

Because We're Stronger Together

Intergenerational Programs Engaging Youth in Service to Older Adults



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united**
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THE AGING NETWORK'S
VOLUNTEER COLLABORATIVE
Engage the wisdom of age.

About This Project

The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative, funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging and managed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) worked with Generations United to identify the approaches and contributions of younger generations to older generations and thereby help local communities meet growing eldercare needs while fostering intergenerational learning.

Generations United created a survey to identify intergenerational programs across the country in which youth and young adults (25 years and younger) serve or support older adults. This survey was distributed to the Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative and Generations United members, partners, and supporters. In addition to the survey, Generations United conducted extensive research on current intergenerational programs. These findings were used to create an on-line program directory, this tip sheet, and the program profiles included here.

For more information on intergenerational programs, please visit the directory available at <http://www.gu.org/OURWORK/Programs/Directory.aspx>.

About Generations United

Generations United is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. Since 1986, Generations United has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. Generations United acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children's, and youth organizations, providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation. Learn more at <http://www.gu.org>.

About The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative

The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative is a national resource center that helps establish the aging and disability networks as leaders in engaging the growing cohort of talented older adult volunteers to meet the growing needs for services.

The Volunteer Collaborative offers online resources, comprehensive training, and opportunities for leaders to learn best practices from each other. This support enables organizations to 1) build their capacity through skilled volunteers, who provide solutions that keep older adults and people with disabilities healthy and independent and 2) expand opportunities to serve a broad, diverse range of potential volunteers, including people who receive aging or disability services.

The Volunteer Collaborative is funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging and managed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), in partnership with the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA), AARP Foundation, and in collaboration with the Corporation for National and Community Service and AARP. Learn more at <http://agingnetworkvolunteercollaborative.org>

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<http://www.gu.org>

INTRODUCTION

The United States is in the midst of a demographic transformation with both youth and older adults making up an increasing proportion of the population. Currently, there are approximately 41 million people in America who are 65 years and older, an increase of 6.3 million or 18 percent since 2000.ⁱ By 2030, there will be more than 72 million people over the age of 65.ⁱⁱ At the same time, there were approximately 74 million children in the United States, an increase of 1.7 million since 2000.ⁱⁱⁱ This number is projected to increase to 80 million in 2030.^{iv} The most recent statistics show that there are about 25 million children between ages 12 to 17.^v

Additionally, the gap between the percentage of older adults and children has narrowed. By 2040 each group will constitute approximately 20 percent of the total population.^{vi} In other words, older adults and children will make up over 40 percent of the U.S. population. This shift is only one part of current demographic, social, and economic changes. In 2012, 47 percent of children (ages 0 to 17) in the United States were nonwhite or Hispanic.^{vii} By 2050, this number is projected to be closer to 64 percent.^{viii} Similarly, older minorities are increasing as a proportion of the older population.^{ix}

Where this new reality is seen by some as a challenge, it also presents unique opportunities for intergenerational collaboration. Intergenerational programs by definition increase cooperation, interaction, and exchange between people of different generations, allowing the sharing of talents and resources, and the supporting of each other in relationships that benefit both the individuals and their community.

Within this framework, young people can and do provide an array of helpful services to older people. These programs range from mentoring to friendly visiting, chore services to computer classes, and gardening to gaming. Youth volunteer at very high levels. The most recent data show that 27.4 percent of teens (ages 16 to 19) and 18.9 percent of youth adults (ages 20 to 24) volunteered in 2012.^x If younger teens are taken into account, as in the 2005 Youth



Top Youth Service Activities with Older Adults

1. *Teaching technology*
2. *Friendly visiting*
3. *Recording oral history*
4. *Delivering meals*
5. *Providing home safety inspections and repairs*

Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey, over 55 percent or 15.5 million teens between the ages of 12 to 18 volunteered.^{xi}

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

Intergenerational programs are proven strategies to strengthen communities and enhance services by engaging our country’s growing natural resource of older adults, children, and youth. Over the past 40 years, thousands of these programs have mobilized younger and older people in service to each other or together in service to their communities.



The program models can vary widely depending on the participants and the community. In Bradenton, FL, teens run a program that trains youth to evaluate older adults’ needs and to install safety equipment in their homes, including bathtub rails, deadbolts, and smoke alarms. In Los Angeles County, CA, older adults mentor teen parents, offering support and encouragement while helping them understand the complexities and challenges of raising children. In Arlington Heights, IL, a planning committee of high school students and older adults organize an annual intergenerational prom, selecting the theme and coordinating the fun evening with dinner, dancing, and entertainment.

