



GRANDPARENTS *For* VACCINES

Once Upon a Time



A STORYTELLING MOVEMENT TO PROTECT EVERY CHILD'S TOMORROW!

Welcome to Grandparents for Vaccines!

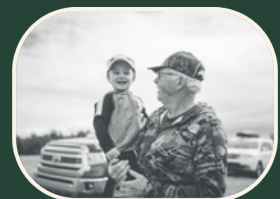
We're thrilled to welcome more than 4,500 grandparents and allies of children who have joined Grandparents for Vaccines (GFV) since our launch on September 7, 2025. Your enthusiasm and outreach are helping our movement grow every day—thank you for spreading the word and encouraging others to join. Our community is expanding rapidly, and with each new member, our shared voice for children's health grows stronger. This first newsletter highlights some of the most significant developments since GFV began—and offers a glimpse of where we're headed together.



SHARING OUR HISTORY



SHARING OUR LIVES



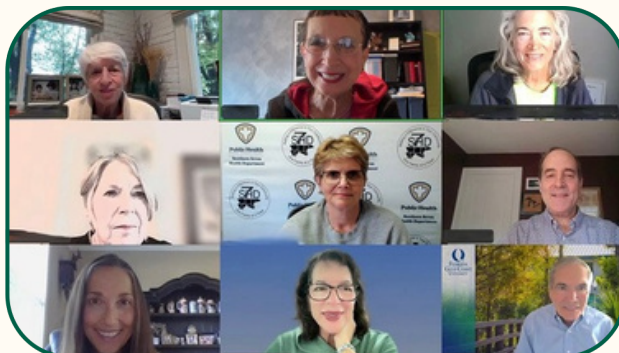
SHARING OUR STORIES

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WHAT'S NEW ON OUR WEBSITE

Our website continues to grow, thanks to you! We've added recommended books for a Grand Book Club, a Stories page featuring rotating testimonies from grandparents, and an expanding collection of trusted resources and media coverage highlighting the work of Grandparents for Vaccines (GFV). We're especially excited about the Stories page, where grandparents bring to life memories from an era when childhood diseases could steal health, futures, and even lives. These stories remind us why our mission matters—and why our voices are so powerful. We invite you to explore, share, and celebrate these pages as we continue to amplify the wisdom and experience of grandparents everywhere.



State Leaders Stepping Forward We're thrilled to share that grandparents across the country are stepping up to become state leaders for Grandparents for Vaccines (GFV)! These members are the heart of our growing movement. They attend twice-monthly Zoom meetings, participate in media training, share their personal stories, and serve as local voices for GFV in conversations with news outlets and community organizations. We now have State Leaders representing California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington, and we're still expanding! If you're passionate about protecting children and strengthening public trust in vaccines, we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at hello@grandparentsforvaccines.com and include State Leader in the subject line.

Building for the Future

Many of you have asked how to support Grandparents for Vaccines (GFV) financially. We're excited to share that our leadership council is working with a pro bono attorney to establish GFV as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This will allow us to accept donations and ensure the sustainability of our growing movement. With the surge in emails, story submissions, and media outreach, it's clear that our small team of six dedicated volunteers can no longer manage the demand alone. To keep pace, GFV now needs administrative and technical support to strengthen our infrastructure and extend our reach. Rest assured, our leadership council will continue to serve on a volunteer basis. Your generosity will help us expand our capacity while keeping our mission—and our message—rooted in community, care, and the protection of future generations.

Grandparents for Vaccines is in Demand!

A heartfelt thank you to Jim Nathan and Floridians for a Healthy Democracy for featuring Dr. Arthur Lavin and eight remarkable speakers at a recent event celebrating the power of personal storytelling. Each speaker shared vivid memories of how their lives—and their families' lives—were shaped by polio, measles, and meningitis. Their reflections captured not only their own experiences but also the fears, hopes, and resilience of generations before them. Be sure to watch! This event is a moving reminder of how our stories connect the past to the present—and protect the future.

Share Your Story—Join the GFV Speakers Bureau!

Requests for members of Grandparents for Vaccines to participate in webinars and Zoom events hosted by foundations and public health departments are pouring in, and we'd love to feature your voice! If you have a story to tell about how vaccines have shaped your life or your family's health, consider joining our GFV Speakers Bureau. To volunteer, please email us at Hello@grandparentsforvaccines.com and include "GFV Volunteer Speakers Bureau" in the subject line. Your story could be the one that inspires a parent, or even a policymaker, to take action.



