

RAPP REPORTER

Fall 2006

A Newsletter of the Brookdale Foundation Group

RAPP Update

Our Relatives As Parents Programs (RAPPs) have had a busy year providing direct services to relative caregivers and their families in 45 states and the District of Columbia. Public libraries, YWCA's, Housing Authorities, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Area Agencies on Aging and State RAPPs bring awareness to the issue of relative caregiving at the state, local and community levels and create and expand supportive, replicable services to relative caregivers and their families. We have highlighted some of their work in this Reporter as well as some important information on the new Medicaid eligibility requirements, legislative updates, preparing our caregivers for tax time and newly released Census Bureau information.

Our RAPP family continues to grow as do our initiatives to respond to the needs of relative caregiving families. RAPPs know that constant outreach, responsiveness to the needs of

relative caregivers and the children in their care and collaborations at the state, local and

In this issue:

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- Big Brothers Big Sisters and Public Housing Authorities Can Be Great Partners!
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County introduces it's Family Portraits Project
- A Caregiver Legislative Update
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- Hawaii, Connecticut, Minnesota, Florida, Washington and Tennessee's RAPP Highlights
- Tax Time Can Pay for Caregivers! Financial Assistance Through Tax Credits; and
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- National Partner Updates: Generations United, Census Bureau, AARP and CWLA
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community levels are key to

ensuring the provision of quality services to this special population. We are proud of their hard work and are happy to share some highlights with you.

If you are interested in applying for a RAPP Local, State or Regional seed grant, see inside for our 2007 Funding Alert!

New Citizenship and Identity Documentation Requirements for Medicaid Coverage: What Do They Mean for the Children Grandparents and Other Relatives are Raising?

The Children's Defense Fund
Child Welfare and Mental Health
Division

As of July 1, 2006, all U.S. citizen children and adults who apply for Medicaid or renew their Medicaid eligibility must document their citizenship. They must present a U.S. passport or the combination of a U.S. birth certificate (or other approved document) and an identification document. Without such documentation, Medicaid will not pay for the children's care. The questions and answers below will help grandparents and other relatives understand what these new rules mean for the children they are raising.

How do I know if the children I am raising are eligible for Medicaid?

In most every state, children being raised by grandparents or other relatives should be eligible for Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). It should not depend on whether the caregiver is the legal

guardian for the child or the income of the caregiver.

For more information about your child's eligibility for Medicaid or SCHIP, check with your state Medicaid or SCHIP agency. Contact information is listed in the box in the enclosed insert. Please also refer to *Healthy Ties: Ensuring Health Coverage for Children Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives*, available on the Children's Defense Fund Web site, www.childrensdefense.org.

What documentation must I have when I apply for Medicaid for the child I am raising?

You should check with your Medicaid office to see what documents you will need. Ask specifically about the new requirement for documentation of citizenship and identity that took effect on July 1, 2006. You may need documents that prove the child's citizenship and identity.

The new documentation requirements do not apply to children who are eligible for SCHIP in states where Medicaid and SCHIP are separate programs.

What is the new requirement for documentation of citizenship and identity?

It requires U.S. citizens who apply for and receive Medicaid to show documentation of citizenship and identity.

For a child applying for Medicaid, the Medicaid agency must get the documentation before the child can receive Medicaid coverage for his or her health care services.

If the child is already receiving Medicaid, documentation will be required the first time that the child has to renew his or her eligibility for Medicaid after July 1, 2006. State Medicaid programs must redetermine a child or adult's eligibility for Medicaid at least every 12 months. At the time of renewal, the caregiver will be given a "reasonable opportunity" to produce the documentation. Each state has the flexibility to define what a "reasonable opportunity" means, so the time period will vary from state to state. Most importantly, the child will continue to receive Medicaid coverage during this period.

Is this a new requirement?

It is new for most states. Proof of citizenship has long been required under Medicaid, but most state Medicaid programs have allowed applicants to self declare their citizenship. All states except Georgia, Montana, New Hampshire and New York used this self-declaration option. Rules for documentation of citizenship in those four states were also more lenient than the new federal rules.

Must I provide proof of the child's citizenship and identity?

Yes. You must document the child's citizenship and identity. Some states will help you acquire the necessary documents. Please be sure to check with your state Medicaid agency for more details. (See the box in the enclosed insert).

How do I document citizenship for the child?

The documentation requirements might vary from state to state. It is best to check with the Medicaid agency in your state listed in the box in the enclosed insert.

The federal rules specify that certain documents are preferable to others and you must try to obtain them before others will be acceptable for documenting citizenship and identity.

A U.S. passport is most preferable and can be used to prove both citizenship and identity.

The second best source for proving citizenship is the child's birth certificate. You may have gotten that when the child came to live with you. The state also has the option of checking electronically with the state Bureau of Vital Records to obtain the child's birth certificate. This will only be possible if the child was born in the state where he is now applying for or receiving Medicaid. If the agency will do this for you, you do not have to

get the documentation for the child yourself.

of birth, which may or may not be applicable in your case. It is best to check with your state

public agencies to establish the child's identity. These include child protective services

If you need to get documentation, you can most likely obtain a certified copy of the birth certificate from the Bureau of Vital Records in your state. The table in the enclosed insert includes the phone number for the office. It also describes, for each state, who, other than a parent, may request a birth certificate, how much it costs, what you must do to get it and how long it will take to receive it. This information was taken from the Web sites of the state Vital Records offices. Once you have a certified copy of the birth certificate, you must then take it or mail it to your Medicaid office.

Before using other documents to prove citizenship, you must show that a passport or birth certificate either does not exist or cannot be obtained within a reasonable period of time. If you can get neither, there is a list of other documents you can get. These include a final adoption decree showing the child's name and U.S. place

Medicaid office to make sure you know the rules in your state.

Can I also use the child's birth certificate to prove the child's identity?

No. Under the current rules, you need additional documentation to prove the child's identity.

The state Medicaid agency may check electronically with certain

agencies. This may be a help to you if the child you are raising has been in foster care or in contact with the child protective services agency.

The new rules include a list of documents you can use as proof of identity for the child. Those most relevant to children include:

- School identification card with a photo of the individual;
- School records, including nursery or day care records;
- A drivers' license if the child is old enough to

- drive and has a license;
- Identification card issued by the federal, state or local government with the same information as the driver's license;
- Military dependent's identification card;
- Native American tribal documents; and
- For children, if none of the above is available, an affidavit may be

FUNDING ALERT!

We are pleased to announce the Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) Local, Regional and State Seed Grant Initiatives for the year 2007.

Up to **15 local, 5 state and 3 regional agencies** will be chosen from throughout the United States through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Each agency will receive a \$10,000 grant over a two-year period [\$6,000 in the first year and \$4,000 in the second year if all grant requirements have been met], as well as training and technical assistance. Matching support in cash or in-kind will be required of all selected agencies. The sponsoring agency must be a 501(c)(3) entity or have equivalent tax-exempt status.

Deadlines: Local and Regional proposals: **Thursday, January 11, 2007.** State proposals: **Thursday, February 9, 2007.**

Selected applicants will be notified in April and be invited and required to attend our National Orientation and Training Conference in Denver, Colorado, June 1-3, 2007.

Copies of the Local, Regional and State RFP guidelines and application forms may be downloaded directly from the Foundation's website.

used. The affidavit must state the date and place of the birth of the child and must be signed by the parent or legal guardian.

What happens if I cannot document citizenship and identity for the child?

According to the new federal rule, a state cannot receive federal dollars for Medicaid services provided to Medicaid-eligible children and adults unless states receive satisfactory documentation. That does not necessarily mean your child cannot receive the health care he or she needs. However, lack of documentation and concerns about funding may discourage your state from providing coverage. It also could discourage your doctor, clinic or hospital from serving your child because of concerns that they will not be paid for the care they provide.

Are the rules different if I am a foster parent for the child?

The new rules also apply to children in foster care. Please check with your caseworker to see what, if anything, you need to do. The child welfare agency should get the necessary documentation for the child to the Medicaid agency.

Does the new requirement apply to children who are legal immigrants?

No. Legal immigrants already must demonstrate satisfactory immigration status in order to qualify for Medicaid and they must continue to do so. The process that has been in place for qualified legal immigrants does not change.

For further information, please contact the Child Welfare and Mental Health Division at the Children's Defense Fund at 202-662-3568 or childwelfare@childrensdefense.org

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Maryland

Theresa Haws, Match Support Specialist

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Maryland (BBBS) became a RAPP grantee in 2005. It is a model organization in the field of child development and family strengthening initiatives. There are a variety of reasons for this. The first is the proven results in lowering delinquency rates in children and improving peer and family relations. The second stems from our long history and positive reputation of service in the Greater Baltimore area. The innovation of our programs, the dedication of the staff and the vision of creating safer, more caring communities, is what keeps the program running strong.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a non-profit, youth mentoring program. It helps boys and girls grow up to be confident,

competent and caring young adults by providing the influence of positive adult role models and the friendship of caring adult mentors to children whose education, health and safety are threatened.

Who are the "Littles?"

