

*Helping caregivers through their journey one step at a time.*

## For grandparents raising grandchildren, their hearts are in the right place. But what's missing?

Written by David Louis  
August 13, 2023

**ST. GEORGE** — When parents become grandparents many believe that the hard work of raising a child is over.

No longer focused on the heavy lifting of getting a child off to school, unexpected trips to urgent care, making it in the nick of time to soccer practice, or perfecting the art of negotiation with someone who just lost their two front teeth – a grandparent's life of leisure has begun.

However, for millions of grandparents, this scenario is much different than the reality they face when circumstances intervene and they find themselves raising a grandchild during what should be their golden years.

For St. George grandparents Albert, 72, and Judith Anderson, 69, (actual names not identified), instead of fixating on their life's plans coming to an abrupt end, the couple quickly learned to make lemonade out of lemons when their then 18-month-old granddaughter Emma came to live with them.

Emma was in a parental household that didn't provide the young child with the best environment, so the Andersons stepped up to effect change.

"The most dynamic thing" that's happened since Emma came to live with the Andersons is they've had to learn to "open their eyes and broaden their perspectives." "Quite frankly, we love her so much and wanted to get her out of the situation she was in, which wasn't healthy. Stepping up to raise her was a no brainer," Albert said. "We decided to put our life on hold and just continued on, but we also knew that anything we wanted to do we could always do later."

Emma, now 15, is thriving with her grandparents.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that the phenomenon of grandparents raising grandchildren is "increasing and significant."

In 2000, more than 2 million American grandparents raised their grandchildren. This represented nearly a 30% increase from 1990 (Census Bureau, 2000). The latest census data suggests that more than 7 million American grandparents live in the same household with grandchildren under 18, and approximately 2.7 million of those grandparents have sole responsibility for raising their grandchild.

Regardless of how many, the whys are the same.

They include increasing rates of divorce and single parenting, substance/alcohol abuse – primarily opioid and methamphetamine – AIDS and other public health issues, poverty, military deployment and incarceration of the parents. Mental illness or other disabilities are also reasons why children end up being cared for by grandparents (Utah Division of Child and Family Services).

The return journey back into parenthood can be especially difficult for grandparents the second time around.



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## Grandparents raising children *(continued)*

“It’s been a great experience,” Albert said. “We’ve learned so much. We learned what it’s like to be a teenager, growing up in a completely different world than when I was her age. This is not the same planet. I guess you can say we’ve been successfully nursed into it by our granddaughter.”

### Challenges

Every day, grandparents face a litany of challenges that include navigating legal issues of pursuing guardianship, custody or adoption, financial stress, housing and transportation needs, coping with isolation or not knowing where to turn to for help.

Even though finding services can be difficult, some organizations try to break free from the traditional child welfare model.

Generations United, a nonprofit, Washington, D.C.-based organization was launched more than 35 years ago in partnership with AARP. The mission is to advocate for grandfamilies.

Their research outlines the depth of issues many grandparents encounter.

Ana Beltran, director of Generations United, Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center, said although the demands grandparents face can be daunting, the effort is worth the investment.

“Anecdotally we hear about all of the challenges they face, but we don’t hear too much about the positives,” Beltran said. “Yes, grandparents may have to give up vacations, retirement and friends, but the love of a child gives them a sense of purpose and meaning.”

The challenges most foster grandparents face include:

- Struggles with discipline, difficulty managing their grandchildren’s educational and social needs (including helping with school-related technology), and acceptance of outdated and potentially harmful health beliefs.
- Drug-related issues: Grandparent-led households are six times more likely – 35.6% for grandparents (compared to 5.8% for parents) – to have a parent serve time in jail and four times (29.7%) more likely to have lived with someone struggling with drug or alcohol addiction.
- Limited access to mental health services for depression, stress and behavioral or emotional issues.
- Limited understanding of available services and how to apply.
- Housing assistance, which benefits less than one-third of eligible grandfamilies.
- Nutrition assistance, as less than half receive SNAP (Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program/formerly food stamps).
- Lack of financial assistance: Nearly half of children in grandfamilies have caregivers who have not received financial support such as foster care or adoption assistance payments, Social Security survivor benefits, child support or Temporary Assistance for Needy Family grants.



