Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives
2013
Voices of Children

Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives

2013

A compilation of poems, essays and drawings submitted from children living in Washington State to the 2013 Children’s Kinship Care Expression Contest.

Initiated by the Washington State Relatives as Parents (RAPP) Program and the Kinship Oversight Committee.

Coordinated by:

Family Education And Support Services
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To order more copies of this booklet or for additional information about the 2013 Voices of Children Contest contact Shelly Willis at Shelly@FamilyESS.org or call 1-877-813-2828

This booklet can also be found online at:
www.dshs.wa.gov/kinship
Foreword

Most children find safety and comfort in the arms and care of their family, including grandparents and other relatives. For more than 2 million children in the USA, living with a grandparent, aunt, uncle or other family member has become a permanent or long-term arrangement.

When parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, placing with a relative caregiver can have some advantages. Kinship Care reduces the trauma children experience when placed with strangers. It enhances children’s sense of identity and self-esteem, continues the connections children have to their siblings and other relatives, and strengthens the family’s ability to give children the support they need. Kinship care often comes as a surprise to both the child and the relative caregiver.

What does it mean to a child who can’t live with their parents to know he or she is safe, loved and has a place to belong?

Some answers to this question are offered in this small but powerful book as children ages 5-18 from across Washington State relate their experiences living in Kinship Care.

Some are funny, some serious or even sad, but all are sincere and offer testimony to the value, sense of family, and love each young author experienced in living with a relative caregiver.

Enjoy your reading!
Shelly Willis, Family Education and Support Services Executive Director
Dedication

The dedication of this book goes to an individual or organization in recognition for long-standing dedication and outstanding advocacy for kinship care families. This year we are pleased to dedicate the 2013 Voices of Children book to:

Twin Star Credit Union Cares!

It is truly our pleasure to dedicate our 10th annual Voices of Children book to

Twin Star Credit Union!

TwinStar Credit Union has been a sponsor of the Voices of Children statewide contest for the past decade. Much more than a community bank they offer innovative programs, flexible services, and generous community support.

Today, TwinStar Credit Union is the 9th largest credit union in Washington with more than 85,000 members. Even larger than their membership is their heart of community giving.

We greatly appreciate TwinStar's steadfast and thoughtful support. This contest has allowed us to honor over 100 families across Washington State and served to inspire many, many more.

Thank you TwinStar Credit Union for caring about the communities you serve

WITH MANY THANKS

This booklet is a tribute to grandparents and other relatives of Washington State. It is a collaborative effort that could not have been possible without the support, guidance and partnership of those listed below. Thanks to each of you for your tremendous spirit and dedication to those we serve.

Bill Moss, WA State Acting Assistant Secretary Aging and Long-Term Support
David Rothschild, GAL – FESS Board Member
David Stillman, WA State Assistant Secretary Economic Services
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Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All entries were printed as received

5-7 Years Old

Sarel
Age 7

Living with my grandparent has been a long and informative journey. I have learned what people are going to be there for me in times of need, and I learned the ones that I could live without. It has been a 7 year journey as of February, but we still have time ahead of us. While living with my grandparents I was taught how to love, and how to help people when they need someone the most. I learned that things happen for a reason, and it is for the best that me and my younger brothers live with our grandparents. I know it has been hard on everyone in the family, and it took some time to get comfortable with what has happened but our grandparents didn’t let that change the fact that they were going to help us. They had to change their life around because of the choices that our parents made, but to this day they say they don’t regret what they did. Hearing that makes me want to grow up and be able to be at least half of the person that my grandparents have been. I love them with all my heart.

Nerissa Age 17
Hi my name is Tishon, today I’m here to tell you how living with relatives has benifited me. I guess I tell this story I’d have to start with my birth. I was given to my Grandmother due to my mom’s Drug Addiction. The benefits of living with my Grandmother where the wisdom, Love, support, faith, pride & Joy she’s given me all thing that have helped me through some of the darkest parts of my early childhood. Like not having either parents and a verbal abuse aunt and alcoholic uncle in and out of the house also my own anger management issues and A.D.H & A.D.D an bipolar disorder along with any biofathers issues.

