



Voices of Children



Raised by Grandparents and
Other Relatives
2015

Voices of Children 2015



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Raised by Grandparents and Other Relatives

2015

A compilation of poems, essays, and drawings submitted by
children living in Washington State to the 2015
Children's Kinship Care Expression Contest.

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

Coordinated by:

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To order more copies of this booklet or for additional
information about the 2015 Voices of Children Contest
contact Shelly Willis at
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This booklet can also be found online at:
www.dshs.wa.gov/kinshipcare

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Voices of Children
Raised by their Grandparents or Other Relatives
2015 Contest

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 member has become a permanent or long-term arrangement.

Kinship Care often comes as a surprise to both the child and the relative caregiver. When parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, placing 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 the connections children have to their siblings and other relatives, and strengthens the family's ability to give children the support they need.

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 these questions are offered in this small but powerful book as 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 in living with a relative caregiver.

Enjoy your reading!

Shelly Willis,
Executive Director
Family Education and Support Services



Dedication

Thank you, Meri Waterhouse!

We are delighted to dedicate the 2015 Voices of Children book to a woman who has been a strong champion for families in the State of Washington for many years — Meri Waterhouse!

Meri's outstanding contributions, tireless efforts and inventive ideas have improved the resources available to Relative Caregivers across our state. Meri's official title at DSHS is Foster Care Recruitment & Retention Program Manager for DSHS Children's Administration; however, her contributions reach farther than her position.

Meri coordinates the statewide Kinship Oversight Committee, an annual Mariner's "*We are Family*" event, and has found a way for Kinship care families to have free access to the Seattle Aquarium.

Meri is a good listener, and a woman of action. She has helped to secure a framework of support intended to aid Kinship Caregivers in raising healthy children, and maintaining permanent "forever" homes. Kinship Care Families in our state are in a better place because of her dedicated and thoughtful advocacy.

Thank you, Meri Waterhouse.



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Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All the entries were printed as received

5-7 years old

It is really AWSOME good to live in my Grand-
parents. I love my Grandparents. They are Awe-
some Grandparents. I hope that I Don't miss a
thing at school. I'm glad I have a house to live in.
I have to pets whitey and Leri a German Shepard.
He makes sure cheks on us every morning. They
teach us responsibility for ouer staff nice clean
and fit every things looks nice good Awsome I
have a tooth I can do better at math and I can read
Better my Birthday is June 2007 I'm goeing to Be
8 years old I will still Be older then my sister shes
and living with Grandma and Grandpa. I don't
have to keep secrets any ore like mom told me to.
I Don't have to Lie anymore I still have Bad
Dreams But I no that I'm safe at Grandma and
Grandpa's house. I have to go on a visit to times a
week I miss a lot of school these days. I'm happy
because we make special panckakes together on
Sunday with eggs and bocker sasige with Love.
That taste really good.

**Kathleen L.
Age 7**



I do not live with Mom or Dad, Dad lives in Florida and Mom is kind of sick. I live with Sara and Ole, they are my Aunt and Uncle. I love living with them because they do fun stuff! They help me how to talk. They take care of me when i am sick. :(I love :) to go out to dinner with them. ♥ They help me with my homework. I go in first grade.
The end.

Debra
Age 7



Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All the entries were printed as received

8 - 12 years old

I was 3 years old when my mom left me in the car alone. I got out and started looking in stores to find her, but she forgot me and left me. A lady bought me some socks, and then called the police. My mom and brother came to the police station. Police called my grandparents to take me and my brother in. They said "of course, come immediately." My Poppy lifted me and held me so tight, and I wouldn't let go of his neck. Grandma helped my brother. We fit in one bed and we slept 17 hours straight. After a while my grandparents became my parents and adopted us. They taught me how to act good and treated us fairly and well. Mom taught me to do math, read, and ride a bike. I became an A student and I met great friends. At home I liked to wrestle with my brother. When new movies came out my Poppy would get them and Mommy would make two bags of popcorn. My pop had a heart attack and stroke. Now I help him because he is partly paralyzed. O love my grandparents because they took me in.

