered on African-American and Latino households. Almost none has been done regarding Jewish families.

That is why the Jewish Children's Regional Service (JCRS) stepped up to the plate. JCRS is a regional social service agency based in New Orleans. It provides help to Jewish families living in the seven Southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. Through their work with Jewish families, staff at JCRS realized the growing number of Jewish grandparents raising grandchildren. Many of these grandparents report feeling isolated, uninformed and craving support. They are faced with a host of problems regarding legal concerns, financial hardships, health and housing issues, special needs grandchildren, social isolation, and childrearing practices.

In most cases grandparents took on this

responsibility on a short-term, informal basis. However, it led to long-term care.

In the fall of 2006, JCRS started its regional Grandparents, Special Parents, and Guardians Club. It was formed to provide support and education to all such Jewish families in the seven Southern states. Part of the Club is the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group, which meets monthly in New Orleans.

The first group met on October 25, 2006. During this group, Charter Members in the greater New Orleans area had an opportunity to meet families faced with similar circumstances. Members report appreciating the opportunity to share their concerns. After feeling isolated for so long, many were surprised to find families in similar situations. The support group is a forum to share experiences and knowledge.

The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group meets monthly at the JCRS office building. You do not have to live in the regional seven

Inside this issue:

<i>Dreadful D's</i>	2
<i>Parenting Today</i>	2
<i>Information on the Web</i>	3
<i>JCRS's 151st Annual Board Meeting</i>	3
<i>What is JCRS?</i>	4

“The Dreadful D’s” by Fanny Brooks

In this group of grandparents, each one of us is victim of at least one of the following dreadful D's:

Disease, Disability, Divorce, Drugs, Death.

Therefore we (and I was a widowed grandmother who raised two grandchildren), have had several layers of emotions thrust upon us. First and foremost is the inescapable reality of all our ages. Usually, by grandparenthood we are past child-rearing age. We have “been there and done that”. Now we have to start over again under very difficult circumstances. We are quite aware those emotions are compounded by our age, our sorrow and our love for our grandchildren.

How do we cope with these problems? An advertising executive once told me, “Lady, we don't have problems, we just have opportunities for success!” By adopting THAT attitude, we can begin to see the way to manage our own “opportunities”! We know what the situation IS. Now, with our POSITIVE ATTITUDE, we know success can be achieved. So, let's think about possible roads to success for this “opportunity” to care for our precious grandchildren.

First and foremost there are the two equally firm steps to take and THEY MUST GO HAND IN HAND... UNCONDITIONAL LOVE and CONDITIONAL LIMITATIONS! Unconditional love is not acceptance of every whim, opinion, attitude and/or action of our grandchild. Through no fault of their own, they have lost their parents, their security and their way of living. Undoubtedly, they can be bitter about that although they may not be consciously aware of those emotions. With my own granddaughter, I heard her tell her younger sibling “Drugs were more important to them than we were!”

Regardless of which “D” was the cause of their loss, basically, our grandchildren's world was destroyed and ours was sorely damaged. Nevertheless, we, as adult loving grandparents, must try to help them by allowing our grandchildren to work through their pain. Simultaneously, we try to guide them through our own actions, by thinking how our actions can affect them, by being consistent, by loving, and by limiting through dialogue. Do not set arbitrary rules or regulations based only on yesterday's society or only on your views. DIALOGUE means to listen as well as speak about attitudes, mores, hab-

its, aims, goals, society, school, friends, morals, privileges and limitations with your grandchildren. Remember these children are lost, their world is reeling, they are having adult emotions when they are only children.

REMEMBER:

THE DREADFUL “D” WAS THE CAUSE,

THE BENEFICIAL “D” is DIALOGUE.

FANNY BROOKS, raised two of her grandchildren by herself. Her granddaughter now has a family of her own.♦

Parenting Today

Most grandparents raising grandchildren are faced with child rearing dilemmas. What worked for past generations does not necessarily work for today's. This leaves many grandparents wondering what to do.

During a Grandparents Raising Grandchildren support group meeting, Sara Keith, LPC, a counselor from Jewish Family Ser-

vice of New Orleans, spoke about child rearing practices. She explained the difficulties facing most families.

