EVALUATION OF A PRINTED NEWSLETTER TAILORED TO
GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS IN KANSAS

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**OVERVIEW**

- Introduction
- Review of literature
- Background information
- Purpose of the study and objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions
- Limitations
In the U.S, 2.7 million grandparents (38%) are responsible for the basic needs of at least one grandchild (Grandparent caregivers).

In Kansas: 21,754 (45.8%) were responsible for at least one grandchild in 2015.

Challenges grandparent caregivers may face:

- Setting boundaries
- Emotional well-being
- Finances
- Education on alcohol, sex, and drugs
- Lack of support services in their community
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Grandparents as role models for children’s eating patterns

- Promote healthful or unhealthful eating habits
- Source of credibility
- May influence adiposity in young children
Second time parenting (Higgins & Murray, 2010)
- More conscious about food safety and nutrition
- But their knowledge did not always translate into better food selections
- Sources of nutrition information were outdated
- Relied on past parenting experiences

What were these grandparent caregivers concerned about?
- Electronics and food purchases
- Picky eaters
- “On-the-go” lifestyle
- Allowing “junk food”
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Written education materials

- Potential to decrease drop out rates
- Need to be noticed, read, understood, believed, and remembered
- Are widely used and are effective at increasing readers’ knowledge and awareness
- Newsletters are minimal labor cost interventions that can deliver information to a wide proportion of society
Experiences using newsletters to promote healthful behaviors

- Effective in increasing knowledge and improving self-reported lifestyle and parenting techniques (Bahl & Francis, 2016; Garton et al., 2003).
- Improved fruit and vegetable consumption (Doerksen & Estabrooks, 2007)
- Promotes discussion among readers and their friends and family members, that helped promote behavior change (Walker & Riley, 2001)
• Kansas State University Human Nutrition Cooperative Extension Service faculty launched a newsletter entitled *Nourishing the Next Generation*

• Financial support from the USDA and SNAP-Ed
• Mailed six times a year to all Kansan grandparent-headed households receiving SNAP benefits

• Electronic version was emailed to:
  • Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Service Family and Consumer Science district and county agents
  • Cooperative Extension Service educators in other states
  • Other community educators
Purpose of Study

*Nourishing the Next Generation* newsletter

- Two-sided, one-page with nutrition and wellness topics
- Based on adult learning theory, the Health Belief Model, and Social Cognitive Theory
- Some of the topics: “picky eaters”, sports nutrition, choosing more healthful packaged and fast foods, increasing physical activity and limiting sedentary time, benefits of family meals, food safety, cooking together as a family including a recipe in every other issue
- After five years of *Nourishing the Next Generation* being in circulation, we evaluated it in order to know the impact it had and to highlight its strengths
OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate how helpful the printed newsletter was perceived to be by low-income grandparents raising grandchildren and by community educators.

- Evaluate if the newsletter improved grandparent caregivers’ nutrition and physical activity awareness, knowledge, motivation, and confidence to follow wellness recommendations.

- Demonstrate effectiveness of the newsletter in promoting wellness behaviors (especially more healthful nutrition and physical activity) by low-income grandparents raising their dependent grandchildren.

- Explore improvements for the newsletter.
METHODOLOGY

Survey

- Grandparents caregivers
  - Random sample of 495 out of 868 households
  - 99 addresses for each of the five years

- Community educators
  - Convenience sample of 175
## METHODOLOGY

### Survey
- Opinions on:
  - The topical nutrition and wellness information
  - Recipes
  - Helpfulness
- Closed- and open-ended questions
- Demographic questions

### Grandparent caregivers
- 25 questions
- Self-perceived changes in their practices
- Short article in a previous newsletter
- Mailed
- Drawing for 4 grocery gift cards

### Community educators
- 39 questions
- Use of the information
- Similar questions from the survey of grandparent caregivers
- Emailed and follow-up reminder

Approval by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board
Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Average responses were calculated for questions answered along a 3-point or 5-point Likert scale.
- Summary of the responses for open-ended questions.
RESULTS FROM GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS

- 495 surveys
- 3 returned, not delivered
- 3 excluded
- 54 surveys
- 12% response rate

- 8 from at least the past year
- 9 from at least the past two years
- 11 from at least the past three years
- 12 from at least the past four years
- 14 from the past five years
RESULTS FROM GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS

Demographics

- 58% were between the ages of 50-59 years
- 75% were white
- 52 were women
- 61% reported being the only adult in their household
- Range of children care

What do Recipients do with the Newsletters?