The Littles, as they are called, are the children who apply for the program and undergo an initial interview conducted in the home. This allows BBBS the opportunity to get to know the parent or legal guardian as well as the child. During this interview, the program is explained further, expectations are set with the caregiver and the child and a thorough assessment is conducted to determine the child's interests and hobbies.

Who are the "Bigs?"

Child safety is the number one concern for Big Brothers Big Sisters. The "Bigs" are volunteers, 18 years and older, who undergo a more thorough interview and screening process. Volunteers submit reference checks, a background check and a slightly more in depth interview. This process ensures that both parties are content and safe in their match.

A "Little" History

BBBS has been serving Baltimore area for over 50 years. The organization started as an outreach program for young Jewish boys. Soon, there were so many applications being submitted by non-Jewish boys that the decision was made

to serve all members of the community. This increased the scope of the agency and provided the opportunity for the organization to grow into the efficient model it is today.

Currently, BBBS serves 9 Maryland counties. Last year alone, the organization served nearly 2000 Bigs and Littles across Maryland! This success is a result of the support provided by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Agency to which BBBS belongs, United Way and the selfless dedication of volunteers.

The Programs **Community**

This program offers the opportunity for Bigs and Littles to participate in activities that both enjoy. These can be everyday activities that do not cost money, such as bike riding, playing board games, cooking, window shopping or catching a local ball game! In order to build a solid friendship, Bigs and Littles get to see each other several times a month.

Amachi Big Brothers Big Sisters

This program provides one-to-one mentoring to children of prisoners in partnership with local faith organizations. Amachi means "who knows but what God has brought us through this child." The activities and goals in these matches are similar to that of the Community program.

In Schools

The Bigs in School program offers the perfect opportunity for volunteers that may not have the time to meet with their Littles during nights or weekends. These matches are organized through local businesses and schools. Bigs and Littles meet once a week during lunchtime. During this time, Bigs get the chance to help their Littles with homework, play in the gym or just talk.

Talent-to-Share

This is a special interest volunteer program for individuals who want to share their unique talents and knowledge. Some of these opportunities include:

- Fundraising committees
- Special events committees
- Office volunteer

The Support Doesn't Stop There...

One of the hallmarks of the Big Brothers Big Sisters success is the support we provide to the Bigs, Littles and families involved in our programs. We organize monthly activities that are low cost for the Bigs and Littles. We also offer support groups and trainings for the volunteers as well as the parents/caregivers.

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides a critical service to Maryland's children and

adults. We look forward to serving even more children in the future and encourage others who work with children to collaborate with your nearest Big Brothers Big Sisters!

For more information on the BBBS of Maryland's RAPP, please contact Theresa Haws at thaws@biglittle.org. For more information on your nearest Big Brothers Big Sisters, visit the Big Brother Big Sister of America website, www.bbbs.org.

The RAPP

Family Portraits Project

Denyse Variano, Education Specialist,
Cornell Cooperative Extension,
Orange County

The RAPP Family Portraits Project was conducted in 2005 and funded by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services through the Orange County Youth Bureau. It is an excellent example of a creative, inexpensive and enjoyable project that is easy to implement and replicate in any RAPP youth program (or any youth program, for that matter)! The intent of the project was to provide an opportunity for youth to express their life experiences through various *art* forms, including written language, photography, painting and/or drawing, sculpture and action and verbal expression (drama, storytelling, etc.).

Through the process of creating and sharing their family stories, youth were given the opportunity to express their history, relate their present and plan for their future.



While the process was actually the critical aspect of the project, the final product was a scrapbook that compiled each individual art form (or photos of those that were not two dimensional).

The scrapbook served as the family portrait and was, with permission of the artists, shared with others in their RAPP groups and with the judges at the Orange County Fair. The participating families were encouraged to contribute to the projects, but it was emphasized that the youth, ages six and above, were “in charge” of the portraits.

The creation of the portraits provided the participating youth with an active voice and a chance to relay the stories of their families in a supportive and caring environment.



The project was more successful than we could have imagined, with twenty-two youth (and their caregivers) engaged in this year long activity. The following quotes help to convey the enthusiasm felt by participants of this project:

“This is the best thing I have ever done. It makes me think that my family is right in front of me... in my life.” Timothy N., RAPP 4-H

“It has helped me look at my family history. Now when I grow up I won’t forget it, because it will be right there for me.” Adam L., RAPP 4-H

“I just like watching him grow up through the pictures, from when we got him till now... I can’t wait to see what the next seven years will be like.” Jay, grandparent caregiver of Justin O., RAPP 4-H

In addition to the scrapbooks, the project added a documentary, which has been used to recruit new members to our RAPP program and educate and enlighten others

in our state and community about kinship care families. Copies of the documentary are available for free loan to other groups interested in modeling this exciting youth development program.

We have been honored with the notification of a New York State award, NEAFCS, the New York Affiliate, 4-H Excellence in After-school Programming Award, for our development of the Family Portraits Project and documentary, *The RAPP Family Portraits Project*:

Grandfamilies Tell Their Stories. This award is now being considered for national honors by the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS).

For more information on Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County’s Family Portraits Project, please contact Denyse Variano at dav4@cornell.edu.

Public Housing Authorities Can Be Great Partners!

Erin Unz Rouse
Syracuse Housing Authority

Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) can offer RAPPs looking to recruit new participants excellent opportunities for partnership and outreach. PHAs often have both housing for elderly and disabled populations, as well as housing designated for families

with children. Public Housing Authorities are required, by Federal Law, to collect and track detailed information about all residents. This makes PHAs a rich resource for referrals and collaboration.

Depending on the size of your local PHA, Housing Authority staff may have access to automated computer systems that can identify grandparent headed households as well as other relatives caring for children. While PHA's cannot share this information with you, they may be willing to mail your meeting announcements and other information to residents. Also ask if they would be willing to post flyers in main offices or community rooms located within public housing developments. Some Housing Authorities may even offer transportation for residents to RAPP meetings!

Get started by contacting your local PHA. Talk to the Executive Director or another administrator about RAPP and your interest in collaborating. Find out if there is a Human Services Department or another PHA department that would be willing to have you come and discuss your RAPP at a staff meeting. That is an excellent way to educate PHA staff on the program so that they can refer residents to you.

Visit the United States Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD) website at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/index.cfm> for more information about PHAs in your area.

For more information on the Syracuse Housing Authority RAPP, contact Erin Unz Rouse at eunz@syrhousing.org.

The Syracuse Housing Authority became a RAPP grantee in 2004.

Caregiver Legislative Update

Jaia Peterson, Public Policy and Outreach Director, Generations United

National Family Caregiver Support Program

The National Family Caregiver Support program (NFCSP) provides supportive services to relative caregivers in the form of information and referral, respite care, counseling and training and other supplemental services. Services are provided through area agencies on aging. Each state is allowed to use up to 10 percent of their NFCSP funds to provide services to grandparents or other relatives raising children.

When the program was created as part of the Older American Act in 2000, it was limited to grandparent and other relative caregivers who are over 60. Since the majority of caregivers are under 60 years old, large numbers did not qualify. In fact, only 29% of all grandparents raising grandchildren are eligible for services because of the age limit. If the age limit

was lowered, even 5 years, to 55, 47% of all grandparents raising children would be eligible.

Recognizing this concern, leaders in the field began educating Congress about the need to serve a broader group of caregivers through the program by lowering the age limit. Congress is currently in the process of working on legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act, which provides an opportunity for them to change the law. At the time of this printing the House had passed a bill that would lower the age limit for grandparents and other relatives raising children to 55. The Senate bill also includes this change. The House and Senate are in the process of "pre-conferencing" the bill which means that they are negotiating any differences between the two bills. If they are able to come to final agreement, the bill would likely be signed into law by early fall and the age limit change would be effective.

In addition to this age change, both bills also include a change that would allow older adults caring for their adult children with disabilities to qualify for services; and language to create projects of national significance to provide education and technical assistance to the aging network on serving grandparents and other relatives raising children.

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act

The Kinship Caregiver Support Act (S. 985) is a bill that would provide several supports to grandfamilies. Some provisions serve caregivers and children who are part of the formal foster care system. Other provisions serve caregivers and children whether or not they are part of the formal foster care system.

The Act creates a kinship navigator program; allows states to use federal funding for subsidized guardianship for children in foster care with relatives; requires written notification to adult relatives of a child within 60 days of the child being placed in foster care; and allows states to establish separate licensing standards for relative foster parents and non-relatives foster parents, provided both standards protect children and include criminal record checks.

The Act, introduced by Senators Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME), was referred to the Finance Committee and has 10 co-sponsors. A similar bill, **The Guardianship Assistance Promotion and Kinship Support Act** (H.R. 3380) was introduced in the House and has 15 co-sponsors. Recently, a group of national leaders in the field coordinated an effort around Mothers and Fathers day to encourage relative caregivers across the nation to contact their members

of Congress and educate them on the need for supportive services included in the bills. The effort generated more than 700 calls. Additional cosponsors and attention will need to be drawn to the bill to make it a priority for further Congressional action.