Intergenerational programs do not have to be new initiatives. In many cases, existing programs and services have been enhanced by adding an intergenerational approach. For example, in Seattle, WA, an elementary school partnered with a nearby retirement community to enhance their reading curriculum by giving students a chance to practice reading out loud to the older adults. In Roseville, MI, a high school culinary arts program opens its door once a month to serve a low-cost, gourmet meal to older adults from the neighborhood senior center. In Carmel, CA, high school students conduct technology tutoring sessions, workshops, and a technology open house at the senior center.



BENEFITS

Being involved in the community has many benefits for youth, including developing skills, values, and a sense of

empowerment, leadership, and citizenship. Interacting with older adults enables youth to develop social networks, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, positive attitudes towards aging, a sense of purpose, and a commitment to community service. While this guide focuses on intergenerational programs where youth provide a service to older adults, it is important to acknowledge that the benefits of intergenerational programs are rarely ever clear cut. The core of intergenerational programs lies in building relationships between the generations that are mutually beneficial for both younger and older participants. Where these benefits are identified for the youth providing service, there are just as many, if not more, benefits to the older adults and community. Older adults who participate in intergenerational programs report enhanced life satisfaction, decreased isolation, improved physical health and well-being, expanded learning and skills, and appreciation for the help of youth volunteers.

Benefits of Youth Volunteering

- Youth who volunteer are more likely to feel connected to their communities, do better in school, and are less likely to engage in risky behavior.^{xii}
- When disengaged youth are involved in quality volunteer opportunities, their level of social trust increases and the likelihood that they will engage in risky behaviors decreases.^{xiii}
- Youth are more likely to volunteer if their entire family is involved in the effort and the shared experience can result in strengthened family bonds.^{xiv}
- Students who perform volunteer service are more likely to graduate from college than those who do not.^{xv}
- Participation in civic engagement activities can help youth become better informed about current events,^{xvi} better understand local government structures and gain an appreciation for the democratic process and the reality of local politics.^{xvii}

Benefits for Older Adults:

- *Enhances life satisfaction*
- *Decreases isolation*
- *Improves physical health and well-being*
- *Expands new learning and skills*

What Motivates Youth?

- *Gaining leadership experiences and career skills*
- *Making a difference in their community*
- *Enhancing job or college applications*
- *Making new friends and volunteering with friends*
- *Earning respect and recognition*
- *Learning from older adult's wisdom and experience*
- *Working for a cause that is important for them*
- *Being productive during free time*
- *Opportunity to be civically and/or politically engaged*

- Two-thirds of adults who volunteered began volunteering while they were young; and adults who volunteered at a young age, regardless of income, donate to and volunteer more at charitable organizations than adults who did not volunteer.^{xviii}
- Intergenerational program experiences can promote more positive attitudes among youth toward older people and the aging process.^{xix}



SIX STEPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Select Participants

Developing a successful intergenerational program that involves youth and older adults begins with effective planning and preparation. Prior to starting outreach to appropriate partners, program developers need to clearly define the goals of the program as well as the roles and responsibilities of participants of all ages. It is important to identify characteristics you may want your participants to have (e.g. interest in photography or music) as well as, incentives for participation (e.g. new skills, experience, school credit, food, and fun). Connect program goals to the strengths and needs of the youth volunteers and older adults.

Offering a program at a regular scheduled time can help it to become a part of the participant's schedule. But also consider offering one-time, short-term, or episodic volunteer opportunities. It is important to recognize that participants' schedules change throughout the year, for example, team sports change by the season as well as vacation and travel schedules.

What Makes a Good Intergenerational Experience?

- *Promotes positive youth-adult partnerships and relationships*
- *Engages program leaders who are cross-trained and understand both generations*
- *Provides opportunities for all participants to share their interests and expertise*
- *Offers a variety of activities and levels of responsibility in order to match interests and abilities of participants of all ages*
- *Gives people of all ages the chance to have fun, socialize and meet new people*

2. Develop Planned Activities

Program development, implementation, and evaluation are similar when working with youth and older adults as with any other age group. When developing programs, it is important to develop opportunities for both short- and long-term collaboration. Additionally, program planning should involve recognizing and respecting the physical and mental capabilities of all participants. Youth volunteers and older adults should participate to the extent possible in program development, to encourage their investment in the project. In developing the program, be sure to identify the outcomes for each generation, such as reducing social isolation, gaining new talents, building confidence, and improving fine motor skills.

