

GRANDPARENTS *for* VACCINES



A Storytelling Movement to Protect Every Child's Tomorrow

Arizona Immunization Conference • Mesa, Arizona • 2026

Arthur Lavin, MD • Donna A. Gaffney, DNSc, PMHCNS-BC

What We'll Cover Together

- Land Acknowledgment & Storytelling Frame
- Why Grandparents? Why Now? — Our Origin Story
- Vanishing Vaccine Stories — A Different Kind of Herd Immunity
- The Power of Storytelling — Evidence & Practice
- From Story to Action — What GFV Is Building
- What You Can Do — Concrete Steps for Every Grandparent
- Questions & Conversation

Financial Disclosures

- Arthur Lavin and Donna Gavin, faculty for this CE activity, has no relevant financial relationship(s) with ineligible companies to disclose.
- None of the planners for this activity have relevant financial relationships to disclose with ineligible companies.
- The Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers is accredited by the Arizona Medical Association to provide medical education for physicians.
- The Arizona Alliance for Community Health Centers designated the 2026 Arizona Immunization Conference educational activity for a maximum of 11 hours AMA PRA Category 1 Credits Physicians should only claim credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.
- The Arizona Pharmacy Association is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) as a provider of continuing pharmacy education.

Land Acknowledgment & Storytelling Frame

We Gather on Ancestral Lands

We gather today in Mesa, Arizona, on the ancestral lands of the Pima and Maricopa peoples, whose connections to land, community, and story continue today.

Across the Southwest, Pueblo storytelling traditions remind us that elders have long been keepers of memory, passing knowledge through story across generations.

We offer this acknowledgment with respect and gratitude, recognizing that our work stands within a much older tradition of caring for future generations through story.





“The Pueblo storyteller figure — an elder surrounded by attentive listeners — symbolizes how truth, values, and communal well-being are sustained through shared narrative.”

There is no greater force than a grandparent.

Why Grandparents?

Why Now?

Our Origin Story

The Moment That Sparked a Movement



The **spark** was not abstract or political.

Watching adults in wheelchairs “storming” Congress to protect healthcare was like a bolt of lightning. That image stayed.

And it raised a question:

What does it mean to “storm” in this moment?

Arthur Lavin, MD • President & Founder, GFV

A New Kind of Storming

Not storming Congress with rolling pins.
Not the “vintage” images of grandparents that no longer serve us.

Storming the Airwaves

Media, podcasts, YouTube
— reaching families where
they are

Storming the Living Room

The family conversations
where trust already exists

Storming the Community

Faith groups, schools, and
healthcare settings

This moment has the power to break through noise and misinformation, and influence decisions that protect children and communities.

WHY GRANDPARENTS? WHY
NOW?

Grandparents Change Things

Historically and culturally, grandparents — especially grandmothers — have been agents of change. They interrupt harmful narratives, protect the young, and anchor families in truth and memory.

- Trusted** The most trusted voice in any family system
- Rooted** Carriers of historical memory
- Loving** Speaking from love, not policy or politics
- Urgent** Living witnesses to what we have overcome



*“If you don’t believe your own grandma,
who are you going to believe?”*

WHY GRANDPARENTS? WHY
NOW?

Grandparents for Vaccines — Who We Are

Sept
2025

Founded and
Launched

501c3

Chartered in Ohio
(2025)

80

State Leaders

50

States —
Our 2026 Goal

Recognized in “20 Public Health Wins in 2025” by Katelyn Jetelina (Your Local Epidemiologist) for “filling gaps, staying rooted in evidence, and helping Americans feel confident and protected.”

Sharing Our History • Sharing Our Lives • Sharing Our Stories

Vanishing Vaccine Stories

A Different Kind of Herd Immunity

We Stopped Telling the Stories

Stories of vaccine-preventable diseases quietly vanished from the American landscape. We stopped telling them.

Relief

We were so relieved our children would not suffer from polio, measles, or whooping cough.

Silence

We believed those frightening stories no longer needed to be told. Silence felt like success.

The Gap

Babies were vaccinated before they were old enough to hear the stories or remember them.

Consequence

When misinformation filled that gap, there was no shared narrative to counter it.

Vaccines not only erased disease — they erased memory.

The Broken Storytelling Chain

We unintentionally **broke the chain** that carried truth across generations.

Grandparent Witnesses and Pioneers

Hold memories of
iron lungs, polio,
diphtheria, fear

Vaccinated
for the first time
Lived the story

Today's Parents

Vaccinated but
never told
the stories.
No memory.
Vulnerable to
misinformation

Our Grandchildren

Unprotected by
story or history

GFV's mission: repair the chain before another generation grows up without the story.

