



2007

Voice of Children

Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives



Isabell—Age 6



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A compilation of poems, essays, and drawings submitted from children living in Washington State to the 2007 Children's Kinship Care Expression Contest.

Initiated by the Washington State Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) and the Kinship Oversight Committee



To order more copies of this booklet or for further information about the 2007 Children's Expression Contest, e-mail Shelly Willis at ShellyWillis1@qwest.net or call 1-877-813-2828.

This book can also be found on-line at:
www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare

Booklet design by Jody McInturff

With Many Thanks

This booklet is a tribute to grandparents and other relatives of Washington State. It is a collaborative effort that could not have been possible without the support, guidance, and partnership of those listed below. Thanks to each of you for your tremendous spirit and dedication to those we serve.

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Linda Carbanou	Contest Judge
Michael Luque	DSHS Children's Administration
Emily Cator	Casey Family Programs, Seattle Office
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Ann Hirsch	Contest Judge
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Kinship Care Information

For more information on finding services, programs, and support for a relative's child in your care or as a kinship caregiver, visit the DSHS Kinship Care Website at **www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare**.



Foreword

Most children find safety and comfort in the arms and care of their family, including grandparents and other relatives. For more than 2 million children in the USA, living with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other family members has become a permanent or long-term arrangement.

When parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, placing them with a relative caregiver can have some advantages. Kinship care reduces the trauma children experience when placed with strangers. It enhances children's sense of identity and self-esteem, continues connections children have to their siblings and other relatives, and strengthens the family's ability to give children the support they need.

Kinship care often comes as a surprise to both child and relative caregiver. What does it mean to a child who can't live with their parents to know he or she is safe, loved, and has a place to belong?

Some answers to this question are offered in this small, but powerful book. Children ages 5-18 from across Washington State relate their experiences living in kinship care.

Some are funny, some serious or even sad, but all are sincere and offer testimony to the value, sense of family, and love each young author experienced living with a family caregiver.

Good reading!

Shelly Willis

Kinship Expression! Contest Coordinator



A Tribute for a Grand Lady!



The dedication for the 2007 Voices of Children Contest goes to a visionary and unstoppable woman - Janet Sainer...also know as the Queen of Kinship Care Services.

Nearly 20 years ago, Janet initiated groundbreaking strategies to launch the now renowned Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP).

She has been an inspirational leader and champion for the provision of greater support, empowerment, and a voice for relatives raising children. Today, more than 175 programs throughout the country, including 10 in Washington State, are part of the RAPP network.

On June 3, 2007, Janet's life came to an end while attending the annual RAPP conference. She was 88 years old. Until the very last moment of her life, she was a shining example of how to live life vibrantly and passionately. It is rare for one person to touch as many lives as Janet did.

Janet always held out the hope that one day (in the not too distant future) sufficient emotional, advocacy, and financial support would be available to kinship care families all across this country. Although she will be missed, Janet's legacy will inspire us to continue to champion relatives who are raising children.

In 2004, the first Voices of Children's contest was created by members of Washington State's RAPP. Janet was a big fan of this annual event. We trust you too will be inspired by the poems, essays, and drawings honoring the children and their relatives who are raising them.

Hilari Hauptman
RAPP State Coordinator

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Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All entries are printed as received.

★ ★ Ages 5-7 ★ ★



Winner

My nana is the best nana in the whole world we do every thing together even our cat coco.

When we came on the airplane from far far away Long Island we didn't even have a home.

We have a house now. Nana, me and coco share every day together everywhere inside and outside.

Nana coms to school with me and helps there. We go to soccer, games, hiking and picnics.

Lots of things but my hand gets tired of writing.

My nana's hands hurt more.

I help nana in the garden.

Nana tells me I can do anything. I would like to win something for my best nana and surprise her.

My nana gives to everyone.

I would like to give to my nana.



Anthony

Age 6
★ 4



Winner



My grandpa and I.

I lived with my grand-parents since I was a baby. But I also want to tell you how it was when my grandpa died. My grandpa's name was Papa Jim. He smoked for 40 years. Then.... he got lung cancer. The cancer spread through out his body. When he was dying I was holding his right hand my grandma was holding his left hand. These are the things I miss doing with him. He walked me to the bus stop. He read me stories. He took me to the park, We ate popcorn and watched movies. I miss him very much. At least I have my grandma.



Lilly-Rae

Age 7

★ 5



Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All entries are printed as received.



Ages 8-12



Winner

I lost my mom 2 Days after my sixth birthday. I lived with aunt and uncle and family. I had tantrum problems. I was in a hospital for six months. Grandma came to Texas; and I came back with her. She lives in an adult apartment. She makes sure I have my homework done even I get upset with my math. Grandma is always there for me even when I have a bad Day. We giggle, hug and we cry. Never a day goes by that she doesn't do something special for me and takes care of my feelings. There isn't a day goes by that she always tells me "I Love you." She is fun and I love her verry much or "more." I go singing at nursing homes with her and sing solos to the residen's.

Holly

Age 8



Winner



Living with my grandma and grandpa makes me feel safe and loved.

When I lived with my mom and dad. I was scared a lot. I had a lot of bad dreams. I was very hungry a lot. Now I am not.

When I first lived with my grandparents I would hide food under my bed. I would not go anywhere with out my sister, and my grandfather was very nice and told me as long as I was with them I will never go hungry and nobody will ever hurt me. I have been here for 5 years and no one has hurt me and I eat very good and I can go places without my sister and on my own. I thank my grandparents for traking care of me and letting me stay with them.

Thank you

Shyan

Shyan

Age 9

**Winner**

My father is in prison. When I was two months old, he went to jail. Then, my grandparents walked into my life and took me in. Ever since then, my life has been spectacular. I live in the best home that any child could ever ask for. I have many friends and do many fun and exciting things with my grandparents. I am disciplined fairly and love my lifestyle. If it weren't for my grandparents, I would be a very unhappy child. I probably wouldn't even be living with my mom, because at the time, my mom couldn't even afford to support her own life. I would be a foster child living with strangers. This is how my grandparents changed my life from living in a drawer, (literally) to becoming a grateful, happy child.

