



# Kinnections

Newsletter for kinship caregivers and service providers



1-800-535-1218



School of Social Work  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

**Mission:** Our mission is to support and empower all of Michigan's kinship families through responsive information and referral services, education and training, and outreach and engagement with caregivers, service providers and communities to ensure that children in kinship families are safe, healthy, nurtured and loved.

February 2021

## A Kinship Caregiver's Story

It was a Tuesday afternoon when we got the call. Due to erratic circumstances, our infant grandchild was left without a caregiver. As grandparents, we were worried and stressed. We wanted to jump in the car immediately and rush to the baby.

It seemed like it took forever for us to hear back from the worker that was involved—there were several calls, back and forth. Before a pick-up plan was confirmed, I hopped into the car anyway and drove the 90 miles to the town where the baby was. I stopped at Walmart and grabbed the essentials we would need: diapers, wipes, bottles, sleepers, and formula. While I was checking out, I heard from the worker, and we set up a meeting location. I was so glad I hadn't waited for confirmation from the worker, because it was midnight by the time we could meet at a gas station and receive placement of my infant grandchild. As soon as I had my grand baby in my arms, there was such a sense of relief. The baby was safe and unharmed.

The following two years were filled with ups and downs, twists and turns—a roller coaster of emotions. We adopted our grandchild two years and twelve days after our midnight gas station meet up. As kinship caregivers, I know there will always be challenges in raising our grandchild, but we have found participating in support groups has helped us find balance and healing. Working with those who have been through similar experiences has been supportive and helpful.

## Why Telling Your Story Is Important

Lisa's story (left) may be similar to others who have answered a call in the middle of the night. Kinship caregivers step in and care for their loved ones, often under urgent circumstances, with no warning or opportunity to plan. Family members provide kinship care without knowing there are legal options and resources available to support them. They simply know they need to help their grandchildren, nieces, nephews, siblings, and neighbors to maintain family connection, to be safe, and to have some level of stability. They didn't know there is a name for what they are doing—kinship care; they are simply doing what is needed for their family.

Sharing stories can be helpful in multiple ways. Being able to share one's story can be a productive way to be heard, recognized, and understood. Learning from others' stories can help someone else in a similar situation feel less alone. It also helps professionals and decision makers across organizations and other systems to better understand the gaps and barriers faced by kinship caregivers in everyday life. Stories help to raise awareness both for other caregivers (who may not realize help is out there) as well as for decision makers and elected officials, who need to understand the needs of those impacted by their decisions.

If you would like to share your story in a future issue of *Kinnections*, please contact us at [kinship@msu.edu](mailto:kinship@msu.edu) or call us at 1-800-535-1218.

## Kinship Navigator Program

First and foremost, we are here to listen to your story to help you get what you need. **Kinship Navigators** have overcome hurdles and challenges in their own journey of healing and caregiving. From finding basic needs and financial supports, guiding legal questions to the experts, and encouraging social supports, we are here for you! Please call **1-800-535-1218** to talk with a **Kinship Navigator** today!

## Black History Month

The Detroit Institute of Arts has created a collection of free virtual programming during the month of February to celebrate **Black History Month**. Programming includes music and film as well as art talks and art-making geared for all ages. Regardless of where you live in Michigan, families from all over the state have access to a virtual



exhibit. Visit the [Detroit Institute of Arts](#)<sup>1</sup> website to view a calendar of events and to register for programs.

## Early On Michigan

**Early On** is a statewide, federally funded program offered to families caring for children ages 0-3. This program is a helpful resource for families who may have questions or concerns about the development of an infant or toddler in their care.

Families receive a free assessment to determine if the child in their care would benefit from speech and language therapy, hearing and vision services, nursing and health services, or a variety of other services. Infants and toddlers with diagnosed disabilities, premature infants, or those with a 20-percent developmental delay, automatically qualify to receive services.

Anyone, including a caregiver or other family member, can complete a referral form to have a child aged 0-3

assessed by Early On Michigan. Services are offered free of charge to families at all income levels, and assessments can be conducted within the child's home or community.

The referral form is available on the **Early On Michigan** website at [1800earlyon.org](http://1800earlyon.org)<sup>2</sup>. Look for additional information at the Early On website or by calling **1-800-EarlyOn**.



## FEBRUARY Family Fun

Our culture commonly associates Valentine's Day with expensive chocolates, bouquets of roses, and romantic gestures. Who says love has to be about romance? Love is found in our family relationships and friendships and interwoven in our meaningful relationships. Here are some ideas to make Valentine's Day special for your family and loved ones:

### • Baking—salty or sweet?

Have a homemade pizza night with a baked dessert like heart-shaped pizzas and deep-dish cookies! Spend quality time with people you care about, and your tummies will be full as your hearts! [Red Tricycle](#)<sup>3</sup> shares 17 super sweet Valentine's Day recipes that are easy for kids and families to enjoy together.

### • Arts & Crafts Valentine's Day DIY

Another way to share the love is through homemade crafts and quality time. Being creative together is a great way to accomplish both at once. Art projects are fun for all ages and seldom require professional or pricey supplies. [Happiness is Homemade](#)<sup>4</sup> shares 20+ Valentine's art projects that are easy to make and clean up.



### URLs for links in this newsletter:

<sup>1</sup><https://www.dia.org/blackhistorymonth>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.1800earlyon.org>

<sup>3</sup><https://redtri.com/valentines-day-food/slide/1>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.happinesishomemade.net/easy-valentine-crafts-for-kids/>



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