

California Aging Issues

May, 2003



Editor's Comments: "California Aging Issues" provides information on aging programs to Cooperative Extension advisors and supervisors and their constituents. Mary Blackburn, co-chair of the Aging Californians in Rural and Urban Settings Workgroup, was interviewed for this month's feature story, "Long-Term Grandparenting." Also in this edition, I describe two innovative, interesting, and doable CE aging programs. Let me know if they appeal to you. Anyone wishing to submit articles or request formation on specific topics should contact me, Diane Gilmer, at: dfgilmer@ucdavis.edu.

- Feature: "Long-Term Grandparenting"
- Extension Programs in Aging
 - Caregiver Training Program
 - Senior Initiative
- What's New at the State Legislature?
- Older Volunteer Activities
 - Ken Brown
- Myths and Truths
- Resources on Aging
- Mark your Calendars
- A Senior Note: Grandparenting Families

Feature: Long-Term Grandparenting -- Diane Gilmer, PhD

Mary Blackburn, PhD, is the Cooperative Extension guru on grandparenting in California. Dr. Blackburn is not only one of the most knowledgeable persons in this area, but a tireless advocate for older people caring for younger kin and a caregiver to her



own grandsons. She has written numerous articles on this issue, the most recent being "Grandchildren Raised by Grandparents: A Troubling Trend," published in California Agriculture, March/April, 2001. This article can be found online at:

<http://oakland.ucanr.org/calag/MA01/pdfs/grands.pdf>

In a recent interview, Dr. Blackburn described the history of child caregiving by older family members. She noted that grandparents and other kin have always provided support (physical, emotional, and financial) to their younger relatives. Many have also been primary caregivers. However, the growing trend for grandparents to be long-term caregivers worries Dr. Blackburn. From 1990 to 1998, there was a 50% increase in number of children raised by non-parent relatives. According to Dr. Blackburn, 6.8% of California children under the age of 18 live in grandparent households and, in almost half of these households, the grandparent is a sole caregiver.

The reasons for long-term grandparenting have changed over the years. In the past, illness, death, parents working, abandonment, and unemployment were the primary reasons. Currently, these conditions still exist, but the increasing role of alcohol and drug abuse by the parents greatly



complicates the caregiving role, adding to the number of children who have special needs and the conflicting emotions of the designated caregiver. In many cases, the older person cares for the younger child while grieving the loss of a relationship with their own child. Feelings can carry over into the relationship with the younger child. As one grandmother said, "We need to separate our grandchildren from the sins of their parents."



Life changes for the older person who once again becomes a caregiver. Later life expectations are lost to a new role, dreams delayed, and adaptation often difficult. Caregivers describe a variety of feelings: anger, fear, embarrassment, guilt, sadness, lack of self worth, frustration, and loss of control of life.

Difficulties can be tremendous. Many long-term grandparents assume the role with no legal standing. Caregivers are often single women who may live on limited incomes - a quarter of single grandparent families live in poverty. Help is needed with housing, financial management, health care, advocacy, respite care, legal rights, and education. At a recent conference, one grandmother said, "The babies need help. I need help too. No one seems to care about me. We have no say, no choice, no support, and no financial assistance. We are people too!"

Dr. Blackburn reports that programs helpful to long-term grandparents include those in counseling, support groups, respite care, and/or informational sharing. For example, the Cooperative Extension Program at Washington State University offers

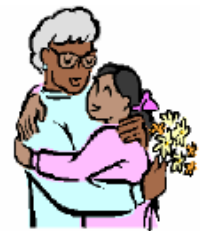
extensive education programs for grandparents and grandchildren. Their site can be accessed at:

<http://parenting.wsu.edu/relative>).

Grandparenting has not yet been a priority for California Cooperative Extension, although it is a main concern of the Aging Californian's Workgroup.

A number of non-profit groups in Northern California provide services to older kin caregivers. For example, the Greater Sacramento Grandparent Network has two grandparent support centers. A very exciting project for this group is the development of the first low-income housing complex where grandchildren can live with their grandparents.