My Grandmother also has very religious which allows me to have a even better positive view of Life. Later I realized that even though I group up with my wonder full Grandmother that there were thing my Grandmother could not give me but then along came my mom who became the next person to benifit me for the better. My mother was now in full recovery and got a job & house and reunited my older siblings that where with my biological father together. I was not eager to jum on the boat for family like I had all way hopes and prayed for. I was fear full I’ve been burned before what and who to say the once I jump towards this dream it wont fall apart. Then my mother said after I explained how I felt that we could take thing slow and me did. After a few years I got to reunite with my mom & siblings and I moved in we have lived together as a family for 3 years I’m succes full in school and have managed my disorders and been able to heal & grow which would not be possible without my family I would not be me with out them. Thank you for letting me share my story on how living with relatives has benifited me.

Tishon  Age 15

I like this place because its better than any other place because they care about me and we can go places together and we can have friends over to play games and they put me in school and I think that is really good and I love them all and I never want to leave

Charli  Age 7
Winning Contest Entries

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8 – 12 Years Old

James
Age 8

I dedicate this to my brother and my family. Out here on the street's hustlin' every day. Tryna find a living in my own way. Caught up in the hood been stuck up in the game, the Crip's is all the same. If you walk on my street your bout's to get clamped. I been to Juve it ant no thang. If your in the system it ant gone change. I try to change my life it's my dad and his wife. He isn't the right one that should be in my life. I did the crim I'm serving the time. I can't wait till the day I free from the gangsta crip criminality.

Keshahun Age 15

Living with my cousin, Gina has been the best thing that has ever happened to me and my sisters. I have benefited in so many ways, such as getting good grades in school, my self confidence, feeling safe and secure. I now know what I want to do with my life and I feel happy about that. Gina has been there for me when I was going through the transition of leaving my mom's home to a new place. She has understood the hardship my sisters and I endured. She took us in as her own. If I did not have her I do not have a clue where I would be right now. I believe if she had not pushed me to be the best I can be in school I probably would of dropped out by now. Now I am looking into colleges and have set up a path plan for my future. I have come to realize I am someone special and there are people that love me. It really has been the greatest experience of my life living with Gina. She means so much to me.

Tiffany Age 16
The Best Ones!

For they took us in; they care, they love, they treat us well.

They took what was the worst; and turned it to the best

With love, and treats, and movie nights. If they were shoes; for them I would not sell

Snuggels, and hugs, kisses and wuv (love); the love of them I would not put to the test.

We pray, we eat, we sing, we dance. We watch the sisterhood of the traveling pants! I would not take a chance!

I love them, they love me; as you see; they are the very best ones!

(When I say us I am referring to my sisters and I)

Michaela Age 14

She helped me

She helped me feel safe,
She made me feel loved,
She gave me hope, she helped me
Forget, She helped me be happy, she
Gave me music, She gave me god,
She helped me learn, most importantly
She helped me live.

Ashanti
Age 11
Winning Contest Entries
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13—18 Years Old

**Gramma and Grampa Essay**

My family lived in a huge house. Five bedrooms in a nice neighborhood. Sounds great right? It wasn't. The electric and water were always turned off. My mom was a drug addict and never home. That meant I had to take care of my sick grandmother while being the mom to my brother and sister. We didn't always have food. I was only ten.

Living with my grandparents now is amazing. It was probably the best thing that could have happened to me. My grandparents try to give us three children the world. Grampa may be grumpy a lot, but I know that I'm still loved. Gramma teaches me new things all the time. Especially what's ladylike and what's not. Many other lessons as well. They show me many things every day, from easier ways to do chores to how to dress properly.

One thing Gramma did for me, that meant the most, was showing me I'm loved and she cares about me, and I won't grow up to be my mom. I've never felt that before. They showed me I'm special. They may be crazy, Looney, strict, grumpy, loving, different, wild, but they're unique, and I'm glad their mine.

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Beverly
Age 14
How Things Change

Things Have change in my life
When my mom moved away
and my got lost and confused
I was mad caues got bad
It was not the same.

I now live with my grandpa
and grandma and they have a
big house. They took us all
three in. Are lives are
Not like before. So much
time on are own.