Most grandparents are used to the Autocratic Style of parenting because it was the prominent style in the past. In this style the parent is the Dictator. The parent has absolute control and always makes the decisions that the child must follow.

You might hear an Autocratic parent say “As long as you're under my roof, you'll obey my rules!” Ms. Keith explained that under this form of parenting, the child is taught to follow directions without understanding why. This form produces followers, not leaders. It does not teach children to think for themselves, a skill necessary to become productive citizens.

Parenting Today continued from page 2

On the opposite end of the spectrum, many grandparents are too lenient with their grandchildren. They follow the Permissive Style and may act like Doormats. You might hear a Permissive grandparent say, "Do you really need this? Oh, all right. Here's the money".

Some grandparents think that giving in to the child's demand ensures that the child will love them. Other grandparents overcompensate for the terrible circumstances the child might have faced in the past. These grandparents sometimes feel guilty and allow the grandchild to get his/her way. This, of course, is not beneficial. Grand-

children learn to believe that they are entitled to things without working for them.

The most productive form of parenting, is the Democratic Style, explained Ms. Keith. Under this form, the grandparent is the Active Guardian. Children are treated with dignity and respect while being disciplined. Both the child and grandparent work together. Everyone is allowed to express their thoughts and feelings. But it is the grandparents job to set limits. You might hear an Active Guardian say, "Sure we can talk about it. What is your idea?".

Under the Democratic Style, the child has freedom within

limits, which are set by the grandparent. The Democratic Style fosters assertive children. This style teaches decision making skills. These skills are needed when the child is later faced with difficult decisions.

Grandparents raising grandchildren may be originally faced with childrearing problems but can overcome them with a information and support. Success is achievable if the grandparent is flexible and ready to learn new child rearing skills. ♦

Information on the Web

The following organizations and their corresponding websites offer information and resources for grandparents raising grandchildren.

- AARP—www.aarp.org. AARP's site offers vast information regarding everything from research to legal advice. It breaks down resources according to states.
- U.S. Administration on Aging—

www.aoa.gov. This site has articles with tips for grandparents raising grandchildren.

- Generations United—www.gu.org. Generations United promotes intergeneration public policies, programs and strategies. The website lists programs, policies, and research.
- National Council on Aging—

www.BenefitsCheckUp.org. This site determines eligibility for over a thousand public entitlements and benefits.

- Children's Defense Fund—www.childrendefense.org. This breaks down the statistics of grandparents raising grandchildren according to states and explains programs that can help.

JCRS's 151st Annual Board Meeting—April 21-22nd

Join us for Jewish Children's Regional Service's 151st Annual Board Meeting. Our guest speaker will be New Orleans city Council member Arnie Fielkow. He will give us an update on the recovery of New Orleans and its future.

The meeting is an opportunity to meet other



members of the Grandparent's, Special Parents, and Guardians Club

It is a weekend of inspiration. It is a time to renew friendships and learn about the work of the oldest existing Jewish children's agency in the United States.

The meeting will be held at the InterConti-

ental Hotel. Hotel rooms have been held at the InterContinental Hotel (phone 800-445-6563) and the Royal St. Charles Hotel (phone 504-587-3700). Contact JCRS for more information.

WHAT IS JCRS?

The Jewish Children's Regional Service is a social service agency providing help to Jewish families living in the seven southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. Help is provided in the way of grants and no-interest loans for college, emergency relief funds, scholarships for Jewish summer camp programs, and tuition assistance and other aid for Jewish children with physical, emotional and/or learning disabilities.

To make a referral, please contact JCRS at

(504) 828-6334 or (800) SAY-JCRS

Staff Contact Information

Ned Goldberg, Executive Director
ned@jcrsnola.org

Lisa Tabb, Director of Programs
lisa@jcrsnola.org

Bonnie Lustig, Special Needs Coordinator
bonnie@jcrsnola.org

Marsha Zander, Camp Coordinator
marsha@jcrsnola.org

Melanie Musser, Houston Area Services
Coordinator
jcrs_south@yahoo.com

In the Works...

Jewish Children's Regional Service is planning the first Jewish Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference in 2008. The conference will be open to both families and professionals. This conference will allow such families to learn and network.

Jewish Children's Regional Service

3500 North Causeway Blvd, #1120
Metairie, LA 70002