



Fall -WINTER 2008  
 Next Issue: July 2009

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## Grandma in the White House: The American First Family

Information provided from Grandparents.com

According to a new poll released in January 2009, by Grandparents.com, three-quarters of those grandparents surveyed say that President Obama and First lady Michelle will be more effective in the White House knowing their kids are cared for by their grandmother, Marian Robinson. Robinson's move into the White House may help provide a national spotlight on multigenerational living and the value of grandparents to the American family. Robinson in the White House provides validation to the contribution that grandparents across the county are making to their families.

More than 64% of those surveyed believe that the current economic challenges will encourage more generations to live together. The following are further findings from those surveyed:

- 82.4% believed that Marian Robinson's move to the White House will bring attention to the role that grandparents play in the lives of grandchildren
- 83.7% believed that Marian Robinson's move to the White House will help highlight the value grandparents can bring to a family
- 65% of grandparents believed that with the current economic times, more families will live in multigenerational homes

## Cliff's Notes on Caregivers

Submitted by Cliff Burt, Division of Aging Services

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**83% of grandparents surveyed believe that Grandma Robinson in the White House will redefine the importance of grandparents in the American family.**

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**Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC)** was developed by Legacy Health System's Caregiver Services Department as a 6-week educational program to provide family caregivers with tools to increase their self-care and confidence. Research studies find high rates of depression and anxiety among caregivers and increased vulnerability to health problems. Caregivers frequently cite restriction of personal activities and social life as problems. They often feel they have no control over events, and that feeling of powerlessness has a significant negative impact on caregivers' physical and emotional health.

In the six 2½ hour classes, caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to: reduce personal stress; change negative self-talk; communicate their needs to family members and healthcare/service providers; communicate more effectively in challenging situations. In Georgia, nearly 25 caregivers have taken this course. Although this course has been targeted to caregivers of spouses or other relatives, the first class for grandparents raising grandchildren will be held in April 2009 in Clayton County.



**100 book bags with supplies provided to caregivers.**  
**Natalie Brown, Middle GA with support group participants**

## Bibb County Kinship Care Support Group

Submitted by Natalie Brown, Aging Services Coordinator, Middle GA AAA

Grandparents or relatives who have taken on the role of parenting a "second time around" deserve much more than just a pat on the back for having the courage to face this challenge head on, most without a second thought. Grandparents/relatives typically are on fixed incomes and cannot afford the extra things attached to raising children. The Kinship Care Program recognized these challenges and attempts to relieve some of the extra burden.

Recently, the Kinship Care Program provided over 100 book bags with supplies to many deserving caregivers. This has been one of many goals and projects set forth by the Kinship Care Program for two consecutive years. Also, school supplies were donated to the Booker T. Washington Center and the Foster Grandparent Program of Bibb County and the Boys and Girls Club and Community Partnership for Protecting Children (CPPC) housed in the Department of Family & Children Services in Peach County. This in no way solves the economic hardship of grandparents or relatives but attempts to enhance the resources available to them.

## Southeast AAA Welcomes New Kinship Care Specialist

Submitted by Marsha Stacy, Kinship Care Specialist Southeast AAA

Marsha Stacy came on board as Kinship Care Specialist October 16, 2008. She is the mother of a six year-old son and has over 20 years of experience in marketing. Her experience as both mother and professional has prepared her perfectly for her new role at the Southeast Georgia AAA. She is currently developing strategies and tools to improve attendance and better serve the attendees and participants of Kinship support group meetings, activities, and educational events.

The Southeast AAA has recently partnered with a local community action agency, Concerted Services, Inc. (CSI), to specifically assist grandparents who are raising Head Start grandchildren. Marsha will be working with CSI staff members to help meet the needs of these grandparents.

The Southeast AAA mission is to promote the independence and well-being of older residents by ensuring that they have access to needed services. Marsha Stacy's experience and ability to "look outside the box" will help us to do this through the Kinship Care Program.

**Welcome  
Marsha!!**



## Collaboration News

DHR Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Work Team

The Department of Human Resources Division of Aging Services, Division of Family and Children Services, Office of Child Support, Office of Developmental Disabilities, and Division of Mental Health Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases continue to meet monthly to discuss grandparents raising grandchildren. Their goal currently is to discuss various ways to provide education and support for DHR staff in learning about grandparent issues and resources DHR- wide.

## Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving Recognizes A Great-Grandmother Doing Great Things

Submitted by Kerrie Sirmans, Heart of Georgia Altamaha AAA

The societal phenomenon of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren is one that is becoming more and more visible in today's society, and justifiably so. There are millions of Grandparents in the United States, who each day of every year, are stepping in to care for their grandchildren when the parents are not able to, and they generally do so without any recognition. However, on October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving Annual Gala in Americus, GA, one such grandparent was acknowledged.

Mrs. Norma Lee Newsome is extra special. She is in fact a GREAT-grandmother, of 71 years, who has been raising her four and six year old great-grandsons for almost 5 years. To make life just a little more challenging, her four year old grandson has a diagnoses of Autism, and the six year old is currently undergoing tests with a possible diagnosis of Autism. Mrs. Newsome is a tireless caregiver to her grandchildren, who gets very little respite from her caregiving duties, and very little time to herself, yet she doesn't complain, because she loves her grandchildren and wouldn't have it any other way.

Mrs. Newsome was nominated and received the Volunteer Caregiver of the Year award for the Heart of Georgia Altamaha region for 2008. She was presented the award by former First Lady Rosalynn Carter at the Gala event. She had a wonderful time and was grateful, yet humble, in her acceptance of the award. Congratulations Mrs. Norma Lee Newsome!

## Albany Grand-Gathering Support Group Celebrates

Submitted by Nancy Harper, Caregiver Coordinator SOWEGA

The Kinship Care Program participants in Albany joined with the Family Caregiver Program participants to celebrate National Family Caregiver Month at a Family Caregiver Recognition Luncheon on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Each Caregiver received a manicure kit and a book from the Chicken Soup for the Soul Healthy Living Series on STRESS. The members of the Kinship Care Advisory Committee were our special guests and were honored for their service in support of the grandfamilies in our program. After a delicious lunch they enjoyed a program called "AARP Potpourri" presented by Assistant State Director of AARP, Pamela Roshell, and two local AARP volunteers, Edward Wilson and Iona Cason. Everyone learned at least one new thing about AARP and its services as evidenced by their raised hands!

The Albany Grand-Gathering Support Group celebrated Christmas and the birthday of the only regularly attending grandfather at the December meeting. The group is referred to as "Earth Angels" by Kinship Care Facilitator, Doris Long, who presented each participant with a ceramic angel as her gift to them. They enjoyed sharing inspirational readings, and they became a glorious choir when singing Christmas carols acappella. Everyone brought a dish to share and there was a delicious feast topped off with Mr. Spurlin's birthday cake! (He commented that no one had ever done that for him before.)



**Mrs. Norma Newsome and  
Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter**



**Other Holiday Pictures:  
Gloria Sanford, Southern  
Crescent with kinship care  
participant and donated items**

## Don't Fall For It!

### Information on Fall Prevention

Submitted by Kim Grier, Livable Communities Specialist, DAS

One moment you are walking through your living room on the way to the kitchen, and the next thing you know you are laying on the ground in pain. As you lay there, thoughts begin to run through your head – “What just happened? Did I break any bones? How am I going to get help? What is going to happen to me?”

Falls are the leading cause of death from injury in older adults, and every year approximately 35-40% of people over the age of 65 will fall. Even more compelling is the research that indicates falls are the main reason for 40% of all nursing home admissions. As disheartening as these statistics appear, the encouraging news is that many falls are preventable.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Injury Center identifies four prevention strategies that may help reduce the risk of falls: exercise, medication review, vision check and home safety. Exercise is one of the most helpful activities you can begin to help reduce your risk of falling. Consider trying Tai Chi, which can help improve balance and coordination through a series of gentle physical movements and stretching. Make sure before starting an exercise program that you ask your doctor or healthcare provider what type of program would be best for you.

Reviewing your current medications with your healthcare provider is another important strategy for preventing falls. Don't forget to include the over-the-counter medication you may be taking such as vitamins or herbal supplements. Medication interactions may cause you to become light-headed or sleepy, which can increase your risk of falling.

Along with an exercise program and a medication review, you are also going to want to have your vision checked. Using the wrong prescription in your glasses, or conditions such as glaucoma or cataracts can increase your risk of falling.

Finally, take a look around your home to see what can be done to make it **safer**. Pick up items you may have piled on stairs or other places around your home where you walk. Consider having grab bars installed next to your toilet, and in your tub or shower; also put a non-slip mat on the floor of your tub or shower. Make sure that you have good lighting in your home, especially near stairs. If you have any throw rugs in your home, secure them to the floor with double-sided tape, or remove them altogether.

Now that you are familiar with four prevention strategies, get up and make them happen! For more information on fall prevention, contact toll free 1-866-55-AGING (1-866-552-4464) or 404-657-5258 in the Atlanta area.

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