Taylor

Age 11

**Winner**

Living with My Grandma

Living with my Grandma has changed my life because she sets me on the right track for life. She has me clean the house and the car so I know how to clean later on in life. When I moved in with my Grandma some of my cousins that I didn't know taught me how to chop wood and hunt. Since I have been living with my Grandma she has taught me how to take care of myself better. Before I moved in with my Grandma I didn't really understand what the value of a dollar actually is. If I had not moved in with my Grandma I wouldn't understand my heritage like I should. What I mean by "like I should" is how to treat an elder and treat others. My heritaage has taught me a lot about how to treat people and myself. My heritage has also helped me understand what I need to do in life. And take care of myself better when I grow up and have my own house. I love my Grandma very much for what she has done for me. She has taught me very many good things in life. So I know I know what it will be like taking care of my own children and my house. I help my Grandma out a lot around the house. I bring out the garbage, vacuum the carpet, bring in firewood and bring in groceries. She helps me out a lot too. She teaches me some of the things I'm going to be facing in life. I always wonder what my life would be like and where I would live if I hadn't moved in with my Grandma.

Donald

Age 12



Winning Contest Entries

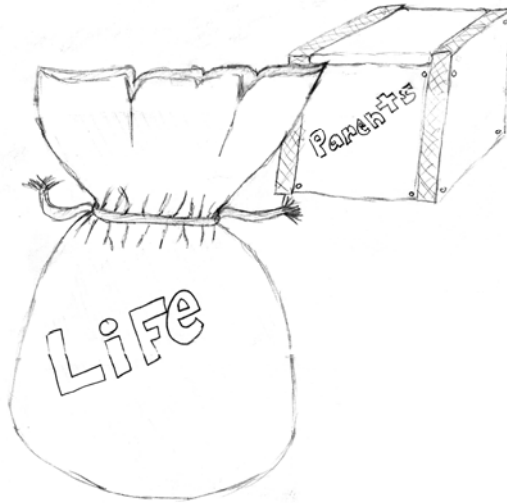
Please note: All entries are printed as received.

★ ★ Ages 13-19 ★ ★



Winner

with my mom



Bag: The bag represents our life's (my sister and I) we did not know what our future held, the bag is closed because we did not know what surprise's we would find when we open the bag, our life was closed and dark we lived a life of secrets and drugs. We moved almost through time and never had a true home.

Box: represents our parent's they held the box closed due to secrets they didn't want us to know. We were never close, they were always out place never home. We were scared because we did not know where they were or what would happen.



Bag: The bag is open because it show our life is open and it is not dark or closed. It shows that we know what future awaits and what surprises well come and that we wont move and that we have a true home.

Cross: We live in the house of the lord and that we live with loving christen relatives.

Box: the box is open because our aunt and uncle don't hide any secrets and we are always close to them and we always's trust them and know were they are and that they do not do drugs or hurt each other or us. Living with my aunt and uncle has made a positive and dramatic influence in my life.

Tanner

Age 14



Winner

--To my Grandma--

Like a flower from a seed
You've helped me grow

Murmurs of lullabies you once sang
helped me to sleep at night

Everytime I fell in life
You were the one who
helped me up each time

All my mistakes I've made
you were there to understand my pain

Without your guidance
I don't know where I'd be...

I've grown up knowing
I'm not alone in this life

If I make a difference
I know it's because of you

Like a song from a poet
Dancing deep within me

You've become my true mom
and that's how it will always be...

Starsha

Age 18



Writings of Merit

Please note: All entries are printed as received.

★ ★ Ages 5-7 ★ ★

We have lots of love in our house. This is a picture of our house and Grandpa, Me, Grammy and Mommy. I love our house.



Jannah

Age 5



Why I like living with my
grama and grampa ^{and Auntie} is because their
nic, loving, sweet, caring
"Together were a Family"



Family

Braxton

Age 6

★ 13



My grandma and grandpa are special to me. They are part of my heart. Grandpa takes me on a ride to my secret road. My grandma grandpa help me with my homework and reading. Grandpa takes me and my brothers to see my Daddy at his fire camp school. I like it when my grandma and I make cookies and cake together. Most of all I like it when my grandma tells me I am her special angle and when she sings to me and my Brother at bedtime.

Love you grandma grandpa



Isabell
Age 6



I'm happy with were I live

My Grandmother always makes yummy yummy dinners.

I play fun games with my coisin Crista and Grandma.

I'm in girl scouts, It's really fun.

Crista always puts the pictures I make on her wall. We have a really funny dog named Lady. Being 7 years old is a lot of fun.



Jessica

Age 7



Why I like living with my nana becas you swim fish and books and she buys me a lot of goodies we camp & we go to the beach dig for clams. No one is like my nana. She is the greatest.



Brenden

Age 7

★ 15



My life with my aunt & uncel

I live with my aunt Dana and uncel Rob. Because my mom dos'nt have enough money to soport me and my sister Leah. But I still get to go to her house every summer. I wish I could live with my mom. But I still am very grateful that my aunt Dana and uncel Rob where nice enough to soport us. And over time I've found out that Aunt Dana is just like a mother to me and uncel Rob is just like a father to me. And I've learend to appreciate all they do for me. And I've learend to love them like I do my mom and dad. They have made a big difference in my life. And I love my Aunt Dana and uncel Rob very very much. And nothing else in the entier world could cange that. And because of what a diferents in my life they have made I would not leave them for a million dollars. They really came through for me and my sister Leah. And because of that I thank them very very much for the suport they've given me. And I love them.

Kathryn

Age 7



"I like this place and I want to be here forever, with my auntie."

What is it like to live with auntie?

"Good. I like to live with her. I like to go where she goes, and Sara [cousin]. I like this house. I like to go with auntie to a place where you eat."

Erwin

Age 7



Living with my Nana has made a positive difference in my life because it has given me the chance to thrive and grow into the special little person that I have become today. Her love and affection keeps me safe and secure.