Tools for Awareness Raising

In addition to phone calls, letters and individual meetings with members of Congress, there are several ways to bring attention to the need for supportive policies for relative caregivers. Below is a description of several types of activities that Generations United and other leaders in the field have been conducting to raise such awareness:

Media Coverage

Over the last 9 months, Generations United and other leaders have submitted op-eds and letters to the editor to national and local press, communicated with editorial boards, pitched stories to national and local papers and responded to reporters from print, radio and television media in order to raise awareness about the need for supportive services to grandparents and other relatives raising children. In direct response to these efforts, GU has tracked more than 50 articles, programs or stories in national and local press including coverage in the New York Times, Christian

Science Monitor, USA today and the Montel Williams Show.

Publications with New Data

Generations United published two publications with new data that drew national attention from the press and interest from members of Congress. The first publication, *All Children Deserve a Permanent Home: Subsidized Guardianships as a Common Sense Solution for Children in Long-Term Foster Care*, provides new state by state data on the number of children in foster care with relatives and describes how federal funding for subsidized guardianship could help children in foster care with relatives. The second publication, *Meth and Child Welfare: Promising Solutions for Children, their Parents, and Grandparents*, helped draw attention to the need for supports for relative caregivers by highlighting the effect that the use of methamphetamines is having on caregiver families. This piece was particularly effective at raising awareness about relative caregiving because it identified a connection to methamphetamines, an issue already of high interest to the press and Congress.

Events

Capitol Hill events, to highlight new data, personal stories and the need for supportive policies are also effective awareness tools. In April and June,

Generations United held two Capitol Hill events to release their new publications and provide a public venue for caregivers and young people to share their stories of why supportive services are important to grandfamilies. The events drew substantial numbers of Congressional staff in addition to coverage from local and national press.

For up to date information on legislation affecting grandfamilies, contact Jaia Peterson Lent at jlent@gu.org.

**Michigan State University
School of Social Work's
Kinship Care Resource
Center**

Ama Agyemang, Coordinator

The Kinship Care Resource Center is a non-profit, community-based organization through the School of Social Work at Michigan State University (MSU). The Center was established in 2002 after a series of research projects on the needs of kinship families from 1999-2002 and became part of the RAPP state grantees in 2004, through collaboration with the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging.

The mission of the Kinship Care Resource Center is to provide support for the physical, emotional, cultural, and social well-being of kinship families in the state of

Michigan. This mission is accomplished by:

- linking families to community resources;
- providing kinship care related technical support and consultation to agencies;
- developing innovative, community-based research projects;
- educating the community about kinship care; and
- advocating for systems change at the legislative, agency and community levels.

The Center is the only kinship program in Michigan that provides a *statewide toll free line* to gain information about community resources in various counties, responds to legal concerns and provides educational and parenting resources. This allows families to locate services and helps to defragment kinship services within the state. Unlike the various individual kinship support groups, the Center *serves as a clearinghouse* to support collaboration and integration of services and programs to eliminate gaps in kinship services.

The Center has created a *kinship care coalition* of social service agencies that conduct community projects to aid kinship families as well as the *Kinship Legislative Task Force* that analyses policies affecting kinship care. The Kinship

Legislative Task Force group drafted a relative guardianship assistance bill and is currently working on a statewide workshop to train individuals on how to effectively advocate for the passage of the bill. The bill would provide a financial stipend for relatives who have guardianship of their relative's children.

The Center is also unique in *supporting community systems to provide training for professionals to help kinship families*. Through service contracts with the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, Head Start and the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Center has been able to conduct statewide kinship trainings for agency professionals, picnics, support groups, develop free literature and other educational materials, applied research and emergency assistance services to help kinship families in crisis in Ingham County.

The Center is also the only one of its kind in Michigan to *support innovative strategies to provide affordable legal services* for kinship families through collaboration with the MSU Chance at Childhood Law and Social Work Clinic. This legal clinic provides kinship caregivers with free legal counseling on issues such as adoption and guardianship.

MSU's Kinship Care Resource Center was recently approved a \$200,000 appropriation from the state budget by both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The appropriation will enable the Center to conduct a *statewide Kinship Assistance Program*.

The Kinship Assistance Program will provide financial assistance such as emergency child care kits, respite care, guardianship fees, utility assistance, counseling, conferences and training for agency professionals working with kinship families.

The statewide Kinship Assistance Program is modeled after one established by David Berns, a former Director of the Department of Human Services in El Paso County, Colorado. In their efforts to address family preservation and poverty,

TANF funds were used to create an assistance program for kinship families based on their documented requests. The program has been very successful and has received very positive reviews from kinship families and agency representatives in the El Paso County area. The Program has also contributed to a significant

decrease in the number of families needing assistance from TANF. As a result of this program, El

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY'S
KINSHIP CARE RESOURCE CENTER
HIGHLIGHTS**

- Received *funding to create* and implement the Ingham County Kinship *Emergency Assistance Program*.
- Conducted *two statewide kinship care conferences* in 2002 and 2004 that brought together over 500 kinship caregivers and social service agency representatives.
- Conducted *5 free statewide kinship care picnics*.
- *Testified in 2005* for federal support of programs for kinship care during Michigan's public policy on aging *forums for the White House Conference on Aging*.
- *Provided technical assistance* to the Area Agencies on Aging and other interested agencies on kinship program development through contracted services with the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging and the Relatives as Parents Programs.
- Created the *MSU Kinship Legislative Task Force Group*.
- Currently working with the Upper Peninsula Area Agency on Aging to conduct their first kinship conference.

Paso County in Colorado has had a:

- 40% reduction in the number of children in institutional placements; and a
- 20% decrease in the number of families taken to court for child related cases.

For more information about the MSU Kinship Care Resource Center or consulting services for kinship programs, please contact Ama Agyemang by e-mail at kinship@msu.edu.

*El Paso County
Department of Social
Services has been a Local
RAPP since 2000.*

**Tips for Working With
Legislators**
Ama Agyemang
MSU Kinship Resource Center

Working with legislators can sometimes be intimidating and overwhelming. As the Coordinator of Michigan State University's School of Social Work Kinship Care Resource Center, I have experienced this sense of intimidation and fright. However, after successfully testifying about the needs of kinship families before Michigan's House of Senate and Representatives, my Center was approved a \$200,000 appropriation in the state budget to provide statewide kinship assistance. I decided to write this article to share information on 7 practical steps to gain support from your state legislators about the needs and issues of relatives who are the primary caregivers of children.

1. Know the current issues and needs of relative caregivers for children in your state and county.

If you are not a relative caregiver, visit a local kinship support group and find surveys that have been done in your state about the needs and issues of kinship caregivers. If no surveys and research have been conducted, you may want to create a kinship needs assessment in your county or state.

2. Memorize the statistics about the number of relative caregivers for children in your state and county. This can be found at the U.S. 2000 Census Bureau website and on the State Fact sheets, available on the Brookdale website, www.brookdalefoundation.org.

Memorize at least three statistics including the number of:

Children being raised by relatives in your state and county;

Grandparents raising grandchildren; and

Children being raised by relatives in the districts of your county legislator.

Remember, your county legislator may have multiple counties!

Legislators always want to have statistics to back up a need or

issue. Knowing the statistics in their multiple counties is always a powerful testimony that will allow them to identify with issues that directly affect residents in their county.

3. Form a relationship with your local legislators.

Know your state legislator and introduce yourself by phone and e-mail. Try to meet him or her at least twice in person. Contact information for your legislator should be found on your state legislative website. Form relationships with legislators that are assigned to committees such as human services, family services, senior citizens services, etc.

It is also important to form relationships with Democratic and Republican legislators from the House and Senate. When meeting with legislators (or their representatives), keep your meeting short (15 minutes) and straight to the point. Be professional and do not attack. Always emphasize the importance of family preservation and how keeping children with their families will support the goal of reducing the number of children placed in foster care.

4. Understand how the legislative process works; How bills become laws and also understand your state's appropriation process. You can find out the

answers to these questions by calling your local legislator's office.

If you are asking for state funds to support a kinship program, know when your Department of Human Services appropriation meetings begin for both the House and Senate and also know the members of the committee. This is public information and can be found on your state legislative website.

5. Attend legislative committee and appropriation meetings for your Department of Human Services and Child and Family Services. Meet the committee members individually before the appropriation and committee meetings and discuss the needs of kinship care. Ask for their support and information on who they suggest you contact for additional support. Legislators always want to know that their colleagues also support a certain issue. Meeting them individually will also lessen your fright during your public testimony at the Department of Human Services appropriation and committee meetings.

6. Form a legislative task force group. Have a plan and a goal.

Create a legislative task force group that meets at a convenient time and date for the group. Your legislative group should not be large (10 people at most) and should include at least two kinship caregivers, lawyers, kinship service providers, personnel from lobbyist agencies and other appropriate social service personnel.

7. Be consistent and don't give up! Remember, Rome wasn't built in day!

With knowledge, consistency and determination, your voice will eventually be heard and change will begin.

For more information about advocacy strategies please contact Ama Agyemang by e-mail at kinship@msu.edu.