Giorgio
Age 11



What I learned when our house burned down:

As long as I can remember I lived at my Grandma's house. I knew she was the boss, I looked up to her, I thought she was big. Then one day our house burned down. My Mom thought I would have to live with her but I didn't feel at home there. I called my Grandma to come and get me. Then i felt at home. Home is not the building you live in but a feeling. I felt at home first in a motel, then the tree house she built for me, then a one bedroom apartment, to now a three bedroom house out in the country. It's the nicest house we've lived in. Now I'm 12 and I'm a lot bigger than my Grandma. My little Grandma with the big heart that holds a big kid like me. My Grandma and I, plus our 2 ferrets are a family. Home is wherever they may be.

Dylon
Age 12



Winning Contest Entries

Please note: All the entries were printed as received

13 - 19 years old

Living with someone other than your parents is a life changing experience. My parents were “OK” parents, they taught me some life lessons but they did not provide me with what I needed to Live. When 7 first moved in with my cousins I thought “well this” will be like going on vacation”. I was wrong they took me in and treat me like their very own child. They present me with the essentials food, water a warm home and loads more. They give me the one thing my parents failed to provide and that is love. When I was younger I knew there was something missing from my life, my cousins showed that to me and gave me love. I believe Love is what everything needs. A plant doesn’t flower unless it has love. A dog is not cheerful and alive unless you pet it and love it. My cousins gave me what my own parents couldn’t, so you ask how do I benefit by living with my cousins? Well they give me the world just in the palm of their hand; but in their words their hugs and all they do for me they give me love.

**Rachelle A.
Age 16**



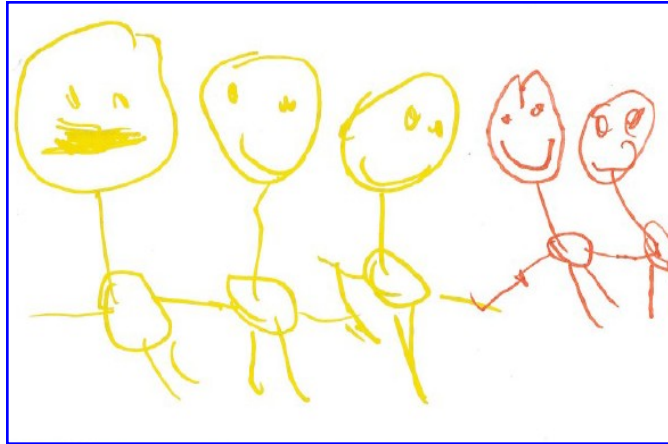
How does a foster child convey in 21 lines of a poem, in 200 words of an essay, or through an image in 5x7 box how living with a relative has made a positive influence in their life? I have been in foster care for about 6 years and lived with my aunt and uncle for over five years, and I owe everything to those two. Without my aunt uncle and I would not be at the University of Washington, I would not have graduated high school Summa Cum Laude, I would not have accomplished everything I have, and I most likely would not even be alive if my aunt and uncle had not taken me in (I was in a horrendous mental place when my aunt and uncle first took me in and I honestly do not make statements about suicide, like the one I did, lightly). So, when asked to sum up how my aunt and uncle have made a positive influence on my life, all I really need to write is my name because I owe it all to them.

Sincerely, Rachel McKenzie Scott

Rachel
Age 18



Writings of Merit 5 - 7 years old



Anazira Age 4



Chrislee H. Age 7





Davey Age 6



Elizabeth Age 7





Living With my uncle Rick and Cheri really makes me happy. When I first moved in, my last name was different, Rick and Cheri went to see a judge and changed to Holden. I was happy when this happened We have 2 dogs (Shasta and shadow) and 3 cats (Lily and Luke and Jarvis). I love living with Rick and Cheri.

