



# Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors

## AZGA 2017 Statewide Summit!

**Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors** are a statewide coalition of grandparents raising their grandchildren. We stepped up to keep our families together and strong. We are the reason our grandchildren are not in foster care, group homes, or other non-familial settings. Our mission is to support, mobilize, educate, and advocate for Arizona's grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and to work with elected leaders to develop better laws and policies that enable us to care for and raise strong, resilient children.

Over 200 Arizona kinship care givers and their children gathered at this year's AZGA statewide summit at the Salvation Army Kroc Center on September 9th to network with one another, plan their next advocacy steps, build a policy platform, and receive information on AZ programs.



This year's policy panel featured AZ State Senators Kate Brophy McGee (R) and David Bradley (D), DES Assistant Director of Community Outreach, Leah Landrum Taylor and DCS Deputy Director of Field Operations, Shalom Jacobs. Attendees had an opportunity to hear the panelists' views on upcoming opportunities to improve support for kinship families, for both *formal* kinship families (children placed by DCS) and *informal* kinship families (children not placed by DCS). Attendees also had an opportunity to share their personal stories and offer their suggestions to the policy makers.

During lunch, Lillian V. Armstrong gave an inspiring keynote address titled "We Have What It Takes" that focused on building resiliency along this journey, cultivating support for families, and stressing the importance of engaging in self-care along the way.

In the afternoon, Arizona Department of Health Services' Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs put together a panel of knowledgeable parents to provide guidance and answer participants' questions. The workshop, titled "Navigating Arizona's Systems of Care" provided families with information and training on how to best navigate and advocate for children with special emotional, behavioral and physical needs.

For the 2017 Call To Action, participants wrote letters to their AZ Senate and House Representatives, asking them to revisit the permanent guardianship law passed in 1999. When originally established, the monthly stipend amount was on par with the adoption subsidy maintenance payment, but over the last 18 years the guardianship stipend has not been increased and is now far lower than both the adoption subsidy maintenance payment and the licensed foster home payment. For example, a 16 year old residing in a licensed foster home receives a base rate of \$866 month compared to the base rate of \$388 for a permanent guardian raising a child that same age.

The children enjoyed a day-camp which included swimming, playing and watching movies. We would like to thank our generous sponsors: Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona's Children Association, Pima Council on Aging, First Things First, Aid to Adoption of Special Kids, AARP Arizona, Primavera Foundation and Area Agency on Aging Region One. This year's summit was a huge success, and we hope that all of you can join us at next year's statewide September summit in honor of Kinship Caregiver month!



### Kinship Month Press Conference

AZGA was honored to be joined by Southern Arizonan Congressional Representatives Raul M. Grijalva (D) and Martha McSally (R) at The KARE Center in Tucson, for a joint news conference on August 30, 2017.

They discussed the importance of bringing awareness to kinship caregivers. After returning to Washington, Reps Grijalva and McSally worked with Representative Bass (D, CA) to introduce a bipartisan resolution declaring September to be National Kinship Caregivers month.

The resolution's intent is to bring attention to the growing number of children being raised by their grandparents, other family members or guardians and the challenges they face.

Visit the AZGA Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/azgrandparents](http://www.facebook.com/azgrandparents) to read the articles that came from the press conference.

**More Information About Arizona Grandparent Ambassadors:** [www.azga.org](http://www.azga.org)

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