Nobody is pur-r-r-fect, but my Nana...She is very special for the love and thoughtfulness she shows to me every day. Nana has taught me that I am extra special, not different, because I am adopted. She said that I was born to soar as God made me with angel wings. Nana says that happiness comes from having something to do, someone to love, and something to wish for in your dreams.

Nana is so loving and understanding with all of her kind and gentle ways. She has a big, warm, and loving heart and is always telling me that I brighten her days with sunshine.

If someone believes in you, and you believe in yourself and your dreams, it can and will happen in your lifetime, according to my Nana.

Nana...I am very grateful for everything you do and have done for me, and I love you as you are my special friend forever.

Madison

Age 7



What it is like to be living with your grandparents.

First, living with grandparents is kind of fun. You still clean your room, go to school go to bed. Like everyone does. I go outside and play with my scooter and bike. I play my playstation2. I practice my guitar. I also watch t.v. and do puzzles. I do my homework like everyone does. I get to play with my cousins. I play on the computer. Last, I get to go to Arizona mostly every year.

Jordan

Age 8



Writings of Merit

★ ★ Ages 8-12 ★ ★

My grandma's name is Lula. I live with my grandma and grandpa. They both mean so much to me. My grandparents love my hugs and kisses. They also love me so much. They buy me clothes, shoes, dresses and more. When I fall they are always their. When I needed someone to talk to they are always their. When I feel sad they both cheer me up. When I need help they help me. My grandparents watch over [me]. My grandparents are helpful, warmhearted, loving and caring. I love my grandparents so much.

Andraya

Age 8



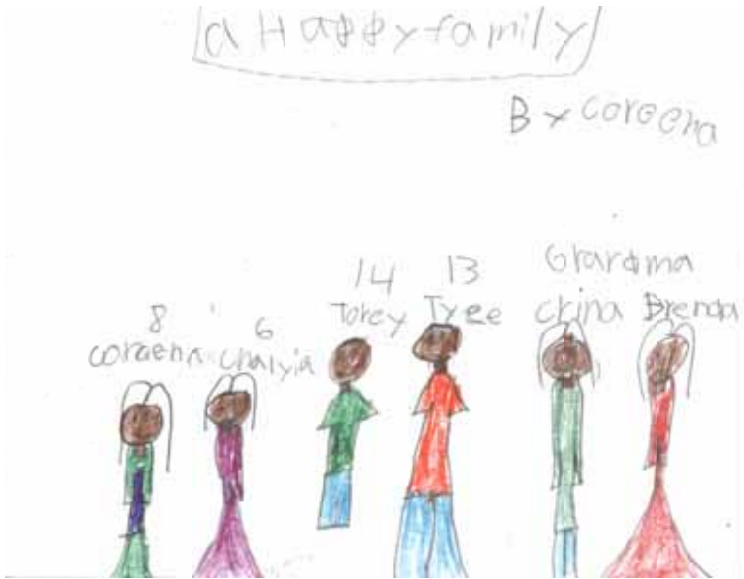
My Grandma and Grandpa take good care of me! They take care of me because they give me water, food, and a nice soft and cozy bed to sleep in. I also have pillows and blankets. One time I was sick and my Grandma gave me seven-up so I could be healthy. On Christmas my Grandpa and Grandma gave me clothes because my clothes didn't fit anymore. Last Tuesday my Grandpa helped me on my Pinewood derby race. I got last place because my money was dragging on the track. I got a speeding ticket because I was going to slow! But it's not about winning it's about have fun. On Monday my Grandpa helped me on my home work because it was hard. When I was cut by a knife I had to put soap and neosporn on and a bandaid. Three months ago my Grandma helped me on my painting. Grandma told me I wasn't going to win. When Grandpa took me up to see how I did I saw a big blue ribbon on my picture! I am gratefull for my Grandma and Grandpa taking care of me.

Justin

Age 8



Our grandparents are raising us. Grandma Brenda has my brother Tyree and sister Chlayia, and Grandma Crina has me Coreena and my brother Torey. We are a very happy family.



Coreena

Age 8



I love my grandma as she loves me. She takes care of me in many ways. She lets me have opportunities that makes me happy. She encourages me to do things that will help me in my life. She can never be replaced. I can always rely on her to be there when I need her. She has taught me to have manners and to respect others. That's why I love my grandma with all my heart!

Chloe

Age 8



My relatives in Thailand

When I was a little girl, I went to Thailand with my family. (I am Thai.) when we were at the airport, both of my aunts greeted us. My grandma also came. And both of my uncles came. When I went to their house, I met my cousins. They took me to a Thai temple. They knew that I didn't know the Thai tradition. I went inside. But first I had to take my shoes off. I prayed with my entire [family]. I prayed to the monks with my family. Then we put rice in pots that the monks were carrying. I went to my cousins' house. They made a difference in my life. They helped me learn an important thing in my life. The Thai tradition. I went back to Washington and knew an important tradition. The Thai tradition.

Arkira

Age 8



Rhiannon

Age 8
★20



Ariel

Age 8



Mothers are alike in many ways. All mothers are pretty and sleepy. Mothers are tired and they are mad. Most mothers love their kids. That's how mothers are alike. My Grandma is special. My Grandmother is special to me because she loves me and she cares about me. She cooks and hugs me. I love her because she helps me when I get hurt and when I am sick. I love her because she was my first teacher. She teaches me about being good and to love others even if they tease you and talk about you.

My Grandma takes me to church so I can learn about God. She is always there when I need her. I love you Grandma. That's how she is special.

Saundrea

Age 8



Living with my grandma and grampa has taught me to be a good citizen. They love me every day and I love them too. We do lots of fun stuff and I get to see lots of new places and movies when they come out we are going to see spiderman 3 when it comes in the summer I wish I could make webs and fly like superman he's cool. We do lots of other stuff but I ran out of time.

