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Grandparents raising kids

More elders in position to care for grandchildren

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FAIRMOUNT — Fairmount resident Beth Holloway became the guardian for her grandson, Tucker, when he was three months old. These days she continues to raise Tucker, a second-grader at Park Elementary School.

Holloway has noticed that more and more grandparents are raising their grandchildren, citing statistics that in the US the number is more than six million and growing. Indiana has more than 40,000 children being raised by grandparents or relatives.



Tucker Robertson, 8, points to a photo of a red sky during a tornado in a book he is reading to his grandmother, Beth Holloway at their home Wednesday evening in Fairmount. emoore@chronicle-tribune.com

She thinks each family situation is unique and would like to see more support groups for grandparents started in schools.

Planning her finances is just one area that is a challenge.

"Rather than saving for my retirement, I'm saving for college tuition again," she said. "Honestly, I'm very blessed to have the support of my family and friends that are always willing to help out when money is tight.

"We, as grandparents, do everything that parents do. We pay for everything that parents do. We plan for their futures. It is hard. We provide support financially and emotionally, give discipline, guidance and security, and most importantly, unconditional love. Tucker is like my son. We have a close relationship. I believe grandparents cannot be grandparents to a child who is under their care. It's difficult because it's our nature to want to be a grandparent. But, we are parents for the second time around."

Holloway, a 21-year employee of Taylor University in Upland, credits her employer's flexibility for her ability to keep her job. She knows many grandparents have to quit work to raise grandchildren.

"Like so many other people, life is day by day, paycheck to paycheck," she said. "At this time in my life, my concerns are for Tucker and his future. He is worth the financial sacrifices.

"Raising a grandchild is challenging yet very rewarding. I feel like I have more time and patience with parenting the second time around. Tucker keeps me busy with sports and school activities. He's fun to be with. I can't imagine my life without him."

She offered these thoughts to grandparents just starting the journey she's on.

"You can expect a radical change in your lifestyle, changes that affect your work, friendships, daily activities and retirement plans. You are not alone. It's important to maintain a family support system, find a support group to learn about the many resources available to you, and take care of yourself. I enjoy being a part of my grandson's life."

Holloway finds some support from the AARP Website at www.aarp.com.

Locally, she is in touch with Barb Nehring, program coordinator of Family Services Society, Inc. in Marion.

"We have RAPP, a Relatives As Parents Program," Nehring said. "The third Tuesday evening of the month we have a carry-in meal and afterward the adults have a free group counseling session and I do a craft or a game with the children. The adults talk about issues concerning what is going on as older parents. They have found they have a lot in common. Some have medical and legal needs we try to help with."

Call Family Services at 662-9971 to find out more.

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