A Different Kind of

HERD IMMUNITY

- Stories immunize against false ideas
- Stories preserve truth across generations
- Stories interrupt fiction before it takes hold
- Stories themselves are a powerful public health vector

“Herd Immunity” through vaccines. “Heard Immunity” through stories. Both matter. Both protect.

HEARD IMMUNITY

Not just immunity through vaccines.

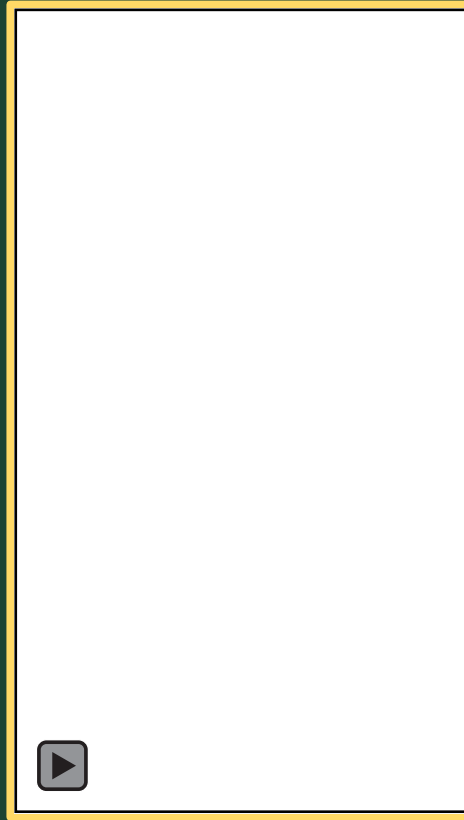
Immunity through stories.

*When grandparents speak,
children are protected.*



Voices We Must Never Lose

Words from Rick's Mother



Personal witness. Embodied memory. Unforgettable truth.

The Invisible Social Contract

Vaccine hesitancy is not always a rejection of vaccines. It is often an unconscious calculation:›

“Other parents will vaccinate. My child will be protected without the risk.”

This is the free-rider problem. And it works — until it doesn’t.

The commons degrades

Herd immunity only holds when enough people contribute. When contribution is optional, protection erodes — silently, then suddenly.

The most vulnerable pay first

Infants too young to vaccinate. Immunocompromised children. Grandparents whose immunity has waned. They bear the cost of others’ hesitancy.

The family table is the front line

Herd immunity was never about strangers. It was always about the people sitting at your table.

Two Camps. One Goal.

The public conversation about vaccine hesitancy is divided. GFV grandparents can hold both sides simultaneously.

The Empathy Camp

Focused on persuasion — what changes minds

Audience: hesitant but persuadable parents

Time horizon: the next conversation

Spokesperson: trusted messenger

The Accountability Camp

Focused on justice — what is morally required

Audience: the already-vaccinated majority

Time horizon: the next outbreak

Spokesperson: affected community member

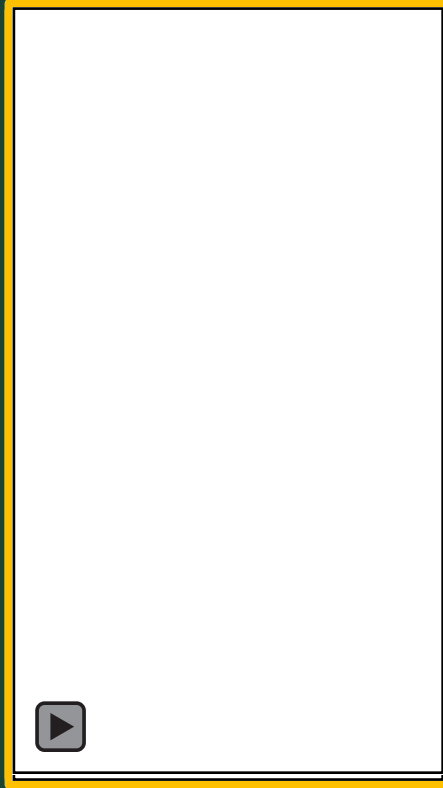
Grandparents are the only messengers who can be warm and devastating simultaneously — because love and urgency are the same thing.

The Power of Storytelling

Evidence & Practice

We Begin With a Story

Jan's Story



Visual. Embodied. Unforgettable. This is why we tell stories.