Make Tax Time Pay for Relative Caregivers: Financial Assistance Through Tax Credits

By Roxy Caines
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) are federal tax credits worth thousands of dollars that reduce taxes and supplement wages. Some workers could receive a refund even if they don't owe taxes!

Relatives raising children may be able to claim an EIC up to \$4,536 if in 2006 they:

- Earned less than \$36,348 (\$38,348 if married);
- Raised a child in their home for more than half the year. (Children must be under age 19, under age 24 if a full-time student or any age if they have permanent and total disabilities); and
- Have a Social Security number (SSN) that authorizes work. (A spouse and child must also have a SSN that authorizes work).

Kinship caregivers may be able to claim a CTC up to \$1,000 if in 2006 they:

- Earned *more than* \$11,300;
- Raised a child under age 17 in their home for more than half the year; and
- Have a SSN or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). (A spouse and child are also required to have one of these).

What else should families know about the EIC and CTC?

- Some families can claim both tax credits;
- Workers who were eligible for the EIC or CTC in the past but did not claim them can claim their refund for up to three previous years;
- The EIC and CTC are not counted as income in determining eligibility for

other public benefits, such as cash assistance, food stamps, SSI, Medicaid or federal housing assistance. The tax credits will not immediately count against asset limits that may apply to these programs; and

- Workers must file a tax return using Form 1040 or 1040A **AND** fill out and attach Schedule EIC to claim the EIC or Form 8812 to claim the CTC.

Are there other tax credits that can help kinship families?

The Child and Dependent Care Credit (DCTC) is a non-refundable federal tax credit that can reduce the amount of taxes families owe which may increase their EIC or CTC refund. Twenty-eight states also have a state DCTC.

Workers may be able to claim a DCTC up to \$2,100 if they:

- Paid child care expenses during 2006 in order to work or look for work
- Raised a dependent child under age 13 in their home for more than half the year; and
- Have a SSN or ITIN (A spouse and child are also required to have one of these).

Workers in the following states may be able to claim a state EIC in addition to the federal EIC: DC, DE, IL, IN, IA, KS, MD,

ME, MA, MN, NE, NJ, NY, OK, OR, RI, VA, VT, WI.

Some state level tax credits are refundable and can add more money to the pockets of working families. For more information, contact your state department of revenue.

FREE tax filing assistance is available!

There are several free tax filing assistance programs sponsored by the IRS that can help workers claim tax credits and file forms correctly. Call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 for nearby

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites. You can also call 1-888-227-7669 to find an AARP Tax-Aide site near you, or visit

www.aarp.org/money/taxaide

Georgia State Provides Comprehensive Services to Relative Caregivers

Leslie McGee
Kinship Care Coordinator
Division of Aging Services

The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR), Division of Aging Services, has collaborated extensively

with other Georgia DHR Offices and Divisions in order to provide an enhanced service network for grandparents raising grandchildren across the state.

As a result of many workgroup meetings and discussions, Georgia Department of Human Resources Commissioner, along with DHR's Division of Aging Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)

Join the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' National Tax Credit Outreach Campaign!

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' produces an Earned Income Credit and Child Tax Credit Outreach Kit that contains bilingual outreach materials including color posters, flyers, brochures and envelope stuffers in English and Spanish, facts about the tax credits, strategies to promote them and link workers to free tax filing assistance and examples of how organizations are involved. Information in 18 additional languages and other outreach materials (including a sample newsletter article) are also available.

To request a FREE copy of this Tax Credit Outreach Kit or to find organizations in your area that promote the EIC and CTC, contact: *Roxy Caines, (202) 408-1080 or*

and Office of Child Support Enforcement staff, agreed to place grandparents as a priority population on state policies that affect grandparents.

Effective August 1st, these changes in state policy will benefit grandparents who are 60 years or older and/or SSI eligible or disabled:

1. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren will receive Emergency/Crisis Intervention Services to help pay for the cost of emergent needs (i.e. shelter, utilities, school expenses). TANF dollars will be the funding element;
2. Grandparents raising grandchildren 60 and older/SSI eligible can receive additional funds to supplement their fixed income to meet additional expenses associated with raising their grandchildren to avoid their placement in DFCS custody. An additional \$50 per month can be added to their TANF Child-Only payments;
3. A subsidized childcare program for low-income families will provide priority services. Grandparents will be exempt from the work activity requirement if age 60 or older or disabled under age 60;
4. The Office of Child Support Enforcement will change their policy so that grandparents with physical, not just legal custody, will receive child support payments. Child support services will be

available to grandparents immediately when they have physical custody;

5. The Division of Aging Services Kinship Care Specialists have become certified foster care trainers in order to provide one-on-one foster care training to grandparents. By receiving this training, grandparents can become foster care parents for their grandchildren in DFCS custody, which allows them to receive 100% of the foster care per diem. This foster care training is called IMPACT, which is an acronym for *Initial Interest, Mutual Selection, Pre-Service Training, Assessment, Continuing Development and Teamwork.*; and

6. Grandparents and other caregivers are hired in the metro-Atlanta county Departments of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to assist other grandparents raising their grandchildren by giving them advice on how to “navigate” the state system and help them understand the different requirements and paperwork needed to

apply for services offered by DFCS. Currently, there are 10 Grandparent Navigators hired within the metro-Atlanta DFCS office.

The Division of Public Health has collaborated with Georgia State’s Project Healthy Grandparents and the Division of Aging Services to conduct a full day seminar on grandparents raising grandchildren. This seminar will teach Public Health’s staff about the Department of Human Resources’ grandparent initiative and provide other important information on the special needs and resources available to this population.

For more information on the Georgia State RAPP Initiative, contact Leslie McGee at lemckee@dhr.state.ga.us.

Hawaii State’s RAPP Initiative

Wes Lum, RAPP State Coordinator

The Hawaii Executive Office on Aging’s (EOA) RAPP State Initiative began in 2004. EOA is the State Unit on Aging whose mission is to assure the well-being of the State’s 230,000+ adults, age 60 and older, by providing leadership in programs and policies for older adults. We serve as a clearinghouse for information and partner with our Aging Network to provide home and community based care for frail, vulnerable seniors.

EOA is committed to supporting family caregivers, including grandparents raising grandchildren. Our accomplishments over the past year include:

Raising Awareness

The Hawaii Caregiver Coalition is the official RAPP Statewide Network. The Coalition has tackled two policy issues: grandfamily housing and adoption assistance. On March 14, 2006, the Coalition co-sponsored “*Caregiver’s Day at the Capitol*” to celebrate professional and family caregivers and to raise awareness of caregiver issues with Legislators.

The Coalition also coordinated “Holo Imua Kakou” (Moving Forward Together) on January 10, 2006, *an evening reception for Legislators* to enjoy networking and presentations, by, among others, a grandfather from Maui who raised 3 grandchildren. In addition to the above, Hi’i Na Kupuna, Maui County’s grandparent coalition, meets monthly to discuss grandparent issues and concerns.

Grandparent Training Legal Services for Children, the Institute for Family Enrichment, Hawaii Family Services, the Queen Liliuokalani Children’s Center (QLCC), Alu Like, AARP and Honolulu County’s Elderly Affairs Division organized “Ka Lei Mehana O

Na Kupuna” (The Lei of Warmth of the Kupuna), a half-day training for kincare caregivers on the Waianae Coast on Oahu. A similar conference is planned in 2006 on the island of Kauai.

The Legal Aid Society of Hawaii in Maui received Brookdale RAPP funds to establish the *Kincare Adoption Outreach Project on the Island of Molokai* to provide educational outreach services to kincare caregivers on matters of adoption, guardianship and public and federal tax benefits. Financial resources and brochures on legal issues were developed for outreach presentations and are used county-wide.

Support Groups

Brookdale RAPP funds were used to initiate 2 support groups: the West Kauai Ohana Caregivers Support Group and the Hi’i Na Kupuna Support Group in Maui County. The Hi’i Na Kupuna Support Group also offers excursions for the grandparents such as whale watching, hiking and shows.

Advocacy

Several legislative proposals were introduced during the 2006 Legislature including a bill that established a Joint Legislative Task Force to determine visitation rights of kinship caregivers and another that required housing “set asides” for grandparents raising grandchildren in state housing

facilities. Although these bills did not pass, S.B. No. 40, which was subsequently signed into law as Act 208, did pass in 2005. This Act authorizes caregivers to consent to health care services for minors. Also in 2005, the Legislature adopted S.C.R. No. 21, which asks the U.S. Congress to continue to review the issue of affordable and adequate intergenerational housing.

Communication

EOA’s quarterly newsletter, *Family Caregiver*, dedicates a column titled “Tutu’s Corner” to address kinship caregiver issues. The newsletter can be downloaded by visiting: www4.hawaii.gov/eoa/information/newsletters/index.html.

Data Collection

The University of Hawaii Family and Consumer Sciences Department has received a small research grant to assess the needs of Hawaii’s grandparents raising grandchildren. Please visit www.hawaii.edu/ohanacaregivers for more information.

This year EOA will be sponsoring questions on a statewide survey to determine the numbers, places of residence and duration of grandfamily caregivers in Hawaii.

