



Charlotte Regional Office Counseling

Peace of Mind Help is on the Horizon

by Lori Fox, Counseling Supervisor

Imagine that a woman walks into her kitchen to prepare dinner. She glances at the stack of bills on the counter and wonders how they will all get paid this month. Reaching for a skillet, she grimaces...her back has been aching all day. Suddenly a three year old bundle of energy runs into the room, toy motorcycle revving at top volume. Little arms demand to be picked up. Despite her aches and pains, she holds him and kisses him and remembers that she is the only living being that this child can depend on for love and care. This woman is seventy years old.

There are 5,174 grandparents who are raising their grandchildren in Charlotte right now. The challenges are daunting. While most grandmas and grandpas get to spoil and dote over little Susie and than says bye-bye at the end of the day, there are people who are spending their "golden years" parenting one or more of their grandchildren. Their own child is incapable of doing this job due to death, incarceration, addictions, or mental illness. Now these grandparents are dealing with tantrums and diapers, immunization schedules and car seats. They are the primary source of love and comfort for their grandchildren. Parenting "tools" that they used over twenty years ago are dusted off and applied in this era of cell phones and internet predators.

The good news is that tremendous hope and help is available through New Horizons for Families and Children. With a grant funded by Smart Start of Mecklenburg County, Catholic Social Services has developed a program to help grandparents access every support available to allow them to raise healthy and happy children. New Horizons serves the unique needs of these families by providing:

- Information and Referrals
- Assistance in obtaining benefits including Medicaid
- Assistance with day care needs for those who qualify
- Parenting Education and Parental Coaching
- Family, Marital, and Individual Counseling
- Ongoing Support Groups
- Case Management
- Advocacy

Through New Horizons, grandparents are given help in integrating new parenting skills in the areas of discipline, setting healthy boundaries, developing positive daily routines, and improving communication techniques. They are given a place to talk about their experiences and concerns and form strong bonds of help with case managers, counselors, and with each other. Together, New Horizons and grandparents are forming a community of hope in which children can grow up healthy and happy.

Imagine that a seventy year old woman wakes up to a pair of big brown eyes watching her. "Grandma," she hears, "can I have oatmeal for breakfast?" She turns her head toward the bedroom window and sees a bright sunrise on the horizon. She smiles. It's going to be a good day.

To learn more about New Horizons for Family and Children, please call Colleen Cranford, program director, at 704-370-3248 or visit our website at www.cssnc.org.