Andre

Age 8



Kelsey

Age 9



Living With NANA

I Like living with my nana for several reasons. I'm just going to tell you a few things. The first reason I like living with my nana because I get fed different foods. Not a lot of kids get desert, but me and my brother do. The second reason I like living with my nana is because she buys me and my brother stuff. She buys us goodies like ice-cream, cake, and candy. Every once in a while it fun to have things like that. She also buys us cloths. We get lots of school clothes and summer clothes. She gets us shoes too. My nana takes me places like the beach and camping. She also takes us clam digging. We even go to the zoo. In conclusion I feel realy safe with my nana. I'm glad she's my nana. There is no one like her. Thats what makes her special.

Shaylynn

Age 9



Jessee

Age 9



I Love my grandma because she is nice. She teaches us the Bible and tells us verses, like Jonh 3:16 and Psalms 147:5. She always takes us places like the library in Yelm, Washington. That is the place I Love most because you can check out books and do homework. I also like my grandma because she makes good food and helps us with our homework. She also teaches us how to divide and stuff like that. I Love my grandma, because she is a great grandma and the best grandma.

Steffan

Age 10



Haven

Age 10



My Grandma has done a lot for me. She has helped me with my homework. She has taken me to my activities such as: Baseball, BasketBall, Piano lesson's, Choir and guitar lessons. My Grandma is loving and caring. Every time I get hurt she is always there for me. I love her very much. She has taken me to my church on Sunday morning and Sunday night and Wednesday night church. She has encouraged me all my life. When I am sad she cheers me up. When I am mad she calms me down. She is the Best Grandma in the Whole World. She does a lot for me, and I don't know what I would do with out my Grandma. My Grandma sings to me every night and we say prayers every night. She is so special to me. I don't want to lose her.



Elijah

Age 10



I Love My Relatives

Living with relatives besides my parents has made my life very positive. My aunt and uncle are there to make sure I'm all right and secure.

First off, when I was little I first came here with my sister Alexis who is 12 now. Anyways I came here and I was scared of the dark so my aunt and uncle stayed up and



closed the windows, blinds, doors and stayed up until I went to bed and they always check on me once an hour.

In addition, I also have my uncle with me all the time for school so I can enjoy seeing my uncle and my friends getting along! My aunt and uncle are like [the] mom and dad I never had!

To conclude, I love to be with my aunt and uncle because I feel nothing could happen! I feel that they are the most comforting person in my life. I get a lot of love from them!

The End

Cassandra

Age 10



My Loving Grandma

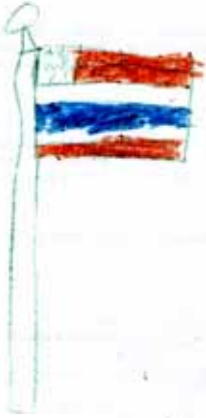
Before I was living with my grandma, I barely had any clothes, toys and fun stuff like that. I did not get to watch TV that much or go to my friend's house. And I didn't get to go to the park that much.

Now that I am living with my grandma, I have lots of clothes, toys, and lots of fun stuff. And now I can watch TV as long as I want -- after my chores get done. Thanks to my loving grandma I get these privileges, like going to my friend's house and going to the park!

Thank you grandma!

Miranda

Age 10



I Like everything about living with my grandparents.

My racing event with my boy scout troop is one fun thing my grandparents took me to.



Tory
Age 11



It is awesome living with my grandparents. I go to school and come home like any normal kid would. I eat dinner every night. I play outside with my friends. I have sleep overs. I have friends over on the weekend. I see my mom every weekend. I see all my friends in between classes. I come home to my babysitter Monday-Thursday. And on Friday I come home to my grandma.

Karissa
Age 11



My brother Elijah and I have lived with our grandma for 7 years. Grandma uses a cane and sometimes a walker. We put her shoes and socks on for her because she can't.

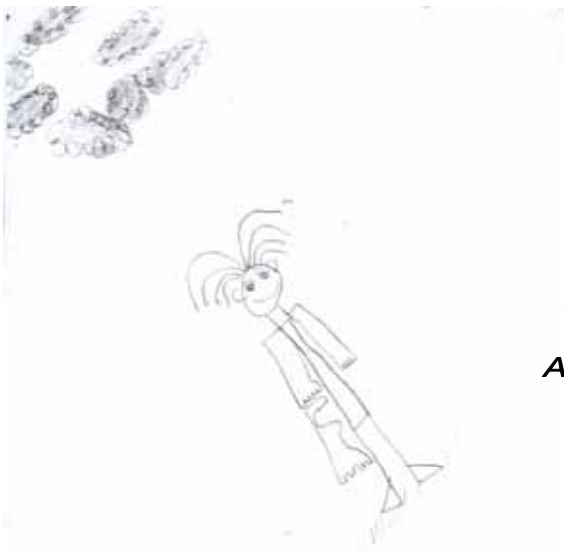
I drew a picture of her in first grade. It is her favorite picture and she keeps it and made a copy of it for me to put with this letter.

She has family and friends over. She had our cousins and aunt over for new years. She also has my other brothers and my mom and her boyfriend over. She takes me my brother and friends to the YMCA.

I would pick my grandma to give an award to. She does a lot of stuff for us like cooking our food helping with homework and buy's us things.

We love our grandma and she loves us. So that is why my grandma should get an award.

Grandma is a cooker, nice wonderful, singer, strong happy, fun, lovefull, exciting sleeper, cleaner incredible, special Wendy.



Arthur

Age 11



Grandma is:

Nice, Playful, Caring,

Safe, Secure, Fair,

Awsome, Cool, Loving, and has a GOOD HEART!!!!

She always feeds me and buys clothes for me,

During the winter, she warms the house.

She puts a roof over my head and buys stuff

that she doesn't have to buy for me, just to make me
happy.

She plays games with me: Skip-bo, Trouble, slugbug,
license plate poker and more.

If she never took us from foster care, none of this would
have happened.