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## Grandparents raising children *(continued)*

- Food insecurity: According to a 2022 [report](#), the rate of food insecurity for households where grandparents older than 60 are raising grandchildren are three times higher than the rate of similar households with no children. Recent data (2019-21) places Utah at 11.2% of households experiencing food insecurity, slightly higher than the national rate of 10.4%.
- Day-to-day support: Thirty percent of grandparent-led households felt that they did not have someone to turn to regularly.

In a recent study by The Foster Care Institute, the majority of non-related foster parents indicated that they suffered from emotional low points with some indicating they did not feel supported by foster care agencies or did not receive proper training. The data also suggests that grandparents feel the same level of disconnect and distress as their non-related counterparts.

Approximately half of the respondents felt that they wanted to quit as a foster parent at some point, with 19% feeling like quitting more than once. The turnover rate of foster parents ranges from 30-50%.

“Yes, it’s my understanding there is a shortage of unrelated foster parents which is probably why more child welfare agencies rely on relatives, which is a good thing, despite the shortage,” Beltran said.

Although raising grandchildren has its uphill battles, the vast majority of grandparents say it’s a heck of a lot of fun.

Judith and Albert Anderson agree.

“This has allowed us to step back and be a little more open to new and different things,” Albert added. “At our age, we forgot what it’s like to be 15, so I agree with my wife, it’s been a huge blessing on many levels, but one not without its challenges.”

### **The economics of raising grandchildren**

Having grandchildren around the house may be a lot of fun, but once families become involved in the child welfare system, the inequities between those who are licensed foster parents and those who are not are glaring, Beltran said.

“There are many states where children are placed with relatives, but the relatives are not licensed for a variety of reasons. Because they are not licensed, they do not receive the full foster care maintenance payments,” Beltran added. More needs to be done, Beltran said, to allow grandparents access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) grants which are often the only source of ongoing financial assistance for families outside of child welfare involvement.

“A lot of kinship support depends on where you live and where you don’t, because this is very much a state- and community-driven issue,” she said. “The children raised outside the traditional system are less likely to be connected to the types of services that they need.”

“Most of us are on Social Security,” said Dot Thibodeaux, president and co-founder of the grassroots support group Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Information Center of Louisiana, during an interview before her passing in 2019. “When the family grows, the Social Security does not. You have to make do with whatever you were getting, and that’s kind of hard.”

Although some states offer financial subsidies to help grandparents with the costs of raising children, few apply because they are unaware of the help. Others don’t qualify because they make too much money — even if they earn very little, Thibodeaux said.

“You almost have to be on the streets,” she added.

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## Grandparents raising children *(continued)*

### Kinship navigator programs

The key to successful outcomes for grandparents raising grandchildren are kinship navigator programs, which started more than 20 years ago as state and county initiatives. These programs assist caregivers in navigating the many systems that impact them, including child welfare, aging, education, housing and health care.

In 2004, Casey Family Programs implemented the first kinship navigator project in collaboration with the state of Washington. As of April 2018, approximately 25 other states operate 70 kinship navigator programs across the country.

“The availability to resources has gotten better over the years,” Beltran said. “But, many grandparents get lost in the competing demands of foster care caseworkers.”

For some time, it’s been known that excessive workloads can make it difficult for child welfare caseworkers to serve families effectively. High turnover rates continue to be a problem, resulting in many agencies focusing on staffing and retention to maintain reasonable workloads among staff.

“These are programs that we are seeing more and more, so things are improving,” Beltran said.



### Change is on the horizon

During the past decade, the U.S. Congress and state legislatures have tried to help with mixed results.

In Louisiana, state lawmakers established a [grandparents’ council](#) in the governor’s office to study solutions facing grandparents raising grandchildren.

In New Mexico, lawmakers voted to set up a [task force](#) to recommend policy changes that could help grandparents with everything from legal and financial resources to food and housing assistance.

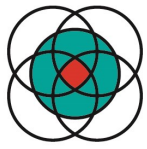
A bill that lingered in the Massachusetts Legislature before being discharged would have provided grandparents caring for their grandchildren with [property tax relief](#). And, in Georgia lawmakers considered bills that would have made it easier for grandparents to take grandchildren for medical care, or enroll them in school; however, the bills failed to pass.

U.S. Rep. Danny Davis, D-Ill., [introduced a bill](#) that would have, among other things, made it easier for grandparents caring for children to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grant payments. The bill lingered in committee before dying for a lack of a vote.