For more information on the Hawaii State RAPP Initiative please contact Wes Lum at 808-586-7319 or at wes.lum@doh.hawaii.gov.

AN INTERVIEW WITH LINDA SILVAS, AUTHOR MAMA BEAR, BABY BEAR



The RAPP Reporter: Tell us about Mama Bear Baby Bear and why you wrote it.

Linda Silvas: Mama Bear is grandmother, Baby Bear is grandchild (they represent every man, woman and child). The book is about the forbidden fruit of the forest (drugs/alcohol) and the elders and other relatives raising the children because their parents are not able to do so.



Mama Bear Baby Bear describes what Baby Bear has to endure because his parents are eating the forbidden fruit and

are neglecting him. When word reaches the ears of Mama Bear that her grandchild is in danger, she is sad and angry to learn that her own child is eating the forbidden fruit and, in fear for her precious grandchild, she immediately goes to his aid. Her life changes at that moment.

The book gives hope to a dilemma that has broken the family circle. Mama Bear Baby Bear is a leaning tool in the fight against substance abuse. We are all walking the same path the circle that never ends.

I chose to write it because it was my own personal experience which I wanted to share. I used animals because I didn't want to mention names.

The RAPP Reporter: What do you think is the most important message in the book?

Linda Silvas: Teaching our youth and future generations about the dangers of the forbidden fruit (drugs and substance abuse).

The RAPP Reporter: How did you choose the title, *Mama Bear Baby Bear*?

Linda Silvas: The bear is a symbol of strength. There's no wrath like the wrath of a mama bear. You don't want to get in mama bear's way when it comes to her cub.

The RAPP Reporter: What advice would you give to grandparents and relatives who are caregivers?

Linda Silvas: Don't lose your spirit and by all means... use the services available through groups like RAPP and organizations like Generations United, AARP, etc.

The RAPP Reporter: In the book, Baby Bear has a strong connection to Mama Bear, would you say this happened in your situation?



Linda Silvas: Oh yes. There is a special bond between baby bear and I. Baby Bear has recently gone back to live with mom, but he does come to visit and brings his friends. To me that's an honor, that he wants to share his friends and time with me.

The RAPP Reporter: Has your grandson read the book? What was his reaction?

Linda Silvas: Yes. He gets something different each time he reads it. It's fascinating. As he grows older, he gets a

different meaning. He relates to the forbidden fruit and its dangers.

The RAPP Reporter: Has the role of grandparents changed as compared to when you were a young girl?

Linda Silvas: Oh yes, when I was young, the family circle was still there and the family gathered together, took vacations together and holidays. As I grew up, that changed. There is a different frame of mind today. The family has become more fragmented. It is grandparents who are trying to pull that family circle back together.

The RAPP Reporter: What would you recommend to those who work with relatives as parents?

Linda Silvas: Continue to convey heartfelt feelings to grandparents.

The RAPP Reporter: Our RAPPs provide supportive services to relative caregivers in 45 states and the District of Columbia. When you were a caregiver, what resources were available to you?

Linda Silvas: I didn't know of any resources. My frame of mind was to work and consider what am I going to do next? I think the supportive services are a 'God-send.' Without these resources from RAPPs, relative caregivers are at a loss.

The RAPP Reporter: What type of relationship do you have with your grandson's parents?

Linda Silvas: I have a good one. I tried to keep it that way. I tried not to be outwardly judgmental and point fingers. I always let them know that I loved them even when I was not happy. When baby bear's mom cleaned up her act, I was right there. I was proud of her and I let her know.

The RAPP Reporter: Who should read this book?

Linda Silvas: Everybody. Why? Because it is a learning tool and it is the type of book that people can relate to.

The RAPP Reporter: Is there going to be a sequel?

Linda Silvas: Yes. Definitely.

The RAPP Reporter: What words of encouragement or advice would you like to leave with our readers?

Linda Silvas: We are the strength pulling up the future. It is up to us to keep our hand extended. There is hope!

To learn more about Linda's itinerary and the book Mama Bear Baby Bear, visit her

website:

www.mamabearbabybear.com

Tennessee State's Relative Caregiver Program

Tennessee's Relative Caregiver Program developed out of the recognition that abused and neglected children, whose parents are unable to provide for them, are best served if cared for by other suitable family members, rather than by unrelated caregivers.

The Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation that created The Relative Caregiver Program on June 9, 2000. Four million (\$4,000,000.00) dollars were allocated to support the Relative Caregiver Program through a two-year pilot in Shelby, Davidson and Upper Cumberland's fourteen counties.

The program was initially funded through the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant prior to being built into the Department of Children's Services base budget. The pilot regions began administering services in April, 2001. In June 2002, legislation passed which extended the pilot for an additional two years. Effective July 1, 2004, the Relative

Caregiver Program became a formal program administered by the Department of Children's Services. The Department of Children's Services (DCS) administers this public/private collaboration by contracting with community-based agencies. The Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) is currently operating in 9 regions in Tennessee: Davidson, Shelby, Upper-Cumberland, South West, North West, Hamilton, East, Knox and North East. By the end of 2006, DCS will implement the program in Mid-Cumberland and South East and South Central Tennessee, thereby expanding to all 12 regions and 95 counties of the state.

Since the Relative Caregiver Program's inception, 5,300 children and more than 3,110 caregivers have been served.

RCP is a vital program to DCS that has achieved the following outcomes:

1. 85% of children determined eligible and participating in RCP show a demonstrated increase in stability by remaining in the continuous care of relatives;

2. Less than 5% of children determined eligible and participating in RCP are removed from the relative and placed in the legal custody of the state;

3. Less than 5% of children determined eligible and participating in RCP re-enter the legal custody of the state after exiting and being placed in relative care;

4. 80% of relative caregiver families show an increase of self-sufficiency and the ability to maintain responsibility and care for at-risk, abused and neglected children without

involvement of the formal child welfare system. This is demonstrated by the family's progression to independence from RCP and achievement of all goals outlined in the Action Plan; and 5. At least 50% of all families being served by RCP will be referred from the Department of Children's Services, the

Department of Human Services and/or the Courts. Tennessee has demonstrated

of the formal system of foster care.

TENNESSEE'S RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM WHAT WE DO!	
SERVICE NAME	DESCRIPTION
Short-term Case Management	Helps kinship families maintain stability, provides support and empowers them to become self-sufficient. Designed to assist and coordinate services for the whole family based on identified needs.
Groups for Children & Teens	Structured groups and activities allowing children to build a sense of community and belonging among other children in relative care, and address attachment issues evolving from separation, loss, and grief through social and cognitive development.
Information & Referral	A service for children and relative caregivers to ensure access to accurate information and linkage with available services within the program or community.
Educational Workshops	Training designed to provide critical education and information that empower caregivers to provide optimal care for their related children.
Emergency Financial Assistance	To support caregivers' ability to provide basic care by assisting with family needs such as: material assistance, clothing, assistance with paying a utility bill or transitional child care.
Recreation & Respite	A service that gives the relative caregiver scheduled or emergency "time off" from child rearing responsibilities and provides a safe and fun environment where structured activities foster social interaction and development.
Support Groups	A scheduled meeting designed to address concerns and issues facing relative caregivers.

a strong commitment to kinship families by passing the Relative Caregiver Bill and implementing the Relative Caregiver Program. The creation of the program has made it possible to provide information, supportive services and financial aid to relative caregivers and children outside

are some highlights: Area Agencies on Aging have and continue to develop outreach strategies to provide education, information, funding and services to relative caregivers. Some of the highlights of this effort include the *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Positive*

For more information on the Tennessee Relative Caregiver Program, contact the Director, Robert L. Matthews, robert.l.matthews@state.tn.us or (615) 532-2342.

Connecticut's Statewide Network
Roberta Gould, RAPP
State Coordinator

The State of Connecticut's Department of Social Services in Hartford has a Grandparents as Parents (GAPS) Statewide Network with approximately 124 agencies and 34 support groups. It continues to seek creative ways to assist grandparent and relative caregivers throughout Connecticut. Here

Directions Program in Norwalk, CT that provides *prevention-based child rearing classes* for grandparents raising grandchildren;

The *City of Hartford Commission on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* co-sponsored, with the *New England Cognitive Center*, a seven-week course, "*Making the Most of Second Time Around.*" Participants, grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children learned techniques and coping skills to help them face the challenges of raising a second family in later life. Graduates of the course earned a certificate from the University of Hartford; and

The *Department of Children and Families* co-sponsored *free workshops* in the Hartford area with support from the *William Caspar Graustein Memorial Foundation* for parents, foster parents and relative caregivers who wanted to learn about resources and techniques that help children succeed in school and in life.

The GAPS statewide Taskforce has also been an *advocate for the passage of a Kinship Navigator Program*. As a direct result of this effort, the Governor signed a Public Act concerning youth policy and the Kinship Navigator Program. The Act mandates that the Department of Children and Families, in consultation with

the Department of Social Services, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Mental Retardation, establish a kinship navigator program that will ensure that grandparents and other relative caregivers who are primary caregivers will receive information on the array of services and benefits for which they may be eligible. Funding will be available to train staff to better refer caregivers to appropriate services throughout the state.