"Thank goodness"

Kyle

Age 11



Liliana

Age 12

★ 29



Living with a relative (besides my parents) has made a positive difference in my life many ways. One of the ways is that I don't have to live with someone who won't take care of me properly. Right now my mom and dad are in a horrible position. It's just been hard when I lived with my dad. He was always out running around in the middle of the night, but my aunt and uncle make sure I'm secure in my bedroom when I'm sleeping, till they go to bed. My dad wasn't able to buy me proper clothes either. I went to school with holes in my shoes and clothes, but now my aunt and uncle buy me nice clothes. I once and a while get sad about my problem and my aunt and uncle are always there to comfort me where as my dad would've left me crying on a stuffed animal. I really don't know what it feels like with my mom 'cause I didn't live with her except when I was born to 2 years old, then I moved in with a judge, then with my dad, and now with my aunt and uncle, I've done a lot of moving.

Alexis

Age 12



My life long story

That one day on Aug. 7, 1994 there was a new person on this earth. It was I, Junior. That's when I was born. I'm twelve years old now. I was taken away from my bio-parent when I was nine years old. Then I got to go live with a new person. That's when I got a second chance in life. That's when things began to get better.

That summer, I went to visit my aunt's house. Her name is Rusty, the nicest and most loving and most caring person alive. I got to go see my aunt for the first time and my cousins. I stayed there at their house for three days.



Those three days were the best three days I'd ever had in my life. When I was there I found out fun things I did not know of.

Aug. 7, 2003. A couple of weeks after my birthday. I did not celebrate my ninth birthday. I didn't even celebrate my 5, 6, 7 or 8 birthday. My aunt Rusty came down and celebrated my birthday. For the first time in a long time I was happy. My aunt came all the way from Granite Falls to Tacoma that's a four hour drive there and back. She came down to celebrate my birthday. A kid she hardly even knew. She came down to tell me something really important to me she said "Happy birthday Junior." I barely even knew these people but I knew I loved them. I felt like I belonged.

December 2, 2003. That's when I went to go stay with my aunt. I was scared, not because I was going to live with her, but because of what was going to happen. I was also happy to go live with her. A week later I asked my aunt what I should call her she said, "Anything you want." I thought for a second and I said "mom" "can I call you mom?" She said, "Sure I'd like that." In my head I was thinking all I ever wanted was a mother and I finally got one. The feeling was so great.

A month or two later. My first time ever seeing a skate park I was so excited. I was so ready for this. In those two months I was practicing in my garage. But I was not learning on my own. My older brother Austin was teaching me. It was hard to learn, but I was trying. To me, my older brother Austin is my hero. He changed my life in many different ways. Austin is my hero because I never had an older brother before. I'd never had someone to hang out with. He always makes me laugh. When I lived with my bio-grandmother I was a lonely kid that never smiled. I never laughed. I wasn't happy. Now I am, so he help me with that.



A couple of weeks later. I was surprised by my mom. I got sighed up for baseball. I went for tryouts I went by my last name to get up. I got up I was scared we where doing pop fly's my first one I missed it I got hit in the leg I was ok. But my little brother Colton said "are you ok." I said "yes." My little brother Colton is the sweetest kid he is really caring he is protective he cares about me and I care about him I would die for him. Colton change my life. How he changed my life because he cares about me and I know. Know one did care about me back then. He helped me know that I am loved and someone would care if I got hurt.

Three years from then. My life is much, much better than it was. Know my mom how she changed my life. She changed my life in so many different ways. She changes it the most. Just so you know I call my aunt Rusty my mom now. My mom is not like other moms she a great mom. She changed my life how she changed my life by saving me from that place I was in with my bios mother I was I kid at risk I still am but I am working my way off that list. My mom changed my life by being my mom and being there for me. My life is better know that my mom is here she help me to read. Before I came to her I did not know how to read at all but I knew how to talk a little bit. My mom help me lose weight and she put me in sports. When I was down there I was not in sports I was over weight and all I did is watch TV. She changed my life by being my mom. I know now every time I wake up in the morning she will be there. My mom helps me with things. She doesn't only put me in sports she's the coach. And I love my mom so much I would never give her up I would never give this life up. That's how my family and my mom changed my life.

Junior

Age 12



Laura

April 20,07

Huggles!

My grandmother makes me feel as beautiful as a Rose!

Cynthia

Age 12





Writings of Merit

Please note: All entries are printed as received.



Ages 13-19



There are many people in my life. There is only one person I would miss if they left. That would be my grandma she been there for me through tough times and good times. There will never be someone that will take her place as my grandma. She is my hero. Sometimes I will be mad because I wont get my way but my grandma does not want me to turn out like my mom. I am happy because my grandma said thank god you did not turn out like your mom. There is something funny my grandma is a grandma of ten and she always says that I am her favorite.

If my grandma found out that I writing this she would cry that's how much I love my grandma to do this for her. I am really happy to be her granddaughter and write this for her I love my grandma.

Brittanie

Age 13



Living with my grandparents for 9 out of 13 years of my life, has been the best. Without them I probably wouldn't be in Washington. I probably wouldn't be alive. We first (my brother John and I) were living with our mother who was into drugs and had a boyfriend that abused us. My brother was only 10 months old and I had just turned four. Her boyfriend broke all my brothers ribs and his left arm. He hit me a lot. He also burned us with car cigarette lighters. With Jack (moms boyfriend) living in Redding



California and my grandparents and father living in Vacaville California I, being four, really couldn't do much. Sometimes Jack would be with us at my grandparents house. That was when Jack threw my brother and broke his arm. Jack told me not to tell anyone what he was doing to us and he drugged my mom the whole time so she didn't know. I was so scared I didn't tell. Another day when my brother was with Jack alone and my mom was at the store Jack mad made my brother unconscious. My mom came home and called the ambulance and was taken to friends Dick and Christina. After my brother got better and Jack and my mom were in jail we moved to Chewelah Washington three years later. If my grandparents wouldn't have took us (which they would have taken us anyway) I don't know how we would be doing. But I'm glad they have us. I'm glad we moved here I have the best friends. Even though some of them go to another middle school, they are the best friends anyone could ask for! My grandparents made a difference in my life. Since we moved here I was able to be in sports. Our 7th grade volleyball varsity team that I am on is undefeated. My favorite sport above all is Basketball. I have been playing for 9 years. (that's also how long I've been with my grandparents) I'm very dedicated to basketball. From three games this season I have a 30 point season so far. I score a 3 every game along with many two's and free throws. All because my grandparents. My dad is doing great now. He lives in Missouri, has a wife Marcia, and I have twin sisters and a brother. Also a step brother Caleb, Marcia's son. My mom lives in Chewelah now also. She is getting married May 26, 2007 to Kyle. Hes nice. He has a 14 year old son Josh and he seems really nice. I plan on going to college with a full-ride scholarship. I have the grades and the



basketball skills. I want to either go to WSU, Gonzaga, or North Carolina. My friend Trevor W. wants to go to those colleges too. He also has the grades and basketball skills. Hes also 5'9 and in 7th grade 13 years old! I love my grandparents. They made my life seem like Im just a normal kid and I was never abused before. Even though people say they want to be like me because I'm rich, I love being me now with the changes my grandparents made. I love them!