- 65% read them completely
- 24% glance through them
- 5% do not read them (3 people)

Opinions

- 96% thought it was visually appealing
- 100% thought the information was easy to understand
RESULTS FROM GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS

Opinions

- 96% thought information was helpful or provided new ideas
- 61% talked about the newsletter with someone else
- 71% thought recipes were “very much” helpful

Awareness and motivations (average of responses, range = 1-3, low to high)

- Increased awareness on healthy eating: 2.6
- Increased awareness on physical activity: 2.5
- Increased motivation or confidence to follow recommendation: 2.2
RESULTS FROM GRANDPARENT CAREGIVERS

Reported behavior changes (average of responses, range = 1-3, low to high)

- Offer more healthful low-cost meals/snacks: 2.8
- Eat more meals together: 2.7
- Increase in physical activity time with grandchildren: 2.7
- Limit “screen” or sitting down time with grandchildren: 2.6

Cooking practices

- 98% reported preparing most meals at home except for school lunches
- 73% reported cooking from “scratch”
Examples of lifestyle changes reported by participants

“join the YMCA to have more [indoor] exercise with the heat so high”

“I have utilized a lot of the healthy snack ideas and some of the tips on helping children try new foods”

“we [my husband and I] are teaching awareness of eating habits to the children like [they were] classes”

“sit down as a family, eat more healthy snacks”, “trying to eat together all the time”

“I am working on a weekly schedule for myself and the grandchildren with activities and meal planning”
RESULTS FROM COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

- 17% response rate (30 participants)
- 64% were from a Cooperative Extension Service
- 70% were from Kansas

Demographics
- 70% between ages 50-69 years
- 96% were women
- 100% had at least a college bachelor’s degree
RESULTS FROM COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

How the information has been used?

- Distribution of printed copies of the newsletter
- Use some or all of the newsletter information in their own publications
- Teach it in their group and individual educational sessions
- Forwarded electronic copies to others they knew

“Give copies to a health clinic that is free for those who are uninsured”

“We have 'Parent Corners' set up at our after-school sites and the newsletter is one of the many resources we provide to parents/guardians”

“With older adult meals program participants during noon meals”
Opinions (average of responses, range = 1-5, low to high)

- A good nutrition education method to reach grandparent caregivers: 4.1
- Content of the newsletter is appropriate: 4.3
- Targets the needs of grandparent caregivers: 4.1
- Ingredients used in recipes in the newsletter are of easy access to grandparent caregivers: 4.0
- Focuses on behaviors to include rather than those to exclude: 3.9

- Information in the newsletter is practical and relevant: 4.0
- Motivates readers to make nutrition-related changes: 4.0
- Motivates readers to make physical activity-related changes: 3.7
- Motivates readers to make food safety-related changes: 3.8
RESULTS

Newsletter recommendations from both groups

Grandparents caregivers:
- “More daily or weekly menu ideas with basic food groups, so I gain confidence that they are getting all the nutrition needed”
- “More recipes for low-cost healthy meals (not snacks)”, and “more summer healthy recipes”

Community educators:
- Wanted to keep this newsletter in circulation because they thought that it was a valuable resource and that the information was helpful to people in their communities who often are unaware about how to be or stay healthy
Was the newsletter helpful?

- Yes, for most of the grandparent caregivers, it helped them learn new wellness-related ideas and new ways to do everyday tasks.

- Yes, for community educators, the newsletter was helpful because its information was useful, provided new ideas, and encouraged readers to take action.
Did the newsletter improve awareness, knowledge, motivation, or confidence to follow recommendations about nutrition and physical activity in grandparent caregivers?

- Yes, they were more aware and knowledgeable about wellness recommendations, and they felt supported and confident in their practices, after reading *Nourishing the Next Generation*

- Most (78 percent) of the grandparent caregivers described feeling more motivated or confident to follow recommendations for healthy eating or physical activity, enhancing self-efficacy
Was the newsletter effective in promoting more healthful nutrition, physical activity, and other wellness behavior changes among grandparent caregivers?

- Yes, 91 percent of responding grandparent caregivers reported improving one or more wellness practice.

- More than two-thirds of responding grandparent caregivers identified the newsletter as a tool that led them eat more meals together with their family, spend more time in the kitchen together with their grandchildren preparing healthful meals and snacks, and improve their food safety practices.
LIMITATIONS

- Lack of a control or comparison group
- Majority of participants were women
- Low response rate
- Self-reported answers
An appropriately designed newsletter can effectively improve the health of a large number of people, yet has limited costs, and thus, is an excellent public health method.
REFERENCES


