

THIRD NATIONAL
GRANDRALLY
FOR GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN

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**THIRD NATIONAL GRANDRALLY BRINGS HUNDREDS OF
GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN TO
WASHINGTON**

*“American Idol” Star Kellie Pickler Sings About the Value of
Caregiving*

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Today nearly 1,000 grandparents and other relative caregivers from across the country gathered for the Third National GrandRally for Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children, which featured a performance by country music star Kellie Pickler, who was raised by her grandparents. Today’s GrandRally focused attention on the needs of children and families headed by relatives. The event offered caregivers, youth raised by caregivers, advocates for these families, and Members of Congress the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the essential role that grandparents and other relative caregivers play in keeping children safe and in stable families.

“I’m proud to take part in the GrandRally. Having been raised by my grandparents, I know the struggles that grandparents face in raising their grandchildren,” said country music singer Kellie Pickler.

The Third National GrandRally was sponsored by AARP, Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund (CDF), Generations United (GU), GrandFamilies of America, and National Committee of Grandparents for Children’s Rights (NCGCR).

“More than 6 million children are being raised in households headed by grandparents and other relatives,” said Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United. “Yet many of these caregivers face enormous barriers to the supports and services needed to raise their grandchildren, nieces or nephews or cousins.”

Leaders from all of the sponsoring organizations, several Members of Congress, including Representative Jim McDermott of Washington and Rep. Danny Davis of Illinois, youth raised by relative caregivers, and grandparents joined country music singer Kellie Pickler with testimonials and inspiring messages. The Love, Hope and Spirit Choir comprised of staff working with relative caregivers at A Second Chance, Inc. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, opened and closed the program.

“The GrandRally gives grandparents and caregivers a great opportunity to come together, share their stories, and raise awareness about many of the challenges they face,” said Brigitte Castellano, Executive Director of the National Committee of Grandparents for Children’s Rights.

Across the country, 4.5 million children live in households headed by grandparents and an additional 1.5 million live in households headed by other relatives, about two out of five of whom reside in these households without their parents. Grandparents and other relatives often step in to raise children due to death of a parent, substance abuse or mental health problems, domestic violence, incarceration, or military service. Some of these children are with relatives in the formal foster care system, but many more are not. Many grandparents and relative caregivers have made great sacrifices to help care for and protect these children and would have it no other way. However, they often struggle to provide financial security for their families and get the children the health, mental health, education and other supports they need.

“The response across the country from grandparents and caregivers is amazing,” said President of GrandFamilies of America, Inc., Pat Owens. “These families have traveled from every corner of the country to celebrate the essential role they play in the lives of the children they are raising. They are here to educate others about the help their children need and the importance of legislation like the Kinship Caregiver Support Act.”

“The 2.5 million children in relative-headed households without any parents present need support from their families, communities, and federal and state governments,” said Children’s Defense Fund President Marian Wright Edelman. “Strengthening family networks is essential to keep children out of foster care and surrounded by strong, loving families.”

The GrandRally is an important opportunity to educate Members of Congress and their staffs about the help these families need for their children. After the formal program, many caregivers met with their own Senators and Representatives to share facts about children being raised by relatives in their states and districts and urged them to find ways to support their effort to keep families together and children safe.

“We should not be asking grandparents raising grandchildren to choose between buying medicine for themselves and putting food on the table for their children,” said Christine James-Brown, President and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America. “Congress must help assist these caregivers in gaining access to the services and supports they need to take care of their family.”

Grandparents and other caregivers who were not able to attend are still being encouraged to make their voices heard by calling their Members of Congress and expressing their support for the many grandparents and other relatives raising children who have gathered on Capitol Hill.

“We need to make it easier—not more difficult—for grandparents and other relatives raising children to care for the ones they love. The GrandRally brought much needed attention to

their plight and we hope Washington takes notice,” said W. Lee Hammond, AARP President-Elect.

For more information about the GrandRally, please visit: www.grandrally.org

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