Isabella Age 5

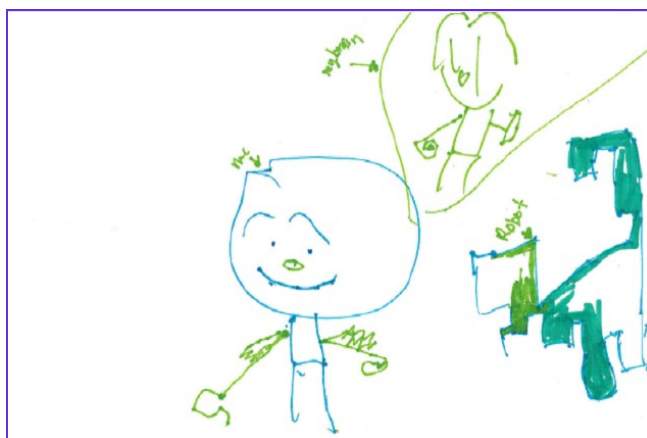


Lucas Age 6





Lyndell Age 7



Marcella Age 6





Syrus Age 7



Ruben Age 6





Melena Age 5





Writings of Merit 8 - 12 years old

Roses are red. Violets are blue. I love my aunt and she loves me too. I miss my mom but that's ok. I am happy here and that what matters the most. I go to a great School. I have friends too. My friends love me and I love them the most. I live with my cousin and aunt and they live with me. I know my mom loves me and I love her. I love living with my aunt. I know my aunt loves me living with her, and my cousin loves me.

Alexis Age 8



Andrew N. Age 9





Armando Age 10



Ashley Age 8





When I was with Wendy

When I was four my mom was using drugs and she decided to leave us with her friend Wendy. Mom thought she would be nice for us and she could still see us while she was getting better. She was wrong. Wendy's the rudest person in the world. She gave the clothes mom got me Bev and Xena to her kids. I had to stay in a bed with no cushions in the basement. Some days she would make me stay there alone all day while she was gone.

A couple months later she brought us to Grandma and Grandpa's house and said "take Xena and Chance." Grandpa said "none or all." So she left. When she left grandma took us to see our mom right away. Then they took us shopping for clothes because we didn't have any.

We still live with Gramma and Grandpa and mom is working on getting us back. She's been clean over 2 years and I get to see her every weekend. They all love us. I have a real bed and clothes that match. Grandpa is teaching me how to cook and fish and play baseball. Now we are a big happy family.

Chance Age 9





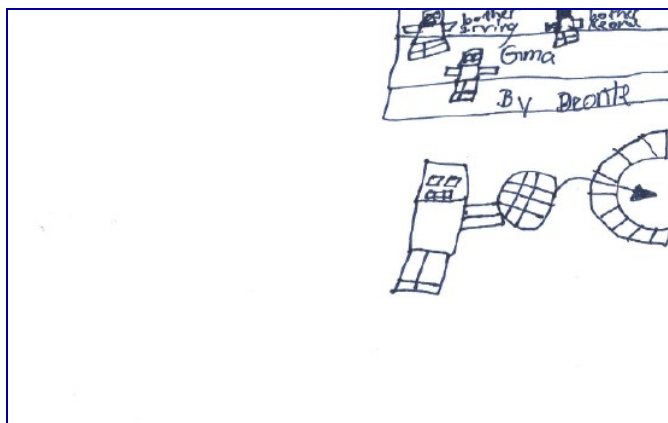
Hi my name is Clarence I am 12 yrs old and have been living with my grandparents since January 2013. The reason I like living with my grandparents is they help me heal. My dad and stepmom had an addiction to drugs called meth. I felt hurt and lost because it took over their lives. My dad gave me and my brother Marcus to my grandma so she can keep us safe. We are still healing because our step mom was emotionally abusive to us. We are happy with our grandma because she is in sobriety and has been a good person to us. She loves us with unconditional love. I love my grandma so much she means the world to me we have out movies, and most of all we like travelling to Sobriety conferences. The main are I like the best was were we went to La push, WA with the Quilente Tribe. While there we camped and had fun participating in activities they had for familys in recovery. Then we attended the Yakama Nation Recovery Campout which I got to do a mini video of being a child in recovery. I enjoy being heard I have learned to talk and not to hide things inside I know will hurt me if I keep hiding my feelings. The one thing is I was reunited with my biological mother who came to visit us, and spent Easter last year with us and two weeks with us one thanksgiving. Grandma is so special to us she saved us from being taken away from my dad. My dad is part of us now he came home to my grandma's and has 5 months of sobriety. He just left to Las Vegas to finish school as being a chef. Grandpa has shown us how to go hunting, we leaned to talk the Yakama Indian Language at our school, and even thought we are Shoshone- Bannock we learned a new language because that is our grandpa's Tribe Yakama Nation. We have learned a lot of they about recovery being with our grandma. We attend A.A meetings and get to do the serenity prayer with the group. One thing I like to do is bake cakes, brownies and cupcakes. I have become a strong young man I like it when grandpa says you're in charge, it makes me feel good about myself. I pray that some day we can go back to our dad but for now are Safe living with our grandparents.