3. Provide Training

Preparing your participants is an important step in creating a successful program. Training will vary in regards to content, length, and frequency depending on the nature of the program, but should include icebreakers, discussion, and program-specific exercises. When engaged in the training, it is important to orient the youth and elders separately before bringing everyone together. Be sure to evaluate your training sessions. Training before and during the program allows for continued success throughout and the opportunity to address issues as they arise.

During the training sessions, there are certain topics that are important to include in preparing participants for the intergenerational program:

- Address attitudes/myths/stereotypes towards the other generation
- Acknowledge the cultural gap and be prepared

Why is Training Important?

- *Helps the generations become comfortable in their interactions with each other*
- *Offers a chance to explore attitudes towards older adults and youth and become sensitive to age-related issues*
- *Dispels myths and stereotypes*
- *Helps youth understand the reality of the aging process*
- *Provides background information on the program participants*
- *Teaches relevant skills, such as team building and problem solving*
- *Involves discovery learning through role playing and simulation activities*
- *Provides an opportunity to gain confidence through discussion and engagement in problem-solving activities related to things that may happen during the program*
- *Encourages establishment of personal goals*
- *Offers a chance to articulate and deal with fears and expectations of participation*
- *Increases awareness of the value of linking generations*

to discuss topics, such as the numerous examples of self-expression (ex. clothing, hair styles/colors, make-up, tattoos, piercings)

- Clarify expectations for appropriate language and behavior
- Share specific information about the program, including roles of participants, timeframe, and program goals.

Even though youth may be self-conscious, it is still helpful to use name tags in the beginning of a program. This encourages participants to use each other's names, which in turns allows everyone to feel more connected. Beginning with fun, light icebreakers also helps participants feel comfortable and at ease during the program.



4. Engage Participants

The involvement of youth and adults in project planning and implementation is key to success. Youth should be involved in the planning of the program as well as assisting in developing recruitment material and recruiting others. Older adults need to understand that they are not just recipients of service but co-creators of the intended outcomes of the intergenerational program. It is important that youth and older adults feel engaged from the onset of the program as a way to take ownership of their participation. A good strategy for connecting with youth is focusing on the program as a chance to volunteer with friends and meet people from diverse backgrounds. For both youth and older adults, it is important to provide very specific examples of what participants will do in the program.

5. Nurture Relationships

Relationships are at the core of intergenerational programs and the most successful programs facilitate the development of these relationships. The primary factor in building relationships is the amount of time youth and elders have together. One-time events do not offer the same opportunity to build relationships as long-term, on-going projects. Like any relationship,



intergenerational relationships grow and flourish over time. Although one-time events are not ideal for building friendships, many intergenerational programs have seen increased interest, understanding, and collaboration between the generations in their neighborhoods and communities based on these introductory experiences. Defined program goals, clear expectations of all participants, appropriate training and orientation, and structure and guidance on how participants will spend their time together will lay a solid foundation for building relationships. Finally, program coordinators should offer ongoing encouragement and support to the program participants. Be sure to talk with the participants about the project and how their new friendships are going, as well as monitoring program activities.



6. Reflect, Refine, and Recognize

Evaluation should occur from the earliest planning stages, throughout the program, and after program completion. Evaluation can range from feedback forms to interviews to focus groups to pre- and post-surveys. It is important for program coordinators to reflect on the activities immediately and make plans for addressing any weaknesses and strengthening future interactions. Consider partnering with local colleges and universities who are looking for research opportunities for their students. Including youth and older adults in the evaluation process gives the valuable feedback that you need to ensure current and future success in your intergenerational endeavors.

Participants need to know that you appreciate them, their involvement, and their efforts throughout the program. Providing adequate recognition helps in retaining youth and older adult participants. Recognition can come in many forms, such as: end-of-project parties, gift cards, articles in the local newspaper, certificates of completion, or profiles on an organization or community website. An intergenerational party or event at the end of a project is a great way to recognize new friendships, celebrate accomplishments, and allow for reflection on the experience.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

A variety of intergenerational programs around the United States and the world mobilize youth to provide valuable services to older adults. The following are just some of the creative programs. For more ideas and information, visit Generations United's Intergenerational Program Directory at www.gu.org/OURWORK/Programs/Directory.aspx or visit the websites below.

