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Lolli, Pops, and grandfamilies

June 2, 2021 John Peters II Opinion 0

By Charlotte Reeves Guest Columnist



Editor's Note: This is one of a series of columns to be shared with Mount Airy News readers by the Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office.

WEATHER

Mount Airy, NC 27030

Weather	Wind	Rain	Sun	Mo
78.1 °F Chance Rain Showers				
63 °F		79 °F		
60 80 THU	59 83 FRI	61 86 SAT		

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Households in which grandparents are raising grandchildren, known as grandfamilies, represent a growing and underserved population in Surry County. The dramatic increase in grandfamilies over the past two decades is simply alarming.

One of the major consequences of substance abuse disorder is the effect on the family. Adults that have substance use disorder often lose the ability to take care of their own children, which results in the children being removed from the home. As a result, many children are placed in “kinship” care, which means they receive care from within the family or friendship network of the child. According to the Kids Count Data Center, in 2017 approximately 2.9 million children throughout the U.S. receive kinship care. More than 100 foster families are providing homes for children in Surry County and there could be an equal number of grandfamilies in our county.

This week, I interviewed two amazing grandparents named Allene and Rich Young – Lolli and Pops – who are raising their six-year-old grandchild, Sebellah. Rich and Allene recently moved to Surry County from Arizona to put themselves in a better place to raise little Sebellah. They have suffered the hardships, as well as reaped the rewards, that raising a grandchild will provide. They understand this so well that they decided to create their own support group known as the “Mount Airy Grands.” Mount Airy Grands provides a safe space for grandparents to share stories, connect with other grandparents, and find helpful resources for the life-changing experience of raising one’s grandchildren.

Grandfamilies represent a population with family social interactions and responsibilities that are more complex than usual. I sat down with Allene and Rich and asked them about the challenges faced by grandfamilies. They recommend seeking legal assistance to accomplish some form of guardianship and to clarify your legal rights. Grandparents face numerous challenges related to legal, financial, medical, educational, parental, social, and familial issues. Grandparents, acting as parents, find their physical, psychological, and financial health can be adversely impacted.

Most grandparents who are raising their grandchildren certainly did not expect to do so. They may have to forego the retirement of their dreams. Most must relearn parenting, learn about new technologies, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat. Most agree though, that there are many benefits to raising grandchildren.

Shante Anderson, a resident of Surry County, is raising her grandson, Tavian, and is also a member of the Mount Airy Grands. Raising her grandson, Shante remarked, has given her a second chance at being a better parent and helps to keep her young and vital. Most importantly, Tavian has taught her the importance of tolerance and patience. There are blessings that are present

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alongside the difficulties and the blessings are not always just for the grandparent. The grandchild benefits by living in a stable environment, learning about their family history, and gaining wisdom from their grandparent's lived experiences.

If you, or someone you know, would benefit from being a part of the Mount Airy Grands, please visit their website at mountairygrands.com. Visit our website at surrycountycare.com for more information about substance abuse disorder and the many resources in our county. If you have any questions or need additional information on prevention, intervention, treatment, or recovery, contact Charlotte Reeves, the county's community outreach coordinator, at reevesc@co.surry.nc.us.

Charlotte Reeves is the Community Outreach Coordinator for Surry County Substance Abuse Recovery Office. She may be reached at 336-401-8218 or reevesc@co.surry.nc.us.



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