Clarence Age 12





DeJanna Age 11

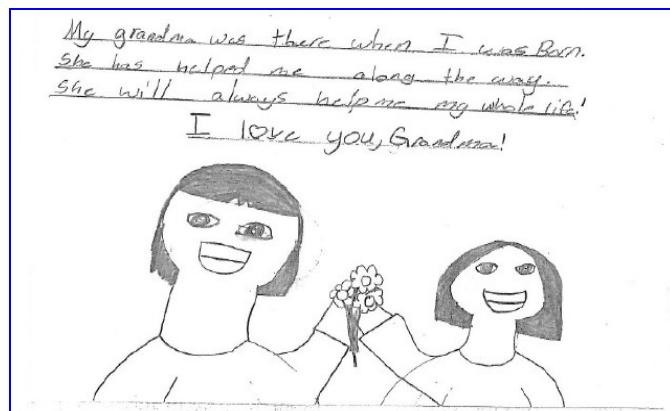


Deonte Age 10





Gabrielle Age 11



Halie Age 8

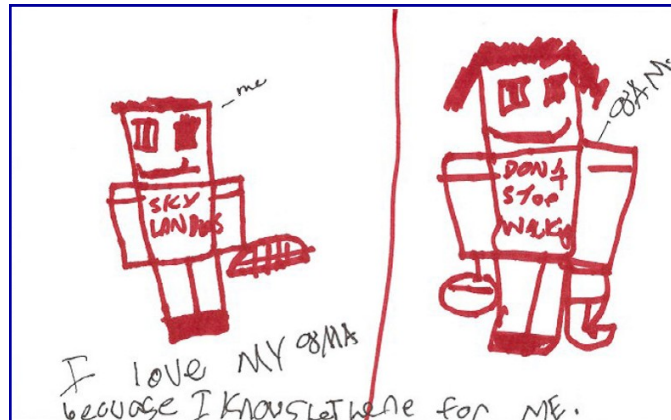




I live with my grandparents, Life with them is “OK”, if you know what I mean, Sometimes I get angry with them because I don’t always get what I want, But they still provide me with clothes, food, and a roof over my head, They give me a lot of chores but they make me do chores so I will get used to it. I need to get used to doing chores when I grow up and have my own house, We go to church every Sunday and Wednesday, I get an allowance which is five dollars a week. We can’t have cats or dogs at our house so my sister has three parakeets and I don’t even know how many fish I have because my fish had babies. My Grandparents aren’t perfect but I love them.