Living with in are family
Rules again resonible
for what I say and do
No always Doing all thing
and being respectful to all

I seem to get in trouble
more but that because it
hard to change going
from what I had became

Steven  Age 13

Love for us

I knew Gma & Papa had not planned
for us to be raised by them
But through it all Im going strong
For I know that thay love us
As they were there, to save us

A mother, father and a home
I never thought we'd loose it
First my mother, she just left
And Dad, not caring anymore
Left to ourselfs, as good as alone

Never knowing, our lives so changed
Our home, our lives, security gone
The home owned by the bank
Gone in just one week, no home
unknown what or where, we'd stay

Gma & Papa heard of our condition
And explained that thing would change
Our lives, put back together
Security a home, and love for us
For they do love my brothers and me.

Jordan
Age 16
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Writings of Merit 5–7 Years of Age

Quentin Age 5

Jasmin G Age 12

Elizabeth A. Age 5

Mollie Age 12

Living with my Grandma and Grandpa (Grammy and Papa) has benefitted me in many ways, like my Grades! I have improved a lot in my grades because my Grandma and Grandpa help me study. I went from being held back a grade to being one of the best readers in my school! Also I used to move so much that it seemed as soon as I met a friend I had to move again. Now I have been in one school for three years. You can obviously see that living with my Grandma and Grandpa has positively affected my life.
How amazing they are!

I have been in many not so good situations and places, yet with them they have taken me to good places.

With trials and tribulations they got us, and even though there name's not gus. We love them as much as they love us.

Though we live on the beach, which has a talent to teach, there as good as teachers as the beach, mabey even better.

With additional candy and hugs they buy our love, I really do hope that you realize that the love they show is not in there eye's, but in there hearts.

The end

Marina Age 12

What living with my grandparents means to me.

I love to stay with my grandpa and grandma because they love me and keep me safe. They are my best friends and make me feel special. I help my grandpa with the firewood and in the garden. I help grandma around the house. When it is time to cook or bake grandma lets me help and teaches me how to be safe in the kitchen. At bedtime my grandma reads me a bedtime story. I get to pick out the story I would like to hear. And I know I am special is because before I was living with my grandparents I was yelled at a lot and didn't get to see them. The police came to where I was and took me to my grandma. Now I am happy and enjoy not being afraid of being yelled at all the time. My grandma teases me. She asks what am I going to do with you? I answer keep me. And she tells me they love me and will never ever let me go. And we hug each other. I love being here with my grandparents.

Jimy Age 5
Mary Age 6

Jerome Age 6

Why I Like Living With My Grandparents

I love living with my grandma and grandpa because they do many things for me. Even though I may not realize it.

Most of the time I tell my grandma and grandpa they don't do anything for me, but then I usually take a minute and think. I think about when I was born and how they bought me clothes, fed me, and took custody of me because my mom couldn't take care of us. Then I take a look at when I was a little kid. She bought many things for me. She bought me a bike, and had my grandpa train me on how to ride a bike. She bought me practically anything I wanted.

Then finally I look to who I am now. I'm very kind, smart, and intelligent. All because they taught me manners, helped with school, and disciplined me. Now when I hear the word discipline I don't think badly. I guess I shouldn't complain because my punishments weren't too bad. They were just little things like, pick up dog poop and pull weeds. Instead of kids who have tough lives and get slapped or something. That is why I love my grandparents!

Shyann Age 11
Living with my aunt and uncle has made me somebody that I would not have been if it were not for them. I have had a new love for books, and less for movies and videogames (well, actually, now I simply HATE videogames). If it were not for them, I would be watching lots of movies per day, but now I only watch about one movie per two weeks. Also, if I were not with my aunt and uncle, I would be in public school, but they know that public school is not right for me, so, they home schooled me and my four siblings despite the challenge. On top of all that, they try to feed us the healthiest food and drink that they possibly can, and they do their best to give us all the attention we need. In all, my aunt and uncle mean the world to me.

Julian Age 11
My dad died. But I do not know how he died. But my dad might of died from stopped breathing. My mom started taking drugs. Now I live with my gramma and my grampa and he takes me and my sister fishing. My grampa is grumpy but he loves me.