Why Storytelling Works — What the Evidence Shows

Narrative Transportation

Stories bypass resistance. When we enter a narrative, our defenses lower and we become open to new information in ways statistics cannot achieve.

Meaning-Making

Stories help us understand not just what is true, but why it matters — creating durable knowledge rather than forgettable facts.

Trust Building

Shared personal narrative creates relational trust. In polarized times, stories build bridges that arguments cannot.

Cultural Transmission

Across every human culture, stories are how communities preserve essential knowledge across generations.

Story Finding Is as Important as Storytelling

Before we can share stories, we must reclaim them. Many have been buried under decades of silence, relief, or the assumption that the battle was won.

Story-finding prompts:

- 1 *What illnesses did I witness as a child that children today will never see?*
- 2 *What do I remember about the arrival of vaccines in my family or community?*
- 3 *Who in my family was changed — or lost — to a disease vaccines now prevent?*
- 4 *What did fear feel like before we had protection?*

This Is Not About Winning Arguments

“This is not about winning arguments. It is about preserving relationships while telling the truth.”

— *Grandparents for Vaccines*

Listen First

Hear the fear behind the hesitancy before sharing your experience.

Choose Your Moment

Calm walks, shared meals, bedtime routines — not heated debates.

Speak From Experience

“What I remember...” not “The data show...”

Stay Present

Even when conversations feel uncomfortable. Especially then.

Love Without Memory Is Incomplete Protection

Their love is real.

Hesitant parents love their children deeply. That starting point is not in dispute.

AND something is missing.

Without the memory grandparents carry, love alone cannot make fully informed choices.

Grandparents hold what's missing.

Not data. Not arguments. Memory. Witness. The lived reality of a world before vaccines.

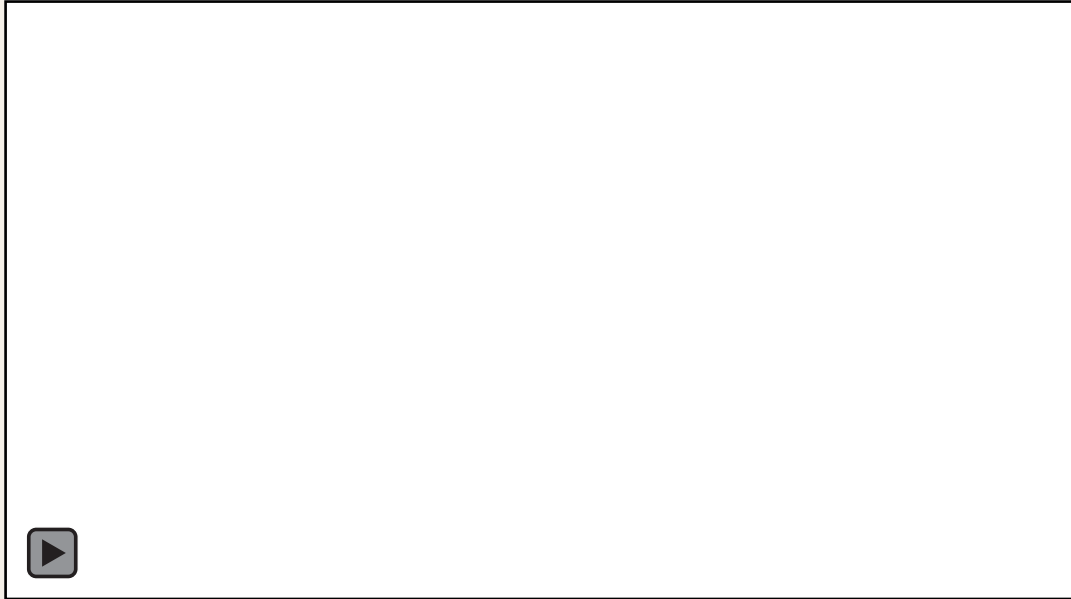
“We love you and our grandkids so much. That’s why we’re saying these things.”

