

Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network is a collaboration of organizations & agencies in the St. Louis Metro Area working to enhance the lives of grandparents and relative caregivers and the children in their care.

#### MEMBERS

- AARP
- The Boyhood Initiative of MO
- Cardinal Ritter Senior Services
- Children's Home Society of MO
- Jennings School District
- Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
- Let's Start Caregivers Group, St. Vincent de Paul Church
- Mid-East Area Agency on Aging (MEAAA)
- Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division
- Parents as Teachers
- St. Louis Area Agency on Aging (SLAAA), Department of Human Services
- University of Missouri Extension

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- ▶ **St. Charles County**  
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573-438-2671

[extension.missouri.edu/  
ecregion/grandparent](http://extension.missouri.edu/ecregion/grandparent)

University of Missouri,  
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# Kinship Connections

*A newsletter for grandparents and other relatives in a parenting role*

## When Trusting Hurts

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**A**s a mental health therapist, I have worked with a number of children and adolescents being raised by their grandparents. Some of these children and adolescents struggle with emotional and behavioral problems. Many of these problems seem typical for children, including irritability, defiance, and opposition.

Other problems seem to represent deeper psychological issues rooted in years of neglect and abuse. What I find to be most disrupting to these children is their inability to trust others and form positive relationships with even the most trusted family members (i.e. grandparents, aunts and uncles that have played a major role in their lives even before the change in living arrangements). Nearly a decade of clinical work and education has shown me that these children often struggle to form positive relationships because of angry feelings toward the life they inherited. All too often I hear these children vent their emotions and convey the same message: How can I trust you when so many others have hurt me?

I remember meeting with a young man and his grandmother during a family therapy session and trying to help them understand the conflict that had developed in their relationship. The grandmother was puzzled by her grandson's behaviors toward her and other extended family members.

"I've done nothing but tried to help him, and this is the thanks I get," she vented. As we explored the reasons behind his behaviors and negative attitude, we approached the topic of trust, and he explained in such a passionate way that while he knew that his grandmother cared for and loved him, he still struggled to trust that she would not hurt him. This led into a conversation about the many adults in his life that had promised to care for and love him unconditionally, and the number of times that he felt abandoned, deceived, and thrown away by these same people. As seen in many children who have been abused or neglected, trusting and loving someone can be a painful experience. This young man had learned that manipulating, hurting, and deceiving others kept them at a safe distance and prevented him from ever having to feel hurt and abandoned again.

Helping a child identify and work through trust issues is critical for their long-term development and survival as they become young adults. For many children, this help starts with

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teaching them small steps of showing trust to others, such as journaling their feelings and expectations of others. This can also be done by helping them to communicate their needs (both emotional and physical) directly or developing cues to communicate needs. Developing a non-threatening hand signal to state the need for space, for example, could be used to avoid an angry verbal response.



It is also important for children to feel supported when talking about the past abuse and affirmed as individuals who are worthy of respect; as such, the abuse and neglect that they experienced needs to be acknowledged. Similarly, it is important for relative caregivers to show sensitivity to their child's trust difficulties, and verbalize a commitment to support them through difficult times. Whatever the strategy or technique used, it should focus on helping the child rebuild his ability to love and trust others based on genuine affection and enough time to heal from the past.

If your child struggles with some of these behaviors, I urge you to seek the help of others. There are a number of agencies and resources available; for more information, contact The Boyhood Initiative of Missouri at (314) 882-6840.

## 2009 Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network Meetings

### **August 26, Wednesday**

9—11 a.m.

#### **World Trade Center**

10th Floor, 121 S. Meramec  
Clayton, MO 63105



**Free Event!** Must RSVP: 314-615-2911  
University of Missouri Extension Office

#### **Rich Krueger**

Community Action Agency of St. Louis County

**Topic:** Helping keep your home cool & saving money

1. Lowering utility bills.
2. What energy assistance programs are available.
3. Quick & easy ways to save money with your utility bills.

### **September 19, Saturday**

#### **Summer Picnic for Relatives as Parents**

11 – 2 p.m.

**Shaw Park in Clayton**

**South Shelter, Picnic Pad #1**

**Free food, fun and games**

**Sponsored by:** Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network



This shelter is located closest to Hwy 170 but just off of South Forest Park Parkway and Brentwood Blvd. on Shaw Park Drive. So if coming from the city on Forest Park Parkway South get off at the Shaw Park Drive exit, there is a stop light at Brentwood Blvd. cross and continue on Shaw Park Drive and our shelter will be the first shelter past the skating rink and ball fields. Coming east or west on Brentwood, go to Shaw Park Drive and follow the above directions. The park is also about 3 blocks from the Metro garage on Central. Free parking is available in front of the South shelter.

## Doing the Right Things

**Rene Farmar, MSW**

*Supervisor, Children's Division*  
Missouri Department of Social  
Services

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Ms. Q has been caring for her daughter's child for over two years now. It's 10:00 p.m. and the phone rings. Her daughter's speech is slurred. She is not aware of the time, but insists on speaking to the child. Ms. Q tries to explain that the child is asleep. Her daughter becomes angry, threatens to come to Ms. Q's home and remove her child.