Angelica

Age 13



I miss my Mom, but I like living with my Aunt & Uncle. Some things are different. Like now I have dogs. At my old house we could not have any pets, unless they were under a certain weight. Also I get to go see movies in the theator. At my old house we didn't have a movie theator.



Elizabeth

Age 13



My improved life

These are some good changes that have happened while I've been living here with my aunt Paula and uncle Dave. I have made better choices in life and done better things.

I have gotten better grades and paid more attention in school.

Also I have learned how to be more respectful to people and to be more polite.

I have dressed better and more appropriate than I used to and I have learned more about responsibility.

I have learned that if I want something I have to earn it by doing some stuff around the house or helping Paula with some stuff.

Now that I've been here for a while I've had a better attitude towards me and other people. I think that I have improved on being a better person since I have been here.

Amber

Age 13



Living with my Grandparents is a blessing. I've been with my Grandparents for over 10 years. Even when sometimes I can be a pain, they stay by my side. If it hadn't been for my Grandparents I don't know where I would be today. My Grandma is very caring, she gives up things that she really wants so I could have what the other kids have. My Grandma is very sick. She hasn't been able to drive for about 6 years and she has to depend on a caregiver. It is hard for me to understand that she can't do the things that she used to. She can't stay home by herself because the doctors say that she can fall anytime. I have to take the responsibility to watch and help her in the house so she doesn't

Continued on next page



get hurt. My Grandparents watch out for who I hang out with so I don't get mixed up with the wrong people. I have learned a lot from my Grandparents. They have tried to teach me right and wrong. Even though they have to act like a parent and a grandparent at the same time, they still spoil me.

Annastacia

Age 13



Depression

I had a friend that I called "my best friend." Who stab my back and I cried many tears. She thinks were still friends. But doesn't understand how much damage she caused to me.

My mom is blind and doesn't understand how I feel... parents divorce my dad leaving. No one understands me for who I am.

I have good friends that barely know me even though they think they do. Now living with my grandparents makes me feel safe and I can live a normal live.

Shelby

Age 13



Helping Hand

I cant write a novel
I don't think I can write a song
But I know my grandma
will help me even when
I have done wrong
she will give me courage
when she lends me a helping hand

She helps me when Im in trouble
and even when Im upset
she will give me comfort
even when Im not at my best
she will always show me kindness
when she lends me a helping hand

And even though at times
it may get rough and tuff
my grandma gives me
strength to never give up
all with a helping hand

My grandma knew that this is
what it would take
so she rescued me
and placed me in her care
for the good of my own sake
and she did all of this
with her helping hands.

Ranika

Age 13



Alone on our own
 six years I counted
 failure and
 disappointment is
 what he showed us.
 Packing up to start a
 new life traveling
 over thousands of
 miles just to find sun-
 shine [and] new life,



new hope that's what my new family brought. Changes are yet to come it only takes time it's like were suffering from his crime. But were theres a will theres a way and god makes it possible each and everyday. I tell my mom god makes no mistakes and that he brought me dedica-tion and motivation I tell her we will be blessed dearly shortly but nearly.



Miracle

Age 14

My Aunt Brenda

When I was only two years old., my sister's and myself came to live with our Aunt Brenda on March 6th, 1995 in Marysville, WA. Before we lived with our aunt we lived in Tacoma, WA with our mother and my step-dad, whom is my sister's real dad. We lived with our aunt because out mother and my stepfather where doing meth at the time so we got taken away from them and our aunt said that she would take us in. If she didn't do that then my sister's and I would have been placed in foster care and have been separated. Because of my Aunt I got to grow up with my sisters, and if she hadn't then I probably would have never known that I had sisters. That's why living with my aunt means so much to me, because I've gotten to live with and close to family my whole life and I wouldn't wish it any different.

Kaydra

Age 14
 ★40



Living with my grandma has had a big impact in my life. She has taught me to be kind and curious, but also many other things.

But the biggest thing that I have learned from living with my grandma is that whether times are good or bad there will always be a way through. I believe that that is very important way to look at things because there will always be good times. But along with good times comes the bad.

But living with a grandparent isn't all about learning, grandparents are loving, caring people. Who better to live with than the person that loves you.

I was living in an unhealthy environment as a baby. But my grandmother was there to rescue me. Grandparents have already raised children and know what your up to. Some say that's bad. But if you think about it, that just might keep you out of making a horrible mistake.

My grandma will always be there for me through thick and thin and I know that. If I need something my grandma is sure to get it.

That's why living with my grandma has made such a great impact in my life.

Anthony

Age 14



Living with my relatives

Hello. My name is Treianna and I am fifteen years old. I do not live with my parents but I do live with my Aunt and Uncle. I am writing to tell you about how living with my Aunt and Uncle has made a positive difference in my life.

Continued on next page



First of all, I have become a better person. For example, I now go to church. And because I go to church I have a more improved attitude towards everything. I became a Christian and I love to do good quality deeds. A good deed I am going to do is I am going to Baja, Mexico with my church youth group to help the orphans. I know that I wouldn't have even thought about doing that while I was with my mom and dad. Also I have a more improved attitude here, living with my aunt and uncle.