Genesis Age 10





Inumer Age 9



Jackie Age 9





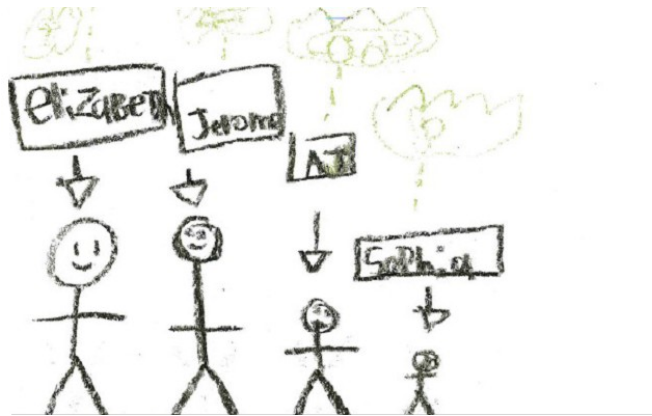
Jayden Age 8

Since I moved to my aunt and uncles I am happier because They care about me and make sure I have help, with school and that I do fun things Like Play Sports, have Lots of friends I get to go to the movies and on vacations as a family. Every night my aunt tucks me in and tells me to have sweet dreams I Love Living here.



Jordan Age 12





Jerome Age 8



Jaydyn Age 9





I live with a relative. It has meant a lot to me because I now get fed, loved clean clothes, toys, and a clean environment to live in. I like my new family because my real mom and dad, took drugs, stole things, and were very mean to me. That is when state said, "Kelsey may not see her mom and dad anymore." When I got there I was very hungry, so my grandma gave me something to eat. She needed help taking care of me. That is when my great aunt came to Spokane from California. The minute I saw my aunt, I loved her. After a few months my grandma didn't need help, but my aunt decided to stay. Then a few years passed, and that is when I got adopted. And now we are planning to adopt my other one year old twin sisters for a better life for them too. I love my family. I have learned a lot by being adopted by my relatives.

Kelsey Age 9

Thank you for help me and my grandma I love my grandma Diana.

Keyshia Age 8





My life is good because when I was At my Old House I did not feel safe and Now I do I am happy with my life. I am with family that ♥ loves me. And I love ♥ the Doggys that Live with me. I have Good Cristmas and birthday.

I am no were but home



Kendyl Age 9





Keone Age 12

My name is maddison
I have lived with my Yai-Yai for about 2 1/2
Years, because, my mom was a drug attic for 2
years I still live with my yai-yai, because She has
custody of 8 of us that She takes care of. My
yai-yai Makes Sure We have Clean Clothes, food,
a home, great School, School supplies for School,
Shoes, good Christmas, Toys, own beds. Since my
yai-yai has had custody of us we are a family of
love respect kindness ad we are still working on
Sharing our toys and belongings. We ride our
bikes when it is nice, go to ocean shores, Pacific
beach. We have Picnics' sometimes. Yai-yai
Love's us with all her heart and we love her very
much for all she does for me and my brothers and
sisters. My yai-yai is a great grandma.

The End

Maddison Age 10





Marcus Age 9



Mariah L. Age 11





Marissa Age 8



I am thankful that god put me with my loveing, careing, and respectful mom. I love my mom so much I would take a bullet for her. She is Special to me because She Started as my grandma and magically turned in to my mom "Whoa". She lets me do my favorite thing to do on my free time. Fishing.

Nathan Age 12





R. Marie Age 10



Ryan Age 10





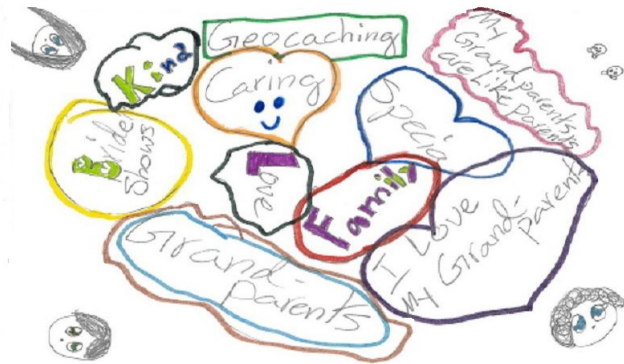
17 years ago my aunt and uncle took custody of my brother and I, so my brother and I got older my aunt which I now call mom taught us very important lessons about life and staying safe. She got two jobs one of them is a nurse and the other is being a nanny for a 7 year old boy and a nine year old boy. When ever I or William my brother got sick or injured my aunt is right there for us and I know that she loves us both very, very deeply and if we ever need help she is right there to hold our hands.

