



Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Issue

One in ten grandparents has been the primary support of a grandchild at some time in his or her life. In Arizona, 7 percent of all children under age 18 are living in a household headed by a grandparent. Figures reported in the 2000 census show a 73.8 percent increase since the 1990 census with Arizona ranking fourth highest in increase of grandparent-headed households nationally. Many organizations that provide services for both generations are not prepared to deal with the special needs that may arise. Legal options are limited and emotionally draining and financially expensive.

What has been done?

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Southern Arizona Coalition (GRGSoAZ) was formed in 1999 as an outgrowth of the National Satellite Conference on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. With leadership from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, coalition members, and representatives from grandparent support groups in Pima, Maricopa, Cochise, Graham and Yuma counties worked together to determine needs and priorities. The GRG Coalition has become a network of professionals representing 35 agencies to collaborate and meet the needs of GRG. Agency personnel contribute time, in-kind resources and cash to meet the needs of GRG through development of the GRG Resource Notebooks, annual conferences, and activities at the Kinship,

Adoption, Resource, Education (K.A.R.E.) Family Center. The coalition actively interacts with the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging Task Force for Grandparent Concerns in Maricopa County that comprises 15 agencies. In 2002, Coconino County Extension in collaboration with Northern Arizona Gerontology Association formed a support group for GRG and established an ethnically diverse 14-member advisory committee to identify critical needs and develop a vision to provide better services for kin caregivers in Northern Arizona.

In the early efforts of the GPRG SoAZ coalition, 700 resource notebooks were developed with 1032 volunteer hours that contained material and community resources available in the following areas: support groups, legal and financial issues, childcare and school support, parenting tips, and nutrition and health issues. Notebooks were distributed free throughout the community. The coalition holds an annual conference for grandparents, employs a full-time program coordinator, maintains and updates a grandparent support website, www.ag.arizona.edu/grandparents. Other activities included the grand opening of the K.A.R.E. Family Center in Tucson on February 7, 2002, the first and only "One-Stop-Shop" for Arizona and a model for other communities. KARE is a collaboration of Arizona's Children Association, Casey Family Program, the Pima Council on Aging and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

Funding

Arizona Cooperative Extension and more than 60 local community agencies
Community Services Block Grants

Contact

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Impact

By the end of 2002 the number of monthly support groups in Arizona for grandparents had increased from 1 early in the year 2000 to 22 (Pima 13, Maricopa 4, Yuma 2, Mohave 1, Coconino 1 and Cochise 1). During 2002, the K.A.R.E. Center had 1300 contacts from local grandparents at public and community events, and reached 11 percent of grandparents raising grandchildren in Pima County. Through leveraged funding and community collaboration, 475 revised GRG notebooks were assembled and 257 distributed in 2002. Maricopa County provided outreach to 70 grandparents raising grandchildren through support groups, conference and one-to-one mentoring. Coconino County reached 25 kin caregivers and applied for grant funding to develop a survey instrument to further identify GRG needs in their county.

"I'm so glad that we have a support group for GRG. We are thankful that we have a caring person like Jessica. She really is concerned about grandparents and their grandchildren."

—Phoenix grandparent raising her grandchild

"The KARE Center was there for us when we didn't know what to do."

—Tucson grandparents raising their grandchild

"The resources in the GRG Resource Notebook have greatly increased my ability as a professional to assist grandparents raising grandchildren. The notebook has decreased the stress level of grandparents I work with." — Case Manager from Area Agency on Aging