

**Family Living  
Focus**

by  
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pectations at home versus at grandma's place, but do not tamper with parental rules about safety issues (like car seat use), health issues (like food restrictions), or daily routines (like bed-times).

- Don't try to compete with their parent(s) for the children's attention. Your role in your grandchild's life is supportive but still very important — children need love from many sources — it's not supposed to be a competition.

- Don't speak ill of either parent. Even if Mom or Dad has abandoned the family, don't bad-mouth the absent parent. Try to honestly explain the situation, and leave a hope for the parent's return.

- Be very non-threatening if you choose to share any parenting tips with your child, and remember that they may choose to totally ignore your advice. Make the suggestion only once and if it is ignored, than let it be. The parent(s) have the authority to set rules for their own children. You can offer praise, approval, and

encouragement for their efforts. You are not the star of this relationship; you are part of the supporting cast.

According to the latest statistics, 33 percent of persons 65 or older are actually step-grandparents, and the numbers are growing rapidly. The effort to establish a special relationship with grandchildren in a blended family is especially awkward if there are other grandparents in the picture. The best way to cultivate this new relationship is simply to spend time with the step-grandchildren.

Don't treat these step-grandchildren any different than the other grandchildren. If you attend recitals and sports events for grandchildren, then do so also for the step-grandchildren. Get to know their friends and their interests. Remember their special events.

Recognize that the blended family will be undergoing their own stresses of trying to become a unified family, and that you may be kept at an emotional distance for quite a while. Try to

stay focused on the needs of the grandchildren, rather than your desires or expectations for the relationship, and above all, don't pry into the past.

Step-grandparents who are sensitive to the complexities of the situation and respect the grandchildren's needs and wishes have a good chance of eventually developing a lifelong bond with the step-grandchildren.

Grandparenting today may require greater patience and flexibility than in yesteryears, but the importance of grandparents is the same, if not greater. As the structure of families continues to change, and the pressures on parents and children in today's society keep growing, the role of grandparents becomes crucial. As a grandparent, you can offer love, support, and stability to both your children and your grandchildren.

*Information for this article has been adapted from Family Information Services, January and May 2002. For further information about additional resources on grandparenting in the new millennium, contact the Schuylkill County Extension Office at (570) 622-4225.*

