

Celebrate Grandparents Day in the Royal City

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August 30, 2017 11:35 AM



Family love: Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are in the spotlight at a special event in New Westminster.
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An upcoming event in New West is helping the Parent Support Services Society of B.C. to celebrate all grandparents and to shine a spotlight on the growing number of grandparents who are raising their grandkids.

According to the society, more than 13,000 children in B.C. are being raised full time by their grandparents or other relatives. While their stories are varied, the society notes that many of their stories include loss, isolation, grief, hardship, love and determination.

“Just as individuals are unique and varied, so are families,” said a press release from the Parent Support Services Society of B.C. “Many kinship care families are happy and thriving. Many are happy, yet still struggling – this is true for all families.”

The Parent Support Services Society of B.C. is holding its third annual Grandparents Day event on Sunday, Sept. 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at New Westminster Quay. The event includes music, Grandparents Day crafts, a silent auction, face painting, kids’ games, prizes, a walk and more.

“Grandparents raising grandchildren (GRG) is a term sometimes used specifically to refer to grandparents in this kinship role, and sometimes as an umbrella term referring to all kinship care providers,” said the press release. “Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are also sometimes called ‘skip-generation’ families.”

According to the society, 7,300 children under the age of 15 are living in kinship care in B.C. Reasons that grandparents or other relatives are raising their kin when the parents are unable to include death, mental health issues, substance misuse, incarceration, abandonment, child abuse or neglect and violence in the home.

The society points out some of the unique needs of grandfamilies:

- * These children have often experienced trauma – 68 per cent of the children in the GRG families it's surveyed had physical, emotional or behavioural challenges.
- * Often, both the grandparent and the children are experiencing grief and loss.
- * Many of these families experience financial hardship, resulting in the use of retirement savings for childraising. Eighty per cent of grandparents surveyed received no financial support from the children's biological parents.
- * Grandparents raising grandchildren deal with a range of legal issues, many related to access and guardianship.
- * Grandparents raising grandchildren are parenting for a second time – and it's unexpected as they were not expecting to be parenting again at this stage of their lives.

For more information, visit www.parentsupportbc.ca.

Resources for grandparents

- * GRG support line: a toll-free line that helps grandparents and other relatives raising a family member's child. Open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. People calling at other times can leave a voicemail or send an email, which will be returned promptly.
- * GRG website: The society has a number of resources for GRG/kinship caregivers, including its legal guide. The website is found at www.parentsupportbc.ca.
- * The Parent Support Services Society of B.C. offers support circles for grandparents who are raising grandchildren. These support circles aim to improve the grandparents' connections in the community and knowledge/skills regarding childhood development and family well-being

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