Inaction in the U.S. Senate also effectively killed a bill that would have provided federal funding for substance abuse programs for families with children at [imminent risk of entering foster care](#). The bill would also have allowed states to waive foster care licensing standards for grandparents and other relatives.

Legislative experts say if this bill would have become law it could have made a huge difference in promoting financial equity between licensed foster parents and grandparents raising grandchildren.

For more information regarding grandparents raising grandchildren visit, [Generations United](#), [GKSNetwork.org](#), [Prevention Services Clearinghouse Website | FamilyFirstAct.org](#), or [grandfamilies.org](#).



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## Prostate Cancer

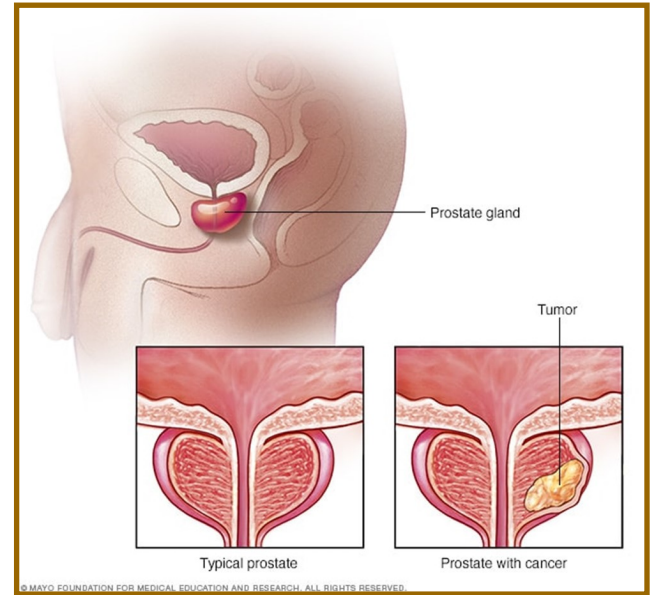
Prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer. Many prostate cancers grow slowly and are confined to the prostate gland, where they may not cause serious harm. However, while some types of prostate cancer grow slowly and may need minimal or even no treatment, other types are aggressive and can spread quickly. Prostate cancer that's detected early — when it's still confined to the prostate gland — has the best chance for successful treatment.

Prostate cancer may cause no signs or symptoms in its early stages.

- Prostate cancer that's more advanced may cause signs and symptoms such as:
- Trouble urinating
- Decreased force in the stream of urine
- Blood in the urine
- Blood in the semen
- Bone pain

You can reduce your risk of prostate cancer if you:

- **Choose a healthy diet full of fruits and vegetables.** Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Fruits and vegetables contain many vitamins and nutrients that can contribute to your health.
- Whether you can prevent prostate cancer through diet has yet to be conclusively proved. But eating a healthy diet with a variety of fruits and vegetables can improve your overall health.
- **Choose healthy foods over supplements.** No studies have shown that supplements play a role in reducing your risk of prostate cancer. Instead, choose foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals so that you can maintain healthy levels of vitamins in your body.
- **Exercise most days of the week.** Exercise improves your overall health, helps you maintain your weight and improves your mood. Try to exercise most days of the week. If you're new to exercise, start slow and work your way up to more exercise time each day.



- Losing weight without trying
- Erectile dysfunction

Make an appointment with your doctor if you have any persistent signs or symptoms that worry you.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** If your current weight is healthy, work to maintain it by choosing a healthy diet and exercising most days of the week. If you need to lose weight, add more exercise and reduce the number of calories you eat each day. Ask your doctor for help creating a plan for healthy weight loss.
- **Talk to your doctor about increased risk of prostate cancer.** If you have a very high risk of prostate cancer, you and your doctor may consider medications or other treatments to reduce the risk. Some studies suggest that taking 5-alpha reductase inhibitors, including finasteride (Propecia, Proscar) and dutasteride (Avodart), may reduce the overall risk of developing prostate cancer. These drugs are used to control prostate gland enlargement and hair loss.

However, some evidence indicates that people taking these medications may have an increased risk of getting a more serious form of prostate cancer (high-grade prostate cancer). If you're concerned about your risk of developing prostate cancer, talk with your doctor.