Savana Age 11

I call her mom but Shelley is also my aunt, and I like her because she takes me to the water slides and she takes me to the skate park and other fun things, and she feeds me good she buys me toys she teaches me things and she makes sure I go to the doctor and all those important things.

William A. Age 9





Grandma and Grandpa are kind to me.
Grandma and Grandpa are loving and caring.
Grandma and I love watching bride shows on Friday.
Grandpa and I love Geocaching together.
Grammy and Poppy are special to me.

Tara Age 11



Vanessa Age 10





grandparents

My mom did things she's not very proud of. She wanted to quit using so she had us move to her friends. We were supposed to visit with mom but Wendy wouldn't let us see anybody. Wendy gave our toys and bunk beds to Her kids. Then she called my grandparents to take me and Chance. Grandpa said "Wait a second, not without Bev!" Wendy said "fine, take them all." Finally, we were free.

I've lived here 5 years. Last March grandma asked if we wanted to be adopted. After doing all the paperwork, we went to court. The judge said "so you want to adopt these kids?" They said YES! The judge said "do you want to be adopted?" We all said yes. That day we were theirs. We celebrated and went out to dinner. I have a roof over my head, good food in my body and a loving family that will love me forever. Since we started living with my grandparents it has been a blast. I never thought I'd have a family that would let me see my momma again. And I'm grandma's favourite. That is EXCITING! And my grumpy grandpa loves me. GRANDPARENTS ARE AMAZING!

Xena Age 11





Sarah L. Age 12





Writings of Merit 13 - 19 years old

Hi my name is Andres and I live with my Aunt and Uncle but I call them mom and dad because they raised me for 11 years of my life my family means the world to me if they died I wouldn't be the same because I'm really close to my family. My mom she's an amazing Cook she takes me wherever I need to go, dentist, doctors office, shopping, wherever I need to go she takes me. And my dad me and my dad go everywhere together we walk to the store, church, or just for a walk. He tells me story's about his childhood and their always fun to listen to. And my brother my brother is fun to play with me and him love to play football, soccer, basketball and we play it almost every day but my brother is younger than me so he is looking up to me so I need to be a good example.

Andres Age 13





The thing I love about living with foster parents is they encourage me everyday to be successful, active, and more responsible to get out and play. They tell me too go on and chase my dreams to be what I want to be when I'm older so I can be successful. They got me into basketball when I moved in they said love it so I did and I now know my dream it is B-ball. My favorite b-ball player is Stephen Curry #30

Golden State WARRIORS

Deshwan Age 13





I am grateful for my grandma because she took me in when I was 3 months old because my mom did not want me. I'm also thankful for my grandma doing every thing for me and being there for me when I needed her the most when am hurting the most inside. I'm also thankful for my grandma taking me places I have never been before. She lets me bring my friends with me she's my best friend she dose everything with me. My friend Jayna is live my sister to me and my grandma would take her in any day because she is just like me mt grandmas other granddaughter. So as you can see my grandma is every thing to me. I don't know what I would do with out her in my life.

Kaithlyn Age 13





Eight days before my eight birthday my dad committed suicide at my house. Before this day, my mom was like the perfect mom. She always checked my head for lice, made sure I attended school everyday, she always showered us with gifts every holiday, taught us lessons, we were always clean. After that day everything changed. My mom started drinking and doing hard drugs. Our house was always dirty and sometimes we would skip dinner. Finally I called my grandma and asked her to bring us some food. The next day CPS showed up at our house. They started showing up weekly, asking my sister and I questions away from my mom. Soon we started living with my grandma, when I lived with my grandma, I didn't go to school often. I missed 55 days during 5th grade, I moved into the Lummi Youth Academy which is a youth shelter on the Lummi Reservation. The staff teach me lessons, help me with my school work and support my goals and dreams.

