PHILANTHROPY & NONPROFITS

Phoenix Stories 2020: Arizona Helping Hands aids grandparents fostering their grandchildren

Grandparents raising grandkids make up a significant percentage of foster care providers, according to Arizona Helping Hands.

ARIZONA HELPING HANDS

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What is your organization's mission?
We provide essential needs for children in foster care through our programs promoting safety, permanency and health.

Tell us how your story delivers or activates the mission of the organization.

Grandparents raising grandkids make up a significant percentage of foster care providers. AHH provides essential needs including beds, cribs, clothing, back to school supplies and more to provide safety, hope and joy to children throughout the state of Arizona. These kids have experienced abuse and neglect and deserve our Helping Hands!

Tell us your story and how impactful the work of your organization is improving the lives of the communities you serve.

The role of a grandparent looks much different today than when I was growing up. It was a treat to go visit grandma, spend some time playing in the apricot tree and having a slice of her homemade apple schnitzel.

Today many grandparents face challenges that were infrequent in my youth. The Department of Child Safety puts out requests numerous times every day: "We have custody of your grandchildren. Can you take them in and provide a safe and loving home?"

As a grandparent, I know my response would be "Bring them to me. I will love and support them." The truth is that grandparents who say yes aren't prepared to change their lives and accommodate their grandchildren's needs. Opioids have had a major impact on our society. Children's lives have been rendered unsafe due to drug use of biological parents. We all know grandparents who have stepped up to help these children.

Arizona Helping Hands is here to assist those midnight calls for help. We provided 3,560 beds and cribs to children in foster care in 2019. Most went to providers who didn't have nine months' notice to prepare for these new
additions. Could you afford to provide beds, clothing, diapers and more for your 3 grandchildren tomorrow?

I can't comprehend the strain on those who are older than I as they step into the 24/7 parent role. Charles, a 75-year-old retired marine told me he was playing golf last week. Now he is changing his 9-month-old grandchild's diapers and doing homework with the 1st grader. Great-grandpa in one moment, "Dad," caregiver and baby rocker the next. Living on a military pension, he was relieved to know that Arizona Helping Hands is here. We provided a crib, a twin bed, clothing and diapers along with words of support and encouragement for this new chapter of life.

Should you get that call, there is help. We assist with essential needs to bring safety, permanency and health to boys and girls. Seeing little Carson ask "Am I going to have my own bed?" of his grandma, and hearing Winston exclaim "I love my new bike!" tells us that the work we do every day for children is the most important service we could provide. A bit of hope and, a sigh of relief for the grandparents who respond to that call for help.

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