Jan's Story

My name is Janice Flood Nichols. I'm a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a polio survivor, a polio pioneer, a medical counselor, and a vaccine advocate. I'm going to spend just a few minutes telling you about a time in our country that many people in my generation call the bad old days, the days before we had many vaccines for childhood diseases. My twin brother, Frankie, and I were in first grade. It was fall and we were getting ready to go out trick-or-treating with our friends. Frankie had developed a little head cold a few days before Halloween. So my parents kept him home to make sure that he would be ready to go out trick-or-treating that weekend. But the day before Halloween, Frankie developed a terrible time breathing. My parents rushed him to City Hospital in Syracuse for communicable diseases.

He was given a diagnostic spinal tap and immediately placed in an iron lung.

By the next morning, his diagnosis had been confirmed. Frankie had polio. I was brought to the same hospital and given massive doses of gamma globulin, given up and down both arms and legs, and the standard one in the buttocks. It was the only thing that they knew that could sometimes prevent a case. By the next day, Frankie's condition had worsened further. They could not control his secretions, so they decided to bring him to the operating room, where they would perform an emergency tracheostomy.

But Frankie died on the way to the operating room. It was November 1st, 1953, at 10:25 at night. In my faith, November 1st is All Saints' Day. I decided and told my parents that I was going to go to every part of his wake, to his funeral Mass, and even to his burial at the cemetery. I had never been away from Frankie for one minute, and I was not about to be away from him now.

But that night, I developed symptoms of polio, and I deteriorated very rapidly. So my parents rushed me off to the same hospital where Frankie had died a few days before. The doctors told my parents that they really did not know whether I was going to live or die. A few days later, my mother suffered a miscarriage.

Four days after admission to the hospital, I woke up. I couldn't move, but I was too young to understand what it all meant. But I heard a baby coughing incessantly down the hall. I had never heard a cough like that. And I eventually learned that the baby had whooping cough.



Jan's Story continues

I have spent my whole life wondering whether that little baby lived or died from a disease that we now can prevent through vaccination.

Then came a turning point.

My rehab began the day that I woke up in the hospital. And soon, by the spring of 1954, just as I was beginning to walk a little bit again, I was given an opportunity to be in the Jonas Salk Polio vaccine trial. To this day, it remains the largest vaccine trial in the history of the world. I was one of just under two million children in first, second, and third grades from the United States and Finland. We were called Polio Pioneers. We were told we were doing something not only for our own generation, but for all future generations.

Our parents must have been very afraid to have us participate in this new vaccine trial, but they knew that they could not do anything that was going to prolong the terrible surge of polio.

Thankfully, because of that vaccine, the United States was declared free of the wild polio virus in the late 1970s. But polio is still not eradicated worldwide.

I speak to you today as a woman who lost her twin, who lost two of my friends from that horrifying epidemic, who can still recall that little baby in the hospital, who had a friend in graduate school who was deaf from the measles, and the story of a woman that I met when we moved to the Pacific Northwest who told me about her little sister who died from chickenpox pneumonia—something that we now have not only a vaccine for, but antibiotics that can lessen the severity of such a case.

I ask you to please talk to other grandparents. We all have stories, and believe me, this is so hard for me to even talk about over 70 years later than the day that I lost my twin. I want you to speak to professionals who can tell you the importance of vaccinating for all childhood diseases.

Do not believe it when people tell you that these diseases are just simple rites of passage. They all have the ability to kill and maim. My twin brother and I were rambunctious, healthy children. My parents did everything imaginable to protect us. But nothing was going to protect us if polio found our community before the polio vaccine was made available.

Listen to others, reflect if you must—but please, vaccinate your children.

We cannot go back to those bad old days. We must remember, and we must protect.

Stories That Inspire

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has shared their powerful, deeply personal experiences. Many of your stories are now featured on the Grandparents for Vaccines YouTube channel. These accounts—told both on video and in writing—bring to life the realities of measles, polio, and other once-devastating diseases, including the severe illnesses and lifelong complications that vaccines now prevent. Your voices remind us all why our stories matter—and why our work continues.

Once Upon a Time....Our stories began in fear.

Together, we're writing a new ending—one of trust, science, and love. That's why we remember. That's why we vaccinate.

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