

Serving Grandfamilies In Libraries: How Libraries are Supporting Multigenerational Families

Libraries have always been known as community hubs that cater to the diverse needs of their patrons. However, in recent years, libraries have taken on a new role - supporting grandfamilies. Grandfamilies, also known as kinship families, are families where grandparents or other older relatives are raising grandchildren or young family members. This growing trend has brought about unique challenges and opportunities for libraries to serve these multigenerational households.

The Rise of Grandfamilies

In today's society, an increasing number of children are being raised by their grandparents. This can be due to various reasons, including parental substance abuse, incarceration, or other circumstances that prevent them from being able to care for their children. As a result, many grandparents step in to provide a stable and loving environment for their grandchildren.

According to a recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, there are more than 2.6 million children living in grandfamilies in the United States alone. This represents 7% of all children in the country, a significant number that cannot be ignored.

Serving Grandfamilies in Libraries: A Handbook and Programming Guide by Sarah Gough (Kindle Edition)

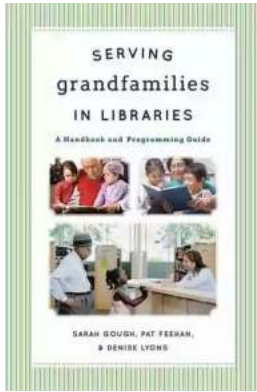
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The Importance of Library Support

As these grandparents take on the responsibility of raising their grandchildren, they face a unique set of challenges. Many may find themselves in unanticipated situations, struggling to navigate the complexities of parenting once again. This is where libraries can play a crucial role in supporting these grandfamilies.

Libraries are not just spaces for books anymore. They have transformed into community centers that provide various services and resources to meet the changing needs of their patrons. Grandfamilies can benefit greatly from the wide range of programs, workshops, and resources that libraries offer.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

One of the first steps libraries can take is to create a welcoming environment for grandfamilies. This can be achieved by offering comfortable seating areas, designated spaces for families, and age-appropriate reading materials for both children and adults. Additionally, having staff members who are knowledgeable about grandfamilies and their unique needs can make a significant difference in providing a supportive atmosphere.

Child-Centered Programming

Libraries can also develop child-centered programming specifically tailored to grandfamilies. Storytime sessions that focus on intergenerational storytelling can help bridge the generation gap and strengthen the bond between grandchildren and their grandparents. Crafting programs and workshops that cover topics such as parenting, legal matters, and financial literacy can equip these families with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate their new roles effectively.

Collaborating with Community Organizations

Libraries should also consider collaborating with local community organizations that offer support services for grandfamilies. By partnering with agencies specializing in legal assistance, mental health counseling, or financial aid, libraries can provide a comprehensive range of resources to address the various needs of these families. Furthermore, hosting workshops and seminars with guest speakers from these organizations can be incredibly beneficial in offering guidance and advice to grandparents.

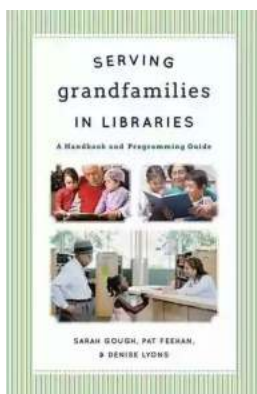
Access to Technology and Information

Providing access to technology and information is another crucial aspect of serving grandfamilies in libraries. Internet access, computers, and printing services can help grandparents and grandchildren bridge the digital divide and stay connected with the ever-growing digital world. Additionally, libraries can curate a collection of books, DVDs, and online resources that cover topics relevant to grandfamilies, such as parenting guides, legal resources, and memoirs of other grandfamilies.

Breaking the Stigma

Lastly, libraries can play a vital role in breaking down the stigma associated with grandfamilies. By hosting events that celebrate and honor the resilience and love within these families, libraries can help raise awareness and promote acceptance. Exhibits, storytelling sessions, or even support groups specifically for grandfamilies can create a safe space where they can share their experiences and find solace in knowing they are not alone in their journey.

The rise of grandfamilies presents a unique opportunity for libraries to step up and provide support to these multigenerational households. By creating a welcoming environment, offering child-centered programming, collaborating with community organizations, providing access to technology and information, and breaking the stigma, libraries can serve as the backbone of support for these families as they navigate the challenges of raising grandchildren. Through their dedication to serving grandfamilies, libraries can truly make a difference in the lives of these remarkable individuals and contribute to the overall well-being of their communities.



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Gough, Feehan, and Lyons have taken everything learned from their research on developing GrandFamily Resource Collections and leading grandfamily

programming in several states and put it in this easy to use guide.

They share the successes and failures of existing programs so other librarians can hit the ground running rather than trudge through a time-consuming and costly period of trial-and-error. It's a lot more efficient to learn from someone else's mistakes than to make your own.

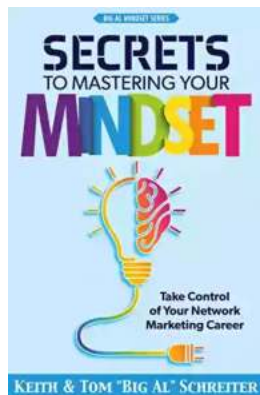
The target population, grandfamilies, and most specifically, grandparents raising grandchildren have become a statistically-significant group worthy of attention in many communities but library practitioners may not have explored further due to a lack of resources and money.

Special features include:

- List of Web resources (government agencies, support groups, etc.)
- List of grants and funding opportunities
- Sample grant applications
- List of possible community partners for the library
- Sample surveys or some tactic for getting to know the needs of one's target population
- Sample marketing plans
- Sample promotional materials
- Sample activity sheets
- Sample release forms, etc.

With this practical and comprehensive guide, your library will be ready to

jumpstart or easily expand a stellar program for the grandfamilies in your community.



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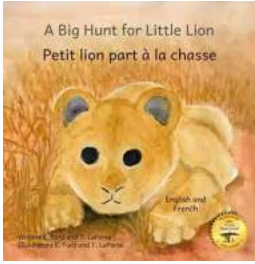
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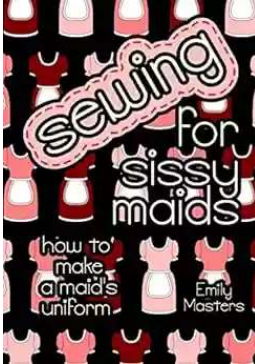
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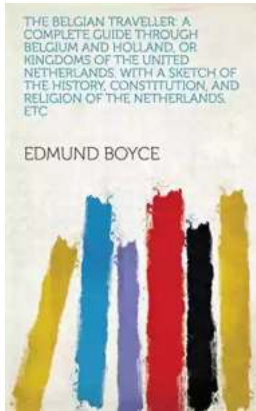
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