Connecticut legislative highlights include: *An Act Concerning Grandparent Notification When a Child Is Removed From The Home: Public Act 06-37*. This Act requires the Department of Children and Families to notify a child's grandparents that he/she has been removed from the home; and *An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures and Revenues For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2007: Public Act 06-186*. This Act includes funding for a Kinship Navigator Program (reported above). GAPS has also developed a *directory that includes support group listings and an e-mail network* to share organizational updates and news for caregivers.

For more information on the Connecticut State RAPP Initiative, contact Roberta Gould:
roberta.gould@po.state.ct.us.



Minnesota **Kinship Caregivers** Association

Improving lives of grandparents, relatives, and the children they're raising.

Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association

Sharon Durken, Executive Director

The Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association (MKCA) is a statewide, non-profit organization collaborating and partnering with agencies and groups that work directly with grandparents, relatives, and close family friends who are raising children. MKCA's reach is statewide and unique in that MKCA is the only organization in the state that focus's solely on kinship issues.

National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), In 2002, the Minnesota Board on Aging in cooperation with the Area Agencies on Aging granted MKCA the full 10% of NFCSP funding allowable to develop and implement a statewide service delivery model to kinship caregivers. The Grand Kin Project serves all 87 counties and 6 Indian Reservations in northern Minnesota.

Grand Kin Project

1. During 2004, MKCA developed a Strategic Plan

encompassing the following three overarching goals:

- To provide high quality services through an effective statewide service delivery model;
- To create a strong voice in the public policy arena; and
- To ensure an effective organization through increased governance capacity and sufficient human and financial resources to achieve planned goals.

As a result, MKCA made some significant adjustments in how supportive services can best be delivered to caregivers across the state, including those from other cultures. Our service delivery model shifted from 18 Host Agencies to six “*Regional Service Agencies (RSAs)*” on January 1, 2005. These changes have increased the volume and quality of direct services to caregivers and the children, but also enhanced the long-term sustainability of those services. The RSAs have a broad geographical reach and strong collaborative relationships that provide a continuum of services to kinship caregivers. Minnesota is a vastly rural state which makes traveling difficult for many kinship caregivers. To accommodate this obstacle, MKCA began hosting Regional Community Forums. The purpose of these workshops is to educate professionals and

caregivers about available benefits and services and address complex caregiving issues. The speakers are local experts from each region who speak about their specialty in law, financial issues, behaviors, attachment and other topics requested by the caregivers.

MKCA’s resource manuals, *First Steps and Legal Steps* can be downloaded from our website at www.mkca.org. The site also contains information about MKCA, support services and news. Findings of a research study on grandparents and relatives raising children in Minnesota was completed by the University of Minnesota School of Social Work and can also be viewed on the MKCA website.

The Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency

One of MKCA’s Regional Service Agencies is the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA). Arrowhead is a private, nonprofit, Community Action Agency in its 40th year of providing self-sufficiency services to low-income and disadvantaged citizens in northeastern Minnesota. AEOA has operated the ROCK (Raising Our Children’s Kids) program in northern St Louis County since 1994. Over the years the program has offered a variety of services including peer support groups, educational presentations, recreational opportunities,

crisis assistance, advocacy and referrals.

In 2005 AEOA received a Regional RAPP Grant from the Brookdale Foundation. That, along with support from the Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association, allowed the ROCK program to expand to serve twelve counties in northeastern Minnesota. ROCK now supports seven peer support groups and expects soon to add an eighth.

Because of the vast geographic area served, AEOA collaborates with various organizations to deliver services. One valued partner is the Isle Recreational and Educational Center (IREC). Isle is a small community of less than 1,000 people in Central Minnesota. Two years ago IREC formed a RAPP support group which currently supports ten families.

Contact information for Arrowhead and for MKCA’s other Regional Service Agencies can be found on MKCA’s website.

Minnesota’s Grand Kin Navigator Program

Upon careful study and discussion, the MKCA Board of Directors voted to change the name of the Grand Kin Project to *Minnesota’s Grand Kin Navigator Program*. It was determined that the work MKCA does through the six contracted RSAs functions as a navigation system to help

Minnesota's grand families "navigate" raising relative's children. Our goal is to strengthen the existing program by increasing funding and working closely with partner organizations to develop stronger ties and bring more of the needed support to the families. We aim to be recognized as Minnesota's Grand Kin Navigator Program in the future by the Minnesota State Legislature.

Our current number of support groups has grown in 2006 from 33 to 37 and includes youth support groups. For some regions it has been more difficult establishing support groups due to the vast distances, but once the groups are established and friendships developed, they sustain and grow. The RSA Coordinators attended an MKCA "train the trainer" day to learn about mentoring and group facilitation. The presenters were experts from within the RSA ranks. The RSA Coordinators will train peer facilitators to lead support groups. Some support groups already use these peer facilitators successfully and gather them quarterly to share the successes and issues encountered in their roles. They receive support and share concerns with the other facilitators, the RSA Coordinator and MKCA Director.

MKCA Collaborations MKCA is working on Native American Parenting Traditions Revisited (NAPTR) project. We are partnering with Native American Community Clinic (NACC), Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol (MOFAS), and Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC) to create a curriculum to assist families affected by fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. The Cummings Foundation funded the project and enabled a Program Coordinator to be hired. MKCA is one of the 4 founding organizations and we are on the work committee writing the curriculum.

MKCA, along with American Indian OIC and the Wilder Research Foundation hosted a meeting with a representative from Senator Coleman's office, the Director of Minnesota's Department of Human Services, foster care, 3 metro counties and several community partnerships to look at public policy to determine if changes are needed to support caregivers. From this and other meetings we hope to look at policy that exists or that may be needed to assist caregivers in their roles as primary caregivers of their relative's children.

For more information on the MKCA or their Regional RAPP initiative, contact Sharon Durken at sharon@mkca.org.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Due to Parental Loss

Deborah Langosch, Ph.D., Director, of the Kinship Care Program at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, researched the impact of grief and loss in kinship families as her doctoral thesis. She explored the experiences of grandmothers who were raising grandchildren in informal care due to the death of their parent from either AIDS or cancer. The study looked at the grandmother's process of grieving their adult child while being solely responsible for their grandchildren, her adaptation to this profound loss, coping strategies and her relationship with her grandchildren. Half of the participants suffered the death from AIDS and half were from cancer. Comparisons were made between the two groups.

Although it was a small qualitative study, the in-depth interviews revealed some significant findings. These were:

- 1) a complicated and protracted mourning process for the grandmothers, especially for those coping with an AIDS death;
- 2) a high incidence of multiple losses and ensuing depression;
- 3) a history or current use of drugs or alcohol among 50% of the subjects which appeared to

be a form of self-medicating for anxiety and depression;
4) issues relating to secrecy and shame specific to AIDS;
5) the grandmother's ability to be considerably attuned to her grandchildren's needs, despite minimizing her own needs at times; and
6) effectively advocating on behalf of her grandchildren.

It was a testimony to the grandmother's efforts and strengths that they found a path around or through many obstacles to accomplish so much for their grandchildren. Policy and practice need to respond to the wide gaps in service that currently exist in order to comprehensively address these families needs and sustain them through trauma, loss and hardship.

More information on the study can be found in her book, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Due to Parental Loss: Their Bereavement Process and Capacity for Adaptation and Empathy*. The book is available from ProQuest at 300 North Zeeb Rd., P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 or 800-521-0600. Visit their website for more information:
www.il.proquest.com.

**THE FLORIDA KINSHIP
CENTER COMMUNICATES!**
Anne Strozier

The Florida Kinship Center is dedicated to communicating

with caregivers and providers. The most effective way we do this is through our quarterly newsletter, *Kinnectivity*. *Kinnectivity* highlights updates from community partners, photographs of caregivers and events, new resources, stories about caregivers' lives and contributions, upcoming events, and other resources of interest to kinship caregivers and professionals.

To keep the community up-to-date on a weekly basis, the Center also sends an e-newsletter weekly to everyone on its mailing list. This e-mail announcement consolidates information we get daily about announcements for upcoming meetings and community events, important updates concerning kinship care, and information concerning caregiver training and services.

The Center also updates its website, www.flkin.org, frequently and provides information about events and newsworthy items through this medium. The Florida Kinship Center also has a unique method to increase communication about kinship care on a national basis. Four years ago, our good friends, Christine Crosby and Jonathan Minocci, came to us with the idea of launching the first magazine for grandparents: *GRAND*. For many years, Christine and Jonathan had offered tremendous support to the Florida Kinship Center and

now wanted to create an exciting new offering for all grandparents. The outcome of their efforts and commitment is the almost three year-old magazine, *GRAND*, with an entire section in every magazine devoted to kinship care! This is a wonderful tribute to kinship care and a fantastic way to communicate about the needs and triumphs of caregivers all over our country.

For more information on the Florida State Initiative contact Anne Strozier at strozier@cas.usf.edu. For more information on Grand Magazine, visit their website, www.grandmagazine.com.