Dealing with unpredictable and sometimes irrational parents can be one of the most challenging aspects of raising a relative's child. Boundaries are necessary and can be difficult to establish. Once set, these boundaries need to be constantly guarded. This alone can be exhausting for the relative in the parenting role. Friendly firmness is required.

Ms. Q spoke very calmly to her daughter. She told her the child was asleep. She suggested that the mother call back tomorrow morning and gave her a time which would assure the child's availability. Ms. Q told her daughter that she understood and appreciated her need to connect with the child. She promised to make the connection happen, but at a more appropriate time. When her daughter did not call back the next morning

at the agreed upon time, Ms. Q called her daughter to follow up. They made plans to get together for a visit.



During the visit, Ms. Q allowed her daughter to act like a parent. Ms. Q encouraged her daughter. She told her daughter she appreciated the small gifts she brought for the child and then shared the child's pictures and school work with her daughter.

Ms. Q made it a point never to talk negatively about her daughter in front of the child. She had some trusted friends with whom she could vent when necessary, but only did so when the child was at school. She answered the child's questions as honestly as she could without giving the child information which may have been too much for the child's young age. Ms. Q also found a support group in her area. She acquired many skills during the meetings and enjoyed the break from parenting.

Ms. Q's proudest moment came during the child's high school graduation. Knowing they had done their very best for the child that mattered to them both. Ms. Q sat next to her daughter to witness the moment. They shared the pride and joy together, knowing the child loved and needed them both for many reasons.

### What did Ms. Q. do right?

- She set boundaries
- She remained calm
- She remained firm
- She allowed her daughter to be a parent when appropriate
- She noticed and commented on the steps her daughter took to support her child
- She never spoke negatively about her daughter when the child was present
- She remained honest with the child
- She attended a support group

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Raising your grandchildren? Do you have parenting questions?

Call: 1-800-552-8522 En Español 1-888-460-0008

or visit: [grandfamilies.missouri.edu](http://grandfamilies.missouri.edu)

Parents and professionals can call ParentLink's toll-free WarmLine to access parenting information and receive problem solving support. The WarmLine is available in English and Spanish and answered Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. by a family support specialist.

## ***Need information? Don't know where to go? Call a Warm-Line!***

### **Relatives As Parents/Grandparents Information Warm-Line**

▶ **St. Louis area: 314-961-8000, ext. 242**

Answered by: Cardinal Ritter Senior Services

Sponsors: Cardinal Ritter Senior Services  
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri



Get answers to questions on custody, guardianship, adoption issues, public benefits, legal services, support with groups and other community services. When you call, be prepared to leave a message and contact number. Within 2 days, you'll receive a follow-up call.

*This service is not for emergencies.*

**Kincare Connections** is written and published by Gateway Grandparents/Kinship Network for grandparents and other relatives in a parenting role in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area. Contributing writers are staff members of member organizations of the Network. **Articles may be reprinted for educational purposes. Please credit as follows:** Author, Organization, *Kincare Connections*. Kincare Connections is available in print or on the web. **To subscribe**, contact Elizabeth Reinsch, Human Development Specialist, 121 S. Meramec, Suite 501, St. Louis, MO 63105, Ph: (314) 615-7605, Email: [reinsche@missouri.edu](mailto:reinsche@missouri.edu)

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## **St. Louis Metro Area Support Groups**

### **St. Louis City**

**Carver House Grandparents Group**

Contact: Brenda Manon 314-652-8485

**Cry Out Youth Ministries**

Contact: Selena Arms, 314-868-1560

**Grandparents as Parents Program**

Contact: Darnell Fowler, 314-754-4483

**Grandparent's Circle, Parenting a Second Time Around**

Contact: Williestean Fulks, 314-383-0836

**Keepers of the Flame**

Contact: Kathleen Mc Aleenan, 314-961-8000 ext. 302

**Let's Start Caregivers Group**

(Grandparents raising kids of incarcerated or chemically dependent parents)

Contact: Cynthia Stevenson-Johnson, 314-241-2342

**Parents and Grandparents of Drug Abusers (PAGODA)**

Contact: Eddie Mae Binion, 314-432-0109

**Proud Grandparents**

Contact: Kathleen Mc Aleenan, 314-961-8000 ext. 302

### ***St. Louis, Jefferson & Washington Counties***

**Blankets of Hope, St. Louis City/County**

Contact: Miss Hair, 314-872-4155

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,  
South St. Louis County & Jefferson County**

Contact: Alvin Huther, 636-296-0768

**Kimble Cares Relatives As Parents Program &  
The Boyhood Initiative of Missouri**

Contact: Huey Hawkins, Jr., 314-882-6840 or  
Ericka Webb 314-882-6830

**KYDZ LaCASA Learning Center**

Contact: Harriet Ball-Stanburri, 314-443-4842

**University of MO Extension, Washington County**

Contact: Maudie Kelly, 573-438-2671

**Villas of Grace Senior Living Center**

Contact: Trymiah Miller, 314-363-5422