Secondly, I have a lot more friends and even best friends in my life. When I was with my parents, we always moved a lot and switched schools so I did not have the chance to meet new people or make friends. And it is really hard to have long distance friendships so whenever I moved; I would loose a lot of friends. But now I know that I am not going to be moving for a long time and I can make and keep friends.

And finally, living with my Aunt and Uncle has made me a more happy person. For example, I can count on both my Aunt and Uncle to be there for me and I know that I do not have to listen to my aunt and uncle fight every night like I did when I was with my parents. And it is a good feeling to know that I am not going to have to watch them beat on each other and to know that they are going to get along. I love having that feeling of happiness knowing that I finally have a real family.

In conclusion, I love living with my relatives. And they have given me tons of reasons to be a cheerful teenager, and being cheerful is what I believe family is all about. And I truly benefited positively from living with my Aunt and uncle.

Treianna

Age 15



Sadness

Sadness is just a way for Satan to try to destroy your life. God puts some people in to sadness to see and to show people what sadness really is like. I know some of the sadness that people are going through and I tell my friends that go through sadness that it will be ok and they will learn how to deal with it just like I did.

Chassidee

Age 15



There is love here.

The love is here with me,
No matter what happens.
I have a place to live.
A place to sleep.

Living with my grandma is cool, but hard.

I can harley see my mom.
Cause she can't take care of me.
She can't take care of herself.
She doesn't know how.
Cause she has don stupid things.
She thinks her boyfriend and his kids are more important
then me.

My daddy I can see every day.
He is cool, but he made bad choices.
So I don't get to live with him.
He just got me a kitten she is cute.
My daddy is nice.

Leticia

Age 15



Sometimes we think so much about the present. It clouds our hope for a future. And my future was clouded. Actually it was so obscured from my view I began to wonder if I had a future. On the day CPS took my mom away, I had hope. Watching my mom drive away was the best and worst moment in my life. The worst because my mom was snatched away. Our relationship ending. The best because a new relationship could take form. Living with my Granny has changed me so much! I now have a chance for a future. I can live my life more fully! I don't have to put MY dreams on hold; because I'm already living my dream. Sometimes people have asked me how I can feel such passion toward a little old lady. And I tell them she's more than a little old lady, she's my Granny, and even more than that, she's my friend. She's cried with me, she's laughed with me, and she's lived with me. My life is better Because my Granny took the time to say: "I love you, and I always will." And I love her, and I always will.

Kristen

Age 15



My Story: I Was Adopted by my Grandparents

When Tammy and Mike were 21, they had a baby girl, Brittany. With their lives full of mistakes and dishonesty, they ended up in jail. Mike's mother got a call to rescue three month-old Brittany.

I am baby Brittany, and my grandparents are now my parents. My mom saved my life that snowy night. My dad said, "This baby is not staying long. We are too old to raise another child." Still, their concern for my safety and their love for me led them to become my guardians, then to adopt me when I was six years old.

Continued on next page



My birth parent's mistakes continued, but I was safe. My new parents were mature and their lives were stable. I grew up knowing I was loved and wanted. They knew the need to start saving for my college, involve me in sports and church activities, and keep me secure.

My parents spend time with me and encourage me to do worthwhile things for others. I know that God cared enough for me to protect me and that He has a plan for me, so I have a positive outlook.

Brittany

Age 16



Thank You

You heard my cry for help,
 When a mother I was without,
 You always picked my spirits up when I was down,
 And for that I love you,
 You always pushed me to follow my dreams,
 Also to strive and to succeed,
 You've changed my life forever,
 Now I know our bond will last a life time long...forever,
 I was lost in a dark and lonely tunnel,
 With no hope to find a way to the light,
 Until you came and shone your light on me,
 I never knew how much you really cared,
 Until you took me under your wing of care,
 I thank god that he sent me an angel like you,
 Now I can start my life anew,
 My heart would be so empty without you,
 I know my dreams will come true,
 Because you believe in me so,
 I thank you for all your love and hope.

Chanelle

Age 16



Well before I moved to my grandma's I was living at my moms house and I was watching My little bros, I ended up doing that for 10 months, I left my school Monroe high and intended on going to Everett community college, which never happened, I tried I just never had the time to go they're because my mom was always gone, and my brother was gone he's 19 now, he and I were pretty close but we were doing drugs and drinking all the time sadly. I was always driving a car with no tabs and I had no license and I am so lucky im not dead or in jail for the stupid things I did , I really don't regret the things I did, because I did get to experience the things that you cant go out and do, they were just one time things, I didn't do them to be cool, I did them to find out what the high was like and I liked them so I kept doing them.

But then I met this girl tonimae and that's where everything started. She wouldn't let me be with her unless [I] went back to school, hahaha, I knew she wouldn't leave me but I kind a wanted to go back to school... I had no where to go so I called up my grandma cause I knew she wanted me to live with her and I could go to school and do pretty much anything I needed to get my life back in to order. So I moved out of my moms which was really hard but I didn't want to loose tonimae so I told her I was leaving, but the things she did made me so sad I couldn't believe it, they made me cry and I never really do that, its embarrassing but yeah, so I was glad I left, I was sick of dealing with her. now 3 months later after I left I now live with my grandma and grandpa, I'm still with my girl-friend tonimae that I love so much and thank for getting some sense to my head, and now I have really good grades, I'm in drivers ed, I got a job working at Safeway and I



never thought I would. I'm almost 17. About a month ago I finally went to the D.M.V. with my grandpa, and I never thought I could achieve anything like this, but I did with the help of my girlfriend and my beloved grandparents, thank you so much grandma and grandpa love you guys so much...and thank you tonimae I love you so much. Thank you.

Michael

Age 16



There's just so much I can say and not enough words to say it in. My grandparents gave me support and love and that's all I needed. I have been through rough times and they both taught me how important it was to hold my head up high and take another step forward. They never gave up on me and for that I owe them the world. Before I struggled with drugs, refused to go to school, got into fights and refused to listen to any of my peers. Now I have graduated both in-patient and out-patient treatment. Currently in recovery. Got my GED, and found out I passed my state board exams to become a certified nursing assistant. Now I'm waiting to hear back from a college so that I can further my education. Without my grandparents and all the positive role models in my life I believe life would not be life for me. I feel great and I'm working towards future goals. Thank-you for taking time to read this and find out what such wonderful people my grandparents really are. I love you guys!!