Washington State's Aging and Disability Services Administration, Department of Social and Health Services Administration (DSHS) has a new website! Those interested in resources for relative caregivers in the state of Washington can now log on to www1.dshs.wa.gov/kinship care. The website is a joint project between Economic Services Administration, Aging and Disability Services Administration, Children's Administration and the DSHS website staff.

UPDATES ON OUR NATIONAL PARTNERS

GENERATIONS UNITED
Generations United (GU) is a nonpartisan organization that bridges child and aging policy,

practice and research on intergenerational issues at the national, state and local levels. GU has served as a resource to professionals and advocates in the intergenerational field for over twenty years.

Mark your calendars to attend GU's 14th International Conference, Intergenerational: IT'S MONUMENTAL, on July 24 - 27, 2007 in Washington, D.C. A special Grandfamilies Pre-Conference Intensive will take place on July 25th. A dedicated grandfamilies track runs the length of the full conference.

Conference information can be found at GU's iPATH at www.gu.org. Check under the 'Action Center' tab to find the latest information on the 2007 conference, or get updates on federal legislation that impacts grandfamilies.

You can also access resources to support your work under the 'Resources' tab. A current list of publications and guides, all free for download, as well as links to the 2005 American Community Survey Census data on the numbers of grandparents and other relatives raising children in the United States, are just a click away.

We always enjoy hearing from our colleagues, email gu@gu.org or call (202) 289-3979.

AARP

The Grandparent Information Center (GIC) has a new home!

The GIC is now part of the AARP Foundation, which is AARP's charitable arm. The AARP Foundation delivers direct community services, education and information to improve the experience of aging in America. Through various service programs, the Foundation works energetically to bring about positive social change and to deliver value to people 50 and older.

The AARP Foundation also strives to build a society in which everyone ages with dignity and purpose. The AARP Foundation Grandparent Information Center (GIC) will continue to position grandparents as a valued resource to society and important safety net for millions of families. With the support of the AARP Foundation, we will continue to help grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren and will strive to have an even greater impact on the lives of grandparents and their families.

New from the AARP Grandparent Information Center is a film entitled *Lean on Me: A Film About Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children*.

There are three easy ways to order this FREE resource:

1. Write to:
AARP Fulfillment
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC
20049

2. Send an email to fulfillment@aarp.org that includes your name, address, telephone number, the stock number of the film - C2212 (DVD) or C2213 (VHS) and the total number of DVDs or VHS tapes you would like to receive (maximum of 10 unless approval is received from GIC staff).
3. Call, toll-free, 1-888-OUR-AARP (687-2277) and give them the above information.

Visit the AARP Grandparent Information Center website at www.aarp.org/grandparents for more information, articles, publications, and other resources for grandparents and other relatives raising children.

AARP has begun the 2006 updates to the State Fact Sheets for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children. Approximately 12-13 states will be fully updated each quarter, so that each state is revised once annually. During the first quarter, the following states have been revised and are now available online: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, DC, Georgia, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Washington. Quarter two revisions are underway. The revised fact sheets are available for download on AARP's

website

<http://www.aarp.org/research/family/grandparenting/aresearch-import-488.html>. These state fact sheets continue to be a tremendous resource for grandparent and other relative caregivers as they seek supportive programs and services in their local communities.

Included in the state fact sheets are:

- Census data on the numbers of grandparent caregivers and the children they are raising;
- A comprehensive list of local programs, resources and services;
- State foster care policies for kinship (grandparent and other relative) caregivers;
- Information about key public benefit programs;
- Important state laws; and
- A list and contact information for national organizations that may be of help.

Last, but certainly not least, the GIC has recently updated and expanded its Local Grandparent Support Database. The database has a new look, is more user-friendly and updates are now posted live within two business days. This searchable database contains contact information for hundreds of local level

grandparent support groups and other supportive programs and services. To add or update your group's information, or to find out what else exists in your area, go to www.aarp.org/grandparents and click on the green banner that says "Find grandparenting resources in your community." Please add or update your information and help spread the word to your community partners to do the same!

THE UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU

For the first time in Census 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau collected information about grandparents who have primary responsibility for their grandchildren under age 18 who are living with them. That information was summarized in a report, *Grandparents Living with Grandchildren: 2000*. This report is available on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-31.pdf>.

Every year, beginning in 2000, the American Community Survey (ACS) has collected similar information. The ACS data have been released on the Census Bureau's American FactFinder site: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.

In January, 2005 the ACS was fully implemented. Throughout the year, ACS data was collected from approximately three million housing unit addresses. Beginning August

15, 2006, you will be able to see grandparent caregiver data for 6,625 different geographic areas of the United States.

ACS grandparent caregiver data will be available for every Congressional District for the first time. Data will also be available for more than 2,000 Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) covering the entire country.

What's a PUMA? A PUMA is a geographic area with a population of about 100,000. PUMA boundaries were established by the Census Bureau for Census 2000 with the advice of local officials. In rural areas, PUMAs are often groups of counties which together have a population of at least 100,000. Urban areas are divided into several different PUMAs. In New York City, the boundaries of PUMAs correspond very closely to the boundaries of community districts.

Now Available!

The Census Bureau has released a social data profile for each of 6,625 geographic areas. It includes the following estimates:

- Number of grandparents living with own grandchildren, under 18 years, in households;
- Number responsible for grandchildren;

- Years responsible for grandchildren;
- Percent who are female; and
- Percent who are married.

Each estimate is accompanied by the margin of error due to sampling variability.

Some detailed tables about grandparent caregivers have also been released. Tables B10051A through B10051I will show the number of grandparents responsible for grandchildren for major race and Hispanic origin categories.

Also available from the Census Bureau will be data from the 2005 Puerto Rico Community Survey. See the Puerto Rico social data profile on American FactFinder for information about grandparent caregivers in Puerto Rico!

In the Fall of 2006, the Census Bureau will release two Subject Tables. S1001 will show Grandchildren Characteristics and S1002 will show Grandparent Characteristics. Stay tuned to the Census Bureau's website, www.census.gov, for more information.

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

Beginning January 2006, CWLA has focused on establishing a national kinship care advisory committee to help define areas of policy, practice

and advocacy that affects the well being of kinship families.

On March 1, 2006, the CWLA National Kinship Care Advisory Committee held its first meeting. Approximately 19 committee members participated by teleconference or in person, including CWLA regional membership directors and other staff. Committee members represent public and private child welfare agencies, community-based informal kinship care organizations, private advocacy groups, foundations and academics from two universities. Meetings have continued throughout this year. The Committee is currently working on several initiatives including an update of the *CWLA Standards of Excellence for Kinship Care Services* based on current literature and research and a newsletter that will feature legislative and public policy updates, new publications, upcoming kinship care conferences and training opportunities.

The Committee is also working on a presentation "*Advocating for Kinship Care as a Valuable Resource for Families*" which will be featured at the 2007 CWLA National Conference, *Raising Our Voices for Children*, on February 26-28. The Presentation will focus on advocacy, policy and best practice within the kinship field. For more information visit the

CWLA website:
www.cwla.org.

RELATIVE CAREGIVER RESOURCES

Challenges and Opportunities in Children's Mental Health: A View from Families and Youth
http://nccp.org/pub_ucr06a.html

This is the first report in a new series from the National Center for Children in Poverty, Unclaimed Children Revisited. It documents critical issues in children's mental health policy and service delivery from the perspective of the key stakeholders—families and youth. Based on a meeting to inform a 50-state policy study, the report highlights innovative ways in which families and youth are engaged in research, policy, and advocacy strategies to improve the mental health, school success, living situation, and community engagement of children and youth facing mental health challenges.

Caring for their Children's Children: Assessing the Mental Health Needs and Service Experiences of Grandparent Caregiver Families

This report from Chapin Hall reveals that absent parents play an ongoing and under-recognized role in the well-being of grandparents and grandchildren, regardless of whether they are a consistent, sporadic, or rare presence in the home. With respect to mental health needs, one-third of grandparents reported symptoms of depression

themselves, and two-thirds were caring for grandchildren whom they identified as having emotional or behavioral problems. However, half of the families had no involvement with a child welfare agency, and fewer than a third of the grandchildren and only a handful of the grandmothers were currently receiving mental health services. The unmet mental health needs of both grandparents and their grandchildren are discussed as well as the implications of these findings for practitioners and advocates interested in meeting the service needs of grandparent-caregiver families.

To access the report visit:

http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1427&L2=61&L3=131

Why Can't We Be A Family Again?" This video, shot over a three year period, explores the lives of two brothers being raised by their grandmother who long to be reunited with their mother. This documentary was nominated for an Academy Award in 2003 and received other numerous awards. Available as a DVD or video from The Filmmakers Library, 124 E.40th St., NY, NY 10016 or 212-808-4980.

