



YOUTH, FAMILY, COMMUNITIES

Aging adults find support through Extension programs

EXTENSION HELPS PEOPLE DEAL WITH LIFE'S CHALLENGES AS THEY AGE

Getting older can bring about a host of changes—and challenges. Extension programs around the country are helping older people navigate issues such as raising grandchildren, maintaining independence and being able to stay active on the farm.

SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- In **West Virginia**, the prevalence of “grandfamilies” is on the rise. Many grandparents have taken custody of grandchildren whose parents are coping with opioid addiction. Extension experts launched the Healthy Grandfamilies program to facilitate discussion sessions for grandparents about communicating with their grandchildren, technology, nutrition, legal issues, stress, school issues and more. Participants were provided three months of free follow-up services with a licensed social worker.
- Programs in **North Carolina** and **South Dakota** are helping seniors “age in place,” or maintain their independence in their own homes, by educating them on how to avoid falls and other hazards. Aging in place can save families the cost of nursing homes or other care, and there are emotional and health benefits to staying in familiar surroundings and remaining part of the community.
- Farm work is inherently dangerous—and more so for aging farmers. Extension efforts in **Maine** and **Kentucky** highlight safety risks for older farmers and help them identify ways to mitigate those risks.

HEALTHY GRANDFAMILIES

The **West Virginia** Healthy Grandfamilies program reached 125 grandparents and 250 grandchildren in a multi-county area between 2016 and 2019.

Here's what one participant said: “I just went so long thinking that I was doing everything wrong in raising my granddaughter. I've had her since she was born, and she's 13 now, so I've gone 13 years wondering if I'm doing it right or doing it wrong. And I've always wanted a support group, I didn't know if there were any, and when that call came, it answered a need that I had.”

In 2019, Extension staffers took the program statewide. Plans are underway to establish the Center of Excellence for Grandfamilies on the West Virginia State University campus.

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