Kyla Age 14





For the past 9 years I have been living with my grandparents Dan and Terry. There are many good reasons why I love living with my grandparents and how I benefit from living here but I think there are too many that I couldn't put them all, Ill just put some of the important reasons. One reason I love living here is that they go out of their way to get what we want, like Christmas, birthdays, or any special occasion, like Christmas my grandpa had to work everyday to make it as good as always. The last time I saw my mother was 5 years ago, she went to germany and texas for two years but for about 3 years shes been in Washington and not once has she called or texted or even said a word to us. My mom has been making false rumours about how my grandma has been not letting us see her. A couple years ago she had a choice between her kids or her husband sean but she picked sean. My grandma keeps saying "you know you're gonna have to meet her again someday" cause grandma knows she is gonna go away.

Micah Age 13





Life Old & New Side

Listening to their arguments, hearing hurtful words crying in the back seat, Starting out the fogged up windows of the grey mini van. Wondering to myself if it was going to live this way forever, It was all a mystery. I felt myself die more and more inside each day. Until I looked into you beautiful brown eyes. I connected like you were my one and only Being able to rest my head at night with no worries whatsoever. Eating the warm peaches and cream oatmeal, those crisp, cold September morning. Going to School knowing I had a house to come back to. Having a shoulder to cry on when I was faced with challenges just being able to be with you and have your loving heart rub off on me, is how I wish I could live my life forever together.

Myla Age 15





Bethany Age 17



Jordyn Age 16





Grandparents story

I came to live with my grandparents when I was in the 5th grade. My mom is a recovering drug addict. She has more than 2 years clean now and is working really hard to get herself back together to get us back. But she's still a work in progress.

I grew up taking care of my brother, sister, and sick grandma. At 10 years old I didn't do a very good job. Now my grandparents take care of me. It's taken a while, but I've learned that they'll take good care of my siblings, too. I don't have to. My grandparents tried to give me back part of my childhood. They've given me the opportunity to focus on my school and life. Before, I was looking at life as a drop out, drug user, and probably pregnant at 16, with no future. Now I am involved in church, school politics, on the Varsity Dance Team, and the Wrestling Team's manager. I see myself going to college, getting a good job, and having my own family some day.

Living with my grandparents has been such a blessing. I wouldn't have any of this if it weren't for them.

Beverly Age 16





I know that ever since I started living with my grandparents my life has been a whole lot better. When I was four years old, my grandparents took me in with my brothers and sisters. We went to School, did sports, had clothes, food, tv, technology and lots of love and Support. When School was out we would go to the ranch in California every summer. My favorite part of going to the ranch was to see the horses, at four years old they were my favorite animal and still are. All my siblings like the ranch too. We also went to Oregon, Arizona a couple times to visit family and Seattle in the Space needle once. We use to live in a small town and now we live here in Chehalis and I like it here. Ever since I lived with, them I also found the lord, and we go to church every Sunday and read the bible, my grandpa said "Its good for you". I love him so much and I also love my Mamaw, she makes the best biscuits and gravy and my grandpa tells the coolest stories. The both of them together is what Kept us all close. So whatever life throws at ya, grandparents are always there.

Bella Age 16





Life Goes On

I have internet, I have food

Grandma's has a cat that is really rude!

I try to pet him, he just runs away!

Will I see my parents today?



I have my own bedroom, my clothes
are always clean, and that grey cat is
really mean!

Grandma says I'll be in Drivers Ed
soon, get my license; drive that cat to the moon!



Kaylynn Age 14





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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.

Bill Moss	WA State Acting Assistant Secretary Aging and Long-Term Support
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Voices of Children 2015





Thank you!