The following training video tapes are now available:

Kinship Care: Relative Caregivers Speak Out, a panel

of relative caregivers respond to a series of questions about kinship care including the emotional and transitional issues they and the children in their care have experienced, how they establish relationships and authority with the children in their care; approaches used to help children adjust to care and separation from their parents; interaction with birth parents and children; and how incarceration, substance abuse and the parent's absence impacts the children and relatives;

Kinship Care: Birth Mothers Speak Out, a panel of birth mothers respond to a series of questions about having children who were once in the care of relatives. Birth mothers discuss how they explained to the children the reason they were living with relatives, how they interacted and were involved with the relative and their children, how their children were affected by their incarceration, substance abuse absence or inability to care for them and the challenges and approaches used to reunite with their children; and

Kinship Care: Teens and Young Adults Speak Out, a panel of teenagers and young adults respond to a series of questions about living or having lived in kinship care. Panelists discuss how they felt about living with relatives; the challenges and adjustments they faced as they

accepted their relatives in a parental role; how their parents incarceration, substance abuse and absence affected them and how those feelings were displayed; what explanations they received for their parents absence and their response; what interactions and supports from birth parents and relatives helped them adjust to being cared for by relatives and what were the challenges faced to reunification with parents and separation from relatives.

Discussion topics and questions accompany each video and the videos are recommended for caregivers, birth parents, support groups, trainers, professionals providing services to relative caregivers and community and religious organizations. Each tape costs \$85 and can be ordered from: Dr. Joseph Crumbley
The Pavilion
261 Old York Road
Suite 620A
Jenkintown, PA 19046
(215) 884-7889 or Fax: (215) 881-7787; E-mail: office@drcrumbley.com or visit his website: www.drcrumbley.com.

Help youth find financial aid for college or vocational training Casey Family Programs has published *It's My Life: Financial Aid*, a 30-page resource guide for caseworkers, other child welfare professionals, and all adults who help young people

transitioning from foster care get access to financial aid resources. The resources offered in this guide are excerpted from *It's My Life: Postsecondary Education and Training*, a comprehensive manual for those helping young people prepare academically, financially, and emotionally for college or vocational training success. Download both guides or find out how to obtain free printed copies at www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/IMLPostsecondaryEd.htm

The Adventures of Nana Cat and Her Children, by Maureen Catherine. The Nana the Cat series is created to help children, ages 3-8, adapt to living with and being raised by a relative caregiver. For a copy of the order form, visit the Florida Kinship Center's website: <http://www.flkin.usf.edu>.

From Generations United

Generations United has updated and published the following two fact sheets to assist grandparents and other relatives caring for children:

Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: Caregiver Support Groups; and *Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: Housing Needs and Challenges*. The fact sheets can be downloaded at GU's website, www.gu.org.

In addition, the blueprint from the 2nd National Expert Symposium on Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children, held on July 2004 is also available. "*Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children: The Second Intergenerational Agenda*," is a comprehensive document that provides an overview of the successes of the first symposium in 1997 and presents twenty-eight recommendations for ACTION in order to continue to help grandparents, other relatives and the children they raise. The Action Agenda is also available on GU's website, www.gu.org.

All Children Deserve a Permanent Home: Subsidized Guardianship as a Common Sense Solution for Children in Long-Term Relative Foster Care.

This report from Generations United provides state-by-state data on the number of children living in foster care with relatives. To access the report visit GU's website at: http://ipath.gu.org/documents/AO//All_Children_Deserve_A_Permanent_Home.pdf

Meth and Child Welfare: Promising Solutions for Children, Their Parents and Grandparents
Nationally, the methamphetamine crisis has taken a powerful, tragic hold over an increasing number of children, families and the child welfare systems that protect

them. Substantial numbers of communities report that meth is a primary factor in foster care cases. Already under tremendous strain, child welfare systems in many states have been overwhelmed by the problems caused by meth and are challenged to find ways to keep children safe with restricted and inflexible resources. Sharing in the struggle are thousands of grandparents and other relatives who care for children in foster care. These "grandfamilies" step in to care for children in crisis, whether because of meth or other reasons, and they need support to help these children remain in safe permanent families. To access the document, visit Generation's United's IPATH: http://ipath.gu.org/UG_re1201437.asp

From The Children's Defense Fund

Summary of the Kinship Caregiver Support Act and Checklist of Pending Federal Proposals Affecting Children in the Child Welfare System or At Risk of Coming to the Attention of the System. These summaries as well as others are available at <http://www.childrensdefense.org>. Click on the Child Welfare and Mental Health Research Division.

Kinship Care Resource Kit for Community and Faith-Based Organizations: Helping Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children.
This kit helps community and

faith-based organizations understand what kinship care is; learn how to offer services and support for relative caregiving families; discover what resources are available to these families; and find national and state organizations and resources. The kit is available online at the CDF website.

Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guides.

Four guides to help caregivers learn about important issues affecting the children in their care. The four topics are: child care and early education programs; food and nutrition programs; health insurance; and raising children with disabilities. The guides are available online at the CDF website.

Expanding Permanency Options for Children: A Guide to Subsidized Guardianship Programs. This guide serves as a basic primer on subsidized guardianship and describes and compares current state programs. The guide is also available online at the CDF website.

From AARP's Grandparent Information Center: *Guide to Public Benefits for Grandfamilies*

Many grandparents or others who are raising children of family members already live on limited incomes when the children come to live with them. Faced with growing expenses

and shrinking incomes, they often have a hard time making ends meet. They may go deep in debt or they may need to dip into their retirement savings just to pay the monthly bills. Help may be available. The charts in this guide give information about many cash assistance, health, nutrition, and tax credit programs that could help grandfamilies. To access the guide, visit the GIC at: http://www.aarp.org/families/grandparents/raising_grandchild/public_benefits_guide.html?print=yes

From Western Michigan University Cooperative Extension:

Second Time Around: Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. A comprehensive guide for facilitating grandparent support groups. Easy to use, contains materials for 8-18 sessions. \$75

Second Time Around: The Custodial Grandparent Family. Strengths and challenges of custodial grandparent families presented by 6 grandparents. Topics include: family formations, impact on relationships, challenges, networking and resource issues. This 25 minute video is intended for professionals and family members. \$75

Second Time Around: Grand Ideas for Grand Kids. A literacy based curriculum guide for facilitating play-based groups for children being raised by grandparents. Includes resources and materials for 8-18

children's group sessions. Primarily for children who are ages 3-7 years of age. \$50.

Second Time Around: Custodial Grandchildren Tell Their Stories. (Video) Personal history of 12 diverse individuals who were raised by grandparents. Discussions focus on self-esteem, common emotions and family strengths. This 30 minute video is intended for professionals and family members. \$50

Mail or fax orders to: Western Michigan University, Department of Family & Consumer Sciences 1903 W. Michigan Avenue Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5322 Office: 269-387-3704; Fax: 269-387-3353; Checks should be made payable to: WMU, Federal ID #386-007-327.

Parenting The Second Time Around, Second Edition. A Cornell Cooperative Extension Workshop Series for Grandparents, Relatives and Others who are parenting again. This curriculum is designed for experienced Workshop Leaders, Professionals, Social Workers or Adult Educators. Topics include information about child development, discipline and guidance, acknowledging ambivalent feelings; rebuilding a family; legal issues (including a 2004 update); and advocacy. Cornell Cooperative Extension, Orange County. \$45.50, plus shipping and handling. To order: The Resource Center, Cornell University, P.O. Box

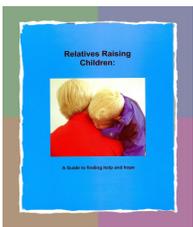
3884, Ithaca, NY 14852-3884
or order on their online
bookstore,

www.cce.cornell.edu/store, or
call (607)255-2080; Fax:
(607)255-9946. Quantity
Discounts are available.

From the Brookdale

**Foundation: Relatives Raising
Children: A Guide to Finding
Help and Hope.**

Marianne Takas.



This book is based upon what
long-term relative caregivers
(and the family service
professionals who work with
them) have learned about
raising relative children. It is
designed to provide useful
information, strategies and ideas
to help link relative caregivers
to others who can help. 166
pages, Third Edition, 2005.
\$6.00.

**Order forms are available on
our website,**

www.brookdalefoundation.org

Conferences

**The 2007 Joint Conference of
the American Society on
Aging (ASA) and the National
Council on Aging (NCOA),
Let's Rethink Aging, will be
held March 7-10, 2007 in
Chicago, Illinois. Visit**

<http://www.agingconference.org>
. for more information.

**The 2007 CWLA National
Conference, *Children 2007:
Raising Our Voices for
Children***, will be held at the
Marriott Wardman Park,
Washington, DC on February
26-28, 2007. CWLA will
feature presentations that
emphasize how our collective
voices have been successful,
how to substantiate this in our
research and how to work
across systems to ensure that
our voices are heard.

**The 2007 Generations United
(GU) - 14th International
Conference, *Intergenerational:
IT'S MONUMENTAL*** will be
held July 24-27, 2007 in
Washington, DC. The
conference will feature
presentations that emphasize
the positive difference
intergenerational programs and
practice have made in the lives
of young and old, how to
substantiate these findings
through evaluation and
research, and how to use the
results to promote sound public
policy at the local, state, and
national levels. For more
information on the GU
conference, visit their website,
www.gu.org.

For Brookdale RAPPs

Save the date! Our Annual
Brookdale Relatives As Parents
Program National Orientation
and Training Conference, June
1-3, 2007, Denver, Colorado.