



OUT OF THE ASHES CAME HOPE

CLARION

Serving The People Of The New Community Network

Elder Awareness

The elderly are considered the world's treasure for witnessing significant events throughout the years and valued as a blessing of enrichment for younger generations due to their significant experience and wisdom. However, today's elderly are facing new challenges with the new technology era and facing great amounts of stress by experiencing medical problems, financial difficulties, social and family isolation, constantly worrying about loved ones and taking care of grandchildren.

A New York Times article by Tara Parker-Pope discusses the findings by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health (2008) which suggests that "strong social ties, through friends, family and community groups, can preserve our brain health as we age and that social isolation may be an important risk factor for cognitive decline in the elderly."

At Family Service Bureau of Newark, we encourage social support and recognize the primary role that the elderly play in our society, especially in the lives of many children. The Kinship Legal Guardianship Program was created essentially for kinship caregivers who have taken the responsibility of caring for their relatives' children who are unable to live with their biological parents for different reasons.

According to the New Jersey fact sheet for grandparents and other relatives raising children (2005) and the 2000 U.S. Census Report, "There are 127,263 children living in grandparent-headed households in New Jersey and 63,514 of these children are living there without either parent present." Most caregivers have taken on the task of not only raising their own children but that of their relatives as well. Therefore, taking on additional responsibility can be stressful, especially for low income families.

The Kinship Legal Guardianship Program at the Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB) supports grandparents and other relative caregivers so that children and siblings can remain within their extended families and communities. During our support groups, grandparents refresh their parenting skills, build a new relationship with their grandchildren, learn how to work with their grandchildren's school, are linked to community resources, participate in workshops and conferences from community leaders, learn tips for managing money and even find out how to navigate the legal issues.

Our program is open to all Newark resident caregivers and referrals are accepted from schools, community based organizations, faith based organizations, family members and even self-referrals. Through bi-monthly support meetings, family activities, field trips, holiday celebrations, home visits and free assistance services such as food, financial assistance and clothing, families develop skills and gain insights that enable them to become a more stable household. Our families have expressed their gratitude about our services and their need to continue receiving our support.

Last year, our families had the opportunity to visit iPlay America, an indoor amusement park, for Halloween and received free Halloween costumes. They also enjoyed a Thanksgiving celebration and even took a trip to New York City to see the famous Rockettes at the Radio City Music Hall for the Christmas Spectacular show. Our program aspires to continue growing and making a difference in the lives of our families.