Dr. Blackburn reminds us there is a positive side to long-term grandparenting. She tells wonderful stories of positive and important relationships that develop. Some caregivers may need more outside assistance than others, but Dr. Blackburn says that, with assistance, all caregiving can be made more meaningful, enjoyable and gratifying. There are many positive ways to support those in a parenting role the second - or even third - time around.



WEB sites helpful to long-term grandparenting families:

<http://www.aarp.org/confacts/programs/grandraising.html>

<http://www.gu.org/about.htm>

People frequently ask how they can tell if they have dementia. A geriatrician once said, "If you forget where you parked your car, don't worry. If you forget you have a car, worry!"

Extension Programs in Aging

--Diane Gilmer

This month we are reporting on a couple of exciting aging programs provided by cooperative extension. If you care to know more about any of these programs, or you think they would work well in your county, let us know.

Caregiver Training Program

Gloria Barrett, Cooperative Extension County Director in Sacramento, has developed a "Caregiver Training Program" to help in-home caregivers provide safe and effective care to their clients.

Recently, Ms. Barrett collaborated with nursing faculty at California State University and the Sacramento County IHSS (In-home Supportive Services) Public Authority in a training program for IHSS in-home caregivers.

California State University nursing students, under the direction of Ms. Barrett and faculty at the University, taught classes in caregiving skills to in-home caregivers from the IHSS caregiver registry. Classes covered infection control, wound care, and diabetes. The nursing students also developed a list of resources for use by the caregivers.



The caregivers completed pre- and post-tests on the subjects, validating the success of the class. Nursing students received excellent evaluations from attendees, stating that the classes were a great resource and had improved their knowledge on each topic. The nursing students evaluated their own success and

requested that in subsequent classes, students and instructors spend time in the homes of the clients as well as in the classroom.

Thanks to the leadership of Ms. Barrett, collaboration with other agencies has resulted in improved health care for older people.

Senior Initiative

The UC Cooperative Extension unit in Los Angeles County has been providing a variety of aging programs to seniors. In a joint effort by the Los Angeles County Community Development Commission and the County Director for Cooperative Extension, a needs assessment of seniors residing in 14 public housing sites was completed. Subsequently, they received an award from the California Nutrition Network.

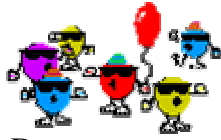


The program began in October, 2002. Eunice Williamson, Nutrition, Family and Consumer Science Advisor in Los Angeles County, developed the program materials. She trained program assistants in nutrition, food safety, consumer safety, and fitness training. Program assistants implemented the program. The Cooperative Extension Common Ground Program will assist with the gardening aspect of the program.

These programs, as well as others, will benefit seniors living in public housing. Congratulations to Eunice Williamson and the people in Los Angeles County for a successful program!

What's New at the State Legislature

Word from Sarah Sutro, consultant to Senator Vasconcellos, is that funding to Adult Day Health Care centers may be permanently cut by as much as 15%. Transportation and special therapies (speech and occupational) in these facilities may be treated as a separate funding, leading to an increase in paperwork and time spent on billing. Funding may also be cut to Home Delivered Nutrition and Brown Bag Programs. Sarah can be reached at sarahsutro@sen.ca.gov.



The legislature has also voted to cut funding for California Cooperative Extension by 30%. This is a very large cutback, and administrators, faculty, advisers, and specialists have been scrambling to determine what effects these cuts may have on the variety of programs we offer across the State.

Karen Varcoe, Program Leader for Human Resources, is playing a major role in currently collecting success stories to document the benefits of our programs for all the people of California. If you have something you think should be included, please contact her at Karen.Varcoe@ucr.edu

New Member of the Advisory Board:

The Workgroup on Aging Californians in Rural and Urban Settings welcomes Linda Jackson, Senior Benefits Advisor for the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as a new member of the board. Ms. Jackson is interested in the financial security of older adults.

Older Volunteer Activities

Focus on Ken Brown

-- Referred by Gloria Barrett,
Cooperative Extension County
Director, Sacramento County

The University of California Cooperative Extension Office in Sacramento County recognizes the outstanding service older volunteers



provide to their agency. Last year volunteers gave 55,858 hours of their time to help disseminate research-based information to county residents.