SECTION FIVE

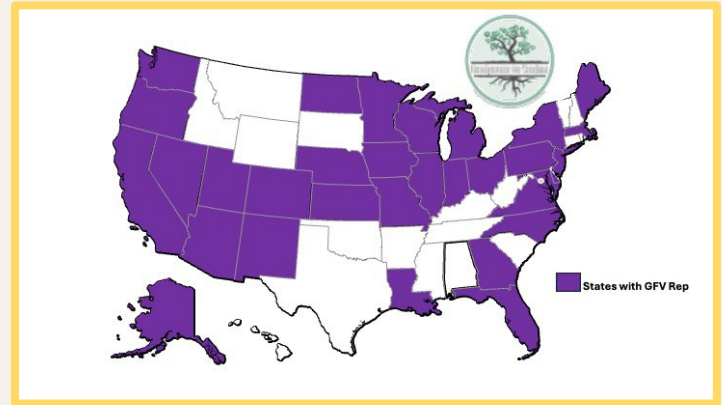
From Story to Action

What GFV Is Building

The Moment GFV Reached the Nation



**80 State Leaders
across 32 States**



FROM STORY TO ACTION

What We Are Building

Storyteller Network

Grandparents across all 50 states trained in story-based advocacy

Video Archive

YouTube channel preserving firsthand accounts of vaccine-preventable diseases

State Leadership

Local leaders who know their communities, media, and legislators

Events and Media Presence

Op-eds, interviews, podcasts, and social media amplifying authentic grandparent voices and events in every city, town, and village.

Public Health Partnership

With pediatricians, nursing groups, and public health organizations

Research-Informed Practice

Grounding everything in evidence about narrative and persuasion

A Story That Moves People to Act

Deb Robarge

Indiana State Leader • Grandmother of 8 • Nurse

Her youngest son contracted H-flu meningitis at 7 months old — before a vaccine was available. He survived, but with deafness and balance difficulties. Years later she discovered many of his classmates became deaf in the same 1985–86 outbreak.

“The only way to change people’s hearts and minds is through stories.”

Deb’s story led to NPR/PBS coverage, Midwest Immunization Consortium presentations, and Iowa Immunizes.

What You Can Do!

Concrete Steps for Every Grandparent

Step 1: Reclaim the Stories

Start with your own family and community. The stories are there — waiting to be remembered.

- 1 Talk to grandchildren about a parent or grandparent who had polio, measles, or whooping cough.
- 2 Share what it was like when schools closed during outbreaks, when parents feared summer swimming pools.
- 3 Describe the iron lungs that were part of hospital wards — the sound, the fear, the relief when they became unnecessary.
- 4 Invite neighbors and faith community members to share their own memories at a community gathering.

Step 2: Share With Care and Courage

Choose calm moments

A walk, a shared meal, bedtime with a grandchild.
Not heated debates.

Lead with love, not data

“What I remember...” carries more weight than any statistic.

Listen before you speak

Hear their concerns and fears first. Acknowledge uncertainty. Stay present.

Correct gently

Offer context, history, and credible sources when you encounter misinformation.

Step 3: Protect Children With Truth

Vaccines protect the body. Stories protect the mind.

Connect science to lived experience — not fear-based messaging.

Reach out to local libraries and bookstores to bring authors of books for young people on vaccines and public health.

Gently correct misinformation by offering context, history, and trusted sources.

Teach children to evaluate claims, ask questions, and recognize the difference between evidence and opinion.

“The politics have changed, but the science has not.” — Dr. Jeremy Faust

Conversation Starters

Many grandparents say their greatest challenge is knowing how to begin. These prompts unlock your lived experience.

“We love you and our grandkids so much. That’s why we’re saying these things.”

“We know what these childhood diseases look like and feel like. Here’s what I’ve experienced and seen...”

“The politics have changed, but the science has not.”

“I want your child to have what my children had — the gift of not being afraid.”

When grandparents speak,
people listen.

Please pull out your phones!
Open Grandparentsforvaccines.org

JOIN US!!!

Step 4: Become Part of a Growing Movement

Share Your Story

Send it in writing or video to GFV. Stories power our YouTube channel and social media.

Invite and Become a State Leader

We need all 50 states. A few hours a month changes everything.

Write & Speak

Op-eds, letters to the editor, social media posts, community forums, school discussions. That includes media requests.

Mentor Others

Help grandparents who want to speak up but aren't sure how to begin.

Follow & Amplify

Instagram, Facebook, BlueSky, YouTube — your share extends our reach.

Request a Speaker

GFV will do its best to accommodate your program or event.

When grandparents speak,
people listen.

Not because we are loud.

Not because we are political.

Because we were there.

GRANDPARENTS *for* VACCINES



grandparentsforvaccines.org

[Hello@grandparentsforvaccines.com](mailto>Hello@grandparentsforvaccines.com)

YouTube: Grandparents for Vaccines

TikTok.com: @GrandparentsforVaccines

Instagram & Facebook: @GrandparentsForVaccines

BlueSky: @gparents4vaccines.social.bsky

Questions & Conversation

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**.*