**Grandparenting In  
The New Millennium**

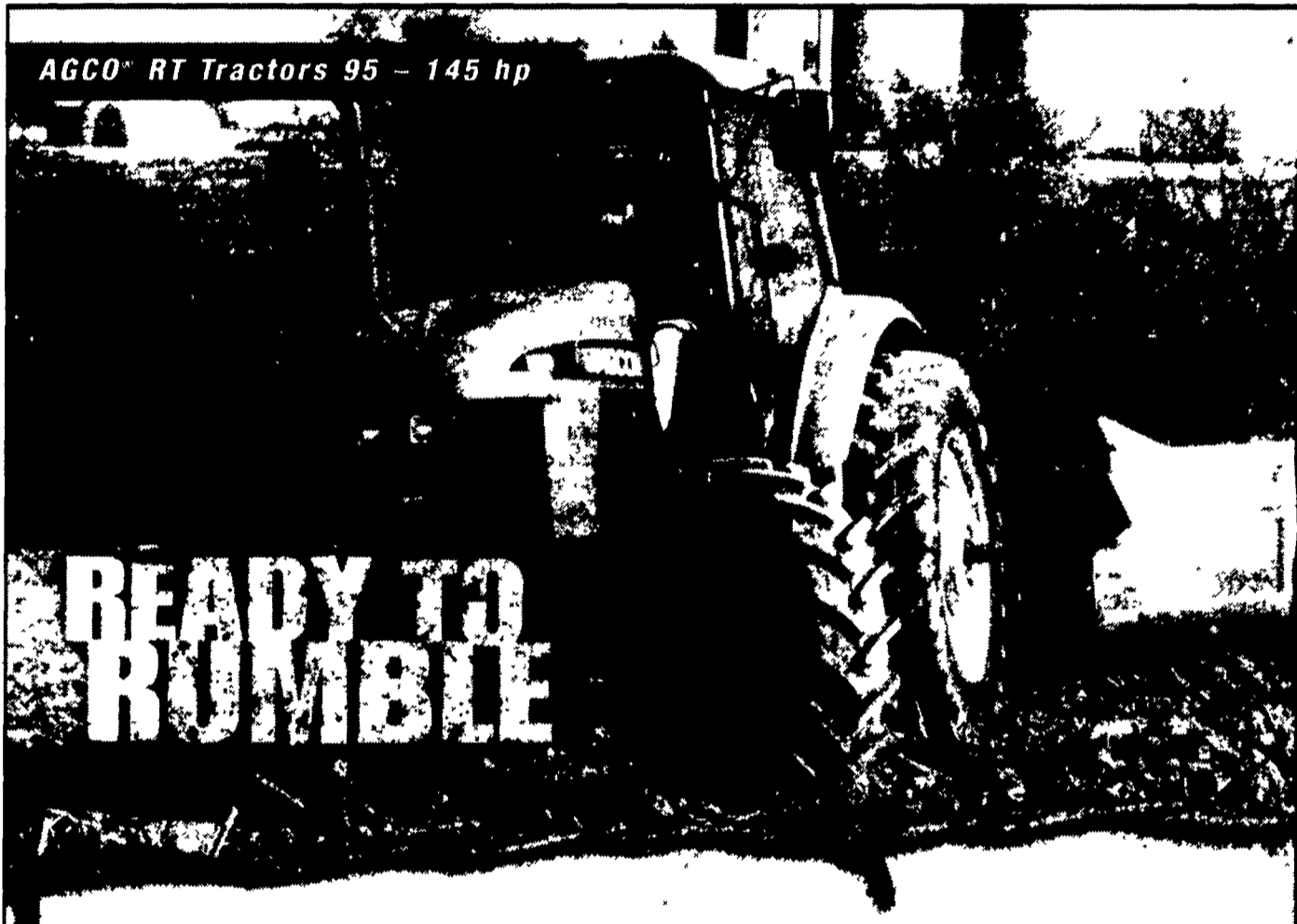
Grandparenting today is far different than a generation ago. Just as the nuclear family is no longer the norm, so it is with grandparenting. Some seniors are just trying to be grandparents; others are raising their son's or daughter's children; and still others are struggling to learn how to be grandparents in a suddenly blended family.

Many well-intentioned grandparents end up causing problems by undermining Mom and Dad's authority with the grandchildren,

spoiling them, and not adhering to the family rules. This type of behavior can cause stress and tension among all the generations. Remember these suggestions if you are trying to be a grandparent in this new millennium:

- No favorites allowed — don't show favoritism for one child over another. Every child has special aptitudes; appreciate the uniqueness of each and every grandchild.

- Don't undermine parental authority — Children are able to cope with different rules or ex-



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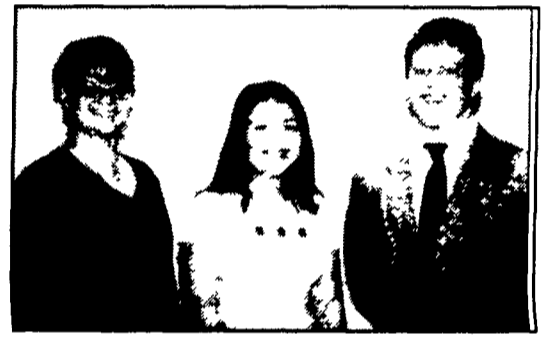
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**4-H  
HAPPENINGS**



Pictured above from left are: Summer Chronister, Dillsburg; Detra Deatrick, New Oxford; and Clayton Wood, Littlestown. These Adams Co. 4-H members recently participated in the fifteenth annual Penn State 4-H Ambassador Conference at the University Park Campus, where they attended workshops on diversity, posters and displays, interactions with the public, presentations and team building, and leadership development.

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