Chance Age 7

Living with my Grandmother, Mimi has been a huge relief. When I lived with my Mom and Dad I felt alone and like I was the Mom to my 3 younger brothers and sisters. When I moved in with Mimi it was the first time I felt loved and cared about. I did not feel loved when I lived at my Mom and Dad's because my Mom was always gone and my Dad was always looking for her. Mimi would show she loved us by asking if we needed anything and by letting us live with her when she didn’t have to. My favorite things about living with Mimi are that she is nice to us, she does not yell at us, and I know she loves me. Living with Mimi has let me know what a real family is.

Kira Age 11
Living with my Grandma and Grandpa is cool because our house is right across from my school. My Grandpa makes a tasty dinner every night to help me sleep nice and tight. Grandpa plays baseball with me and my brother which helps us get along with one another. I especially like our dog; his name is Bear. He's covered from head to toe with fluffy black hair. My room is a wonderful place; I can fill it with all my things. It has so much space.

Holly Age 10

Julia Age 10

Richard Age 5

Alyssa Age 7
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Writings of Merit 8–12 Years of Age

I live with my grandparents. My Grandma's name is Jean but we call her Ranny. Our Grandpa's name is Jerry but we call him Papa. They take really good care of us because they feed us, put a roof over our heads and take us places that we have never been before, like Mount Rainier for a hole day trip and on a train to eat dinner. We started living with my Ranny and Papa when we were baby's because my mom and dad didn't take care of us & they were taking drugs. My mom's mom Dora she is our grandma Dora she took the sinks and tubs away so we couldn't be clean. I had blisters in my mouth and on my feet. My mouth was bleeding and I couldn't hear I was deaf. That is when my Ranny and Papa saved me and my brother and sister but my baby sister is still living with my mom and my dad is in prison tell am 13 years old! He did stupid things.

Alysha Age 10

Aiden Age 8

Donald Age 8
Voices of Children 2013

Justina 10

To my Grandmother,
I know you love me and I know you love my mom.

You have to be happy, you have to be happy.

I love you.

Kelly Age 11

Dear family, I love you so much! You make it hot in the summer! You make it snow in December. You make the moon go. I will never lose my family.

Chevelle Age 8

My family!
Amazing Grandparents

My grandparents saved me from a mean lady with 5 kids. They got my doll and all the good stuff people brought us like new clothes and beds that she gave them. We slept in the basement on the floor. It hurt my back. My brother slept on a bedboard. Wendy wanted to give him away and keep my sister. She called my grandparents. She said come get Chance and Xena. That's me. They said it's all or none. We waited all night for my grandparents. They picked us up in the morning. We didn't get to take anything cause Wendy lied and said all our stuff was dirty.

That's when I learned I'm my grammas favorite. I was so happy to hear that. They keep a roof over our heads and lots of clothes and good food. We went to Depoe Bay whale watching and Spokane to see my mommy and stayed in a motel four days. They let me go to summer school, play baseball and have sleepovers. Grampa takes us fishing. I got my hair cut. We go to church. Now they let my mommy live with us so we can be a real family again.

Lily Age 8

Rosmarie Age 8

Xena Age 9
I live with my parents because my mom and dad did divorce. I love my busy and fun life. My mom stays with my little brother and sister. She tells them to call her Nana when they are not with dad. They have two boyfriends and she made them call all them dads. We bought a new house with a big yard. We play badminton and soccer.

Living with my grandpa, mimi makes me feel loved.

To my dream home.

This is how I felt when I got there. This is how I felt when I went there.

Jonathan Age 10

Tessa Age 8

Alexander Age 10

Alyssa Age 9
I love my grandma SO MUCH because:
THIS IS MY STORY.

When I needed someone to take care of me. My grandma was able to take care of me. With love and care and I don't have to worry about nothing any more. I am able to conquer my fear's because my grandma's love. My grandma gets me through a lot. Some kids pick on me at school but my grandma gives me confidence to just walk away with my head up and shoulders back. Now I am here writing this essay because of my grandma. THAT'S WHY I LOVE MY GRANDMA SO MUCH!!!!!

Mauricia Age 9