Melissa

Age 17



To my dearest grandmother
No matter what you think, you're the one in my life
That I will always depend on.
I don't know how to say what I really feel,
But you're the one I'm most fond of.
You put your dreams aside, to help me follow mine.
There's no way I could thank you enough,
You say to do my best and god will do the rest
even when it's really tough.
Only my action could ever express how much joy you've
brought to my life.
Because of you I know what is good and bad, wrong and
right.
No one else is ever there to help me when I fall
I know that I can't do it alone
but you tell me that I'm a fighter
and that I can make it on my own.
I know you will always be there no matter what heart
ache, or happy times.
I can always guarantee that forever and always you are
mine.
You hold me as I hold you, from the bottom of our hearts
and depth of our souls.
I will never forget you or forsake you no matter what the
tolls.
Because I want you to know, no matter who I become or
what I do.
Just like you, for all of eternity, I will love you.

Kailee

Age 17



Dear Voices of Children

I have been living with my grandma for about 14 year off and on. Living with her has been the best experience of my life because she is a very patient person, a nice person, and she makes it a good place to be.

My grandma is truly a patient person because she has always had to deal with my bad attitude, I mostly have towards her because she pushes me to the limit. Without her today I would not be as far as I am today.

She is a nice person because she has always made sure that I learned from my mistake and after all the things I have done she has always found a way to still love and forgive me.

My grandma has made it a great place to be by making sure that I was always as healthy as possible like having big healthy dinners to eat. Having clothes that fit, always being there for me

So living with my grandma has been the best thing for me and I love her with all my heart because of how she is

Always been there for me

living with my grandma

patient

Great grandma

taking me in

with my attitude

good person

takes me where I want to go

lets me do anything

loving & forgiving person

great place to be

food & clothing

healthy

good great

Chrystina

Age 18



What this Represents

The mountain in this picture represents my grandma's boldness to be a single parent and be truthful with life's situations. The water shows the history of my grandma raising me and my sisters. As the sunset is so beautiful so is my grandma both inside and out. The reflection of the mountain represents her teaching me and my sisters and raising us in her way. If you have a problem she has always been there. We love her so much like so many others, that love the snow, mountain, trees, the earth. I can go on and on. Last but not least the tree has strength and so does my grandma through raising my sisters and myself. She is the greatest ma ever.

This is for you Grandma

Tamika
Age 18



My dearest Grandma,
You're one year older.
Now wanting a fairy on your shoulder.
You've sold many houses,
Big and small,
Always looking out for everyone,
Always there through it all.
You've always smiled,
Through the good times and the bad.
Always being grateful for everything you have.
You are one of a kind,
You're an angel to me,
I hope you know how I feel about you,
I hope you see what I see.
No matter the situation,
You always rise above the rest,
I hope you know g-ma,
You are the best.
It's amazing to watch the great things that you do,
You are the best.
I't amazing to watch the great things that you do,
I hope someday I'll be just like you.
You are my hero,
Above any other,
You bring smiles and laughs where ever you go,
You are a woman that anyone would be blessed to know.
You deserve whatever your heart wishes for,
And so very much more.
I hope today and forever you are blessed,
With all the happiness and love you've brought to me,
Because you out of everone,
You should be happy.
I love you grandma,
Just smile today,
Cause you should have a Happy Birthday!

Kayla

Age 19



The Best Aunt and Uncle

My Aunt and Uncle are the best, because they've made a positive difference in my life by being my guardian. They have raised me since I was 6 years old. I was in and out of foster homes until they came and saved me. They have made my life a lot easier and safe.

It's great to have an aunt and uncle that I can talk with to help me make the right decisions. When I am upset or frustrated with certain situations, I know that I can go to them for help. After talking with them I feel a lot better and mellow.

I really enjoy it when they take me shopping for new, cool clothes. I really like shopping with my aunt, because she has good taste, and likes to shop at Macy's.

They both make sure that I eat healthy food, instead of junk food all the time. They take me to my doctors and dentist appointments when I have one. They also help me when I need it with my homework. These are all very important things that teenagers shouldn't have to worry about. Without my aunt and uncle I would stress about it. I am very lucky to have them to count on.

Michelle

Age 19



--My Angel--My Hero--

Though you have no wings
You are an angel to me.
You lift my spirits up so high
You make me feel like I can fly.
Your heart is like a drop of morning dew,
So fresh and pure and loving too.
If I had one wish that could come true
I'd wish to be just like you.
I love you dearly, I want you to know.
You're my strength, inspiration and my hero.
I will end it here and not say much more.
You are My Angel, My Hero and my whole world
Without you I'd be nothing you see.
You helped me become the person tha is me.
I Love you Grandma!

Lisa
Age 20



Dear Sweet Grandmother may I call you Mom?

You loved me all of your life
You made the sacrifice a *real*/mother would
A *real*/mother is not one who is present when life begins
A *real*/mother is one who is present when life is lived
You loved me all of your life

Some may think you get one chance
You're done when your child is grown
What if your child does not care for their own?

You have taken your turn
It's your time for fun
To spoil them and send them home

I was a child from one of your own
You were a grandmother given a second chance
We healed in each other the ache that loss had carved

Some did not understand
Some decided it was wrong
Some said leave her where she belongs

Could I call you mom? Did I belong?
The unspoken rules I followed without a sound
I called you mom when others were not around

As a child fear gripped my heart
Would you leave me as she had?
To God I pleaded; please do not take another

I am a mother now
I know you loved me as one would
Because of you I can love, as a mother should

You loved me all of your life
You made the sacrifice a *real*/mother would
A real mother is not one who is present when life begins
A real mother is one who is present when life is lived
You loved me all of your life.

Kirsten



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Kinship Care Information

For more information on finding services, programs, and support for a relative's child in your care or as a kinship caregiver, visit the DSHS Kinship Care Website at **www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare**.