

community helper

Grant helps grandparents raising children

Before Linda Deliduka, 67, of Burlington took in her granddaughter, who was 3 at the time, she thought her child-rearing days had come to a close. Her four children and 10 foster children had left the nest, but her new-found solitude was fleeting.

Even though this Burlington public school teacher was approaching retirement and the idea of raising a child on a fixed income was intimidating, she successfully navigated her way through the process of being a grandparent caring for a grandchild. She found the resources she needed and is now helping others do the same.

Deliduka founded Burlington K.I.N. — Kinship Information Network — in February. It's an information network designed to help people raising relatives' children. The group was selected to receive a Community Action grant from AARP Vermont to support its efforts in identifying and linking grandparents and kinship care providers to available programs and assistance, including materials and meeting resources.

"There are 4,000 kids in Vermont being raised by relatives," Deliduka said. "In Burlington there are 100 to 150. We are currently assisting only 12. We need to get the word out."

She said most grandparents are given a guardianship paper to sign at probate court and are told, "Welcome to the world of kinship." But they don't know that the grandchildren are entitled to a Reach-up Grant, WIC, day care subsi-

dies, and in my case, all teens are eligible for support through VSAC. It's truly a case of you don't know what you don't know."

Deliduka's grandchild is now 16.

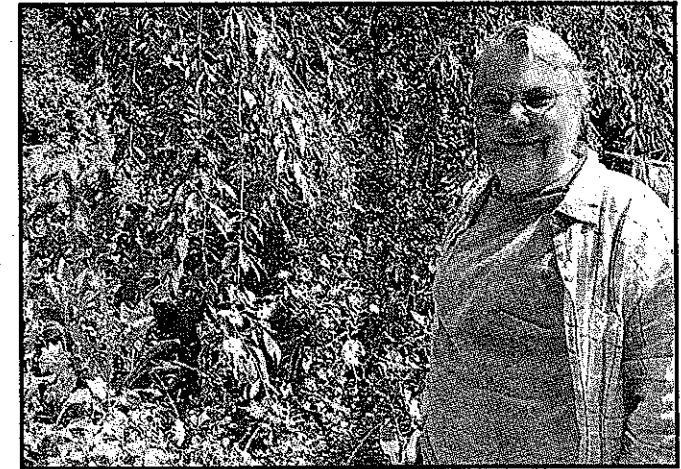
Burlington K.I.N. is not a state funded program.

"There's not enough money to do it all. We're running on a shoestring," Deliduka said. "This grant will give us a chance to do some networking and to work with more state groups and groups with the same mission statewide. We will now have the potential to break down some of the barriers and build capacity."

Three local projects were selected to receive \$2,000 each from AARP, Burlington K.I.N., Champlain Senior Center (see story, Page 7) and 127 Bike Path Entrance Improvement Group.

For more information call 864-5114 or e-mail linda@deliduka.com or visit www.Vermontkinshipcarekids.com.

— Lynn Monty, Free Press



LYNN MONTY, Free Press

Burlington Kinship Information Network founding member Linda Deliduka of Burlington talks June 18 about how she plans to use the recently-awarded AARP Community Action Grant.