One of their outstanding volunteers is **Ken Brown**, an original Sacramento County Master Gardener (since 1980). Currently, Mr. Brown volunteers 20+ hours per month for cooperative extension. Ellen Taylor, the secretary for the Sacramento County Master Gardeners (and Mr. Brown's niece), was pleased to tell me about Mr. Brown. "Kind and patient do not begin to describe Ken—he is so much more." Ms. Taylor reported that Mr. Brown not only volunteers for cooperative extension but is the neighborhood grandfather for Arden Manor. He is the information gatherer and fixer for the community, helping those who are low-income or in need. He helps young and old alike, often "standing in" for non-English speaking parents at schools. At the age of 81, he still mows lawns for several elderly neighbors.

Mr. Brown has three children and four grandchildren. Along with his other activities, he cares of his wife of 50+ years. How fortunate the world is to have people like Ken Brown!

Resources on Aging



Where to get help?

- Biweekly Email Newsletter from the U. C. Berkeley Resource Center on Aging:
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~aging/ResourcesinAging.html>
- A national all-around source of excellent information:
<http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/elderpage.html>
- National Institute of Aging:
<http://www.nia.nih.gov>
- The WEB cite for California Department of Aging is:
<http://www.aging.state.ca.us/>
- DANR Aging Workgroup site:
<http://groups.ucanr.org/elderly/>

Do you have any announcements or questions? Are there special issues that you would like addressed? Is there a senior volunteer you want to honor? Would you like to write an article for “California Aging Issues?”
Contact Diane Gilmer at dfgilmer@ucdavis.edu or 530-752-2700

Mark your calendars:



“Annual Alzheimer’s Workshop”

**November 3rd, 2003
American River College,
Sacramento CA.**

**For more information call 916-484
8512**

Announcements:

Dr. Barbara Gillogly is a member of the Aging Workgroup Advisory Board and a Professor at American River College. American River College offers short and long-term courses on aging and caregiving, most of which qualify for continuing education. For more information contact Dr. Gillogly at 916-484-8512.

This aging fact sheet has been sponsored by the University of California Cooperative Extension, as well as the CE Workgroup on Aging Californians in Rural and Urban Settings and its Advisory Board.

Workgroup members:

Carolyn M. Aldwin, PhD – Chair, Professor, UCD
Mary Blackburn, MPH, PhD – Co-Chair
Nutrition, Family, & Consumer Science Advisor
Mariciel Klenk, CFCS
Nutrition, Family, & Consumer Science Advisor
Janet Momsen, PhD, Professor, UCD
Gloria Barrett, RN, BSN, MSN
Cooperative Extension County Director
Estella West, MS
Home Economics
Carol J. Powell
Family & Consumer Science Advisor
Margaret Johns
Nutrition, Family, & Consumer Science Advisor
Dorothy Smith
Nutrition, Family, & Consumer Science Advisor
Eunice Williamson
Nutrition, Family, & Consumer Science Advisor
Rose Hayden-Smith, MA
4-H Youth Development Advisor
Beth Ober, PhD, Professor, UCD
Karen Varcoe, PhD
Chair, DANR Human Resources
Diane F. Gilmer, PhD, RN, DANR staff

Advisory Board members:

Betty Perry, Older Women’s League
Mary Tucker, AARP Volunteer Specialist
Sarah Sutro, Consultant to Senator Vasconcellos
Barbara Gillogly, Professor, American River
Diane Driver, Coordinator, Center on Aging, UCB
Kelly Patterson – Consultant to Senator Ortiz
George Xakellis, MD, Professor, UC Davis
Mark Robinson, Family and Community Med., UCD
Linda Jackson, Senior Benefits Advisor, Department Labor

"Grandparenting Families"



Remember:



The child is not responsible for the situation.



Some things you can change - some you cannot.

Take Action:



Find others like you and seek their support.



Recognize problems and get help - mental and physical.



Continue in activities that are important (go to church or the senior center, walk, garden, have coffee with a friend and "vent").



Ask for and accept help before you are exhausted.

Take Pride:



Find one good reason why you are the best caregiver for the child.



Find value in what you do – look at the positive side.



Never underestimate how important you are to the child.