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## Recipe: Easy Stuffed Bell Peppers with Ground Beef and Rice

### Ingredients

- 1-pound ground beef
- 1/2 small onion, chopped fine
- 1 raw egg
- 1 package Knorr Spanish Rice
- 1 tablespoon garlic, powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 4 bell peppers (I prefer green), cut long ways in half take out the seeds and the core
- 2 (10 3/4 oz) cans tomato soup
- 1 (10 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 8 cubes Velveeta cheese, optional cheese of your choice
- salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon ketchup



**Prep Time:** 20 minutes

**Cook Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes

**Ready to Eat:** 1 hour 35 minutes

**Serves 2 to 4**

### Instructions

- Set the oven to 375 degrees.
- In a large bowl mix together the raw ground beef, egg, onions, ketchup and seasonings.
- Cook the Spanish rice as directed on the package. When done, set it aside and let it cool down a little.
- When the rice is warm not steaming hot anymore. Add it to the ground beef mixture and mix it all together.
- Wash the peppers and cut them lengthwise.
- Put a cube of cheese at the bottom of the bell pepper.
- Fill the bell pepper with the meat mixture.
- Put the filled bell peppers in a deep baking pan.
- Pour the tomato soup, 1/2 cup water, and cubed tomatoes into the pan and on top of the bell peppers. Sprinkle some garlic powder on top of everything.
- Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes then, uncover and bake for an additional 30 minutes.

*Welcome September!*

*May this month bring you satisfaction, peace and joy.*

*May all the desires of your heart be granted.*

*May this be the beginning of new things in your life.*

*Stay strong, be positive and fulfill your dreams*

*Happy new month friends!*

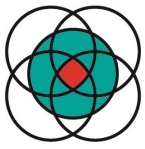


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Please submit your email address to me for future correspondence! You can email me at [jferril@thrive-alliance.org](mailto:jferril@thrive-alliance.org).

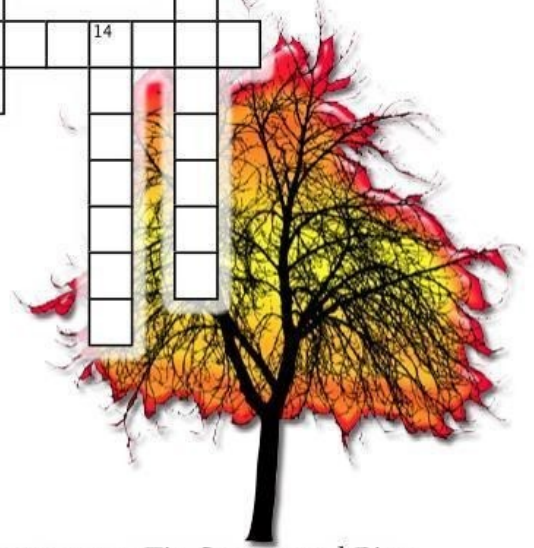
If you desire a listing of caregiver support groups whether live or virtual please e-mail or call me at **812-372-6918**.

We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Email me or call if you would like to be a part of the group.



## Fall Crossword Puzzle

Trees and their fruits are the focus of this fun puzzle!



### Across

- 3. The spiky partner of the Ivy from the holiday song.
- 4. You've got to hand it to Florida for picking this as their State tree!
- 6. This tree grows in Indiana, not Amsterdam! It's the State tree.
- 8. Looks like an evergreen, but loses its leaves.
- 13. This giant is the State tree of California.
- 16. Shellfish meets orchard fruit?
- 19. A horse doesn't eat them, despite the name; this tree is also known as the conker tree.
- 20. I've no "eye-deer" why they thought this tree's fruit looked like a mammal's optical organ!

### Down

- 1. We harvest young Fir, Spruce and Pine trees at this time.
- 2. The seeds of this tree whirl down to earth like miniature helicopters!
- 5. If you burn the wood of this tree, you're left with its name.
- 7. This tree sounds like it has a lot of friends...
- 9. The tree's not built from bricks and the nuts are hard to crack.
- 10. All trees which lose their leaves are called this.
- 11. The tree we get syrup from.
- 12. Four-legged friends might be tempted to tinkle on the State tree of Missouri.
- 14. This Willow doesn't really have much to cry about.
- 15. If there's a shortage of coffee, then the root of this tree is roasted and ground as a bitter-tasting substitute.