Friendly Visiting

The Hebrew Home at Riverdale in New York runs the **Generation 2 Generation** (L'Dor V'Dor) Summer Internship Program. The four-week program provides students with an opportunity to work directly with older residents of the home, learn about Jewish attitudes on aging, attend educational seminars on Jewish culture and history, and develop deep relationships with people of a different generation. Youth participants assist various departments with their programs, and are assigned an individual caseload of residents to visit. They have the chance to make an important difference in the lives of residents who, in turn, share their life experiences with the students. <http://www.hebrewhome.org/g2g.asp>

DOROT's Family Circle program in New York, NY, is a premiere source of intergenerational friendship and childhood education in community values. Seniors share their life experiences with the young, while families with children ages 4 to 12 enrich the lives of the elderly. Families in this program receive a thorough orientation in visiting etiquette, and before each visit, children receive workbooks with conversation and activity suggestions. Each family visits their older friend on Sundays before holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah, Tu B'Shevat, and Passover, bringing with them holiday packages and gifts provided by DOROT.

<http://www.dorotusa.org>

The Bessie's Hope Youth and Elders Program in Denver, CO matches schools and other youth groups with nursing home and assisted living residents. In this mutually beneficial program, the youth gain self-esteem, respect for others, life skills, and academic skills, and the older adults receive companionship, intellectual stimulation, and the chance to feel useful. Activities in all of the Bessie's Hope programs focus on volunteers participating "with", not doing things "to" or "for" their "grandpartners" and the interaction is always empowering for the older adults.

<http://www.bessieshope.org>

Oral History

The **Volunteer Grandkid program** of Our AIM Foundation in Dunedin, FL matches young people with older adults at a local community facility. The youth volunteer as part of a large team and, within that team, each youth pairs up with a friend (or a parent) to visit with an older adult. The

young people meet with their adopted grandparents weekly and ask them to share their memories of key events and accomplishments in their lives. Each youth team prepares a Memory Book that highlights the major accomplishments and warmest memories of their adopted grandparent's life. The program culminates in an intergenerational celebration where the youth present the Memory Books to their adopted grandparents. <http://www.ouraim.org>

The **Living Legacies program** in Monmouth Junction, NJ is an annual intergenerational event that culminates several months' of preparation between high school students and local older adults. The students and older adults meet regularly using different themes as a springboard for conversation. The students then translate what they learned from the interviews into monologues and the "Living Legacies" theatre performance presented at the South Brunswick Senior Center. Past themes include The Veterans' Stories; Immigration, Our Common Bond; People, Places & Events: South Brunswick's History; and Celebrating Our Cultural Diversity. A reception follows the performance where the adults can reconnect with the students and discuss the show. Volunteers take photos and video which are incorporated into the program. <http://www.aginginplacepartnership.org/>

Meal Delivery

The **Students Supporting Seniors** program of the South County Senior Resource Center in Lemay, MO connects students from the Bayless School District with senior center volunteers to deliver meals to the homebound (Meals on Wheels). Each youth (called a "Meal Runner") is responsible for loading/unloading meal carriers and coolers and taking the meal and supplies to the door at each delivery stop. Students have established a special bond with their volunteer drivers, as well as the homebound clients. Students have assisted in other areas of the center by collecting personal care items for holiday gifts and sponsoring fundraising events to support the meal program. http://agingmissouri.org/senior_center_south_county.php

Chore Services/Home Inspections

The ManaTEEN Club in Bradenton, FL, runs the **Home Safety for Seniors** program, which trains youth to evaluate older adults' needs and to install in their homes safety equipment, such as bathtub rails, deadbolts, and smoke alarms. <http://www.volunteermanatee.org/>

Our Folks is a program of Groundwork Hudson Valley in Yonkers, NY, where youth survey older homeowners, identify needed yard and household repairs, and carry out improvements. Approximately 20 youth and 25 older adults each year participate in this program. One goal is to bridge the generation gap by bringing people together over shared projects and shared lunches, which the students and homeowners prepare and eat together. <http://www.groundworkhv.org/programs/community-building/our-folks/>

VISIONS Intergenerational Program recruits, trains, and employs New York City high school students to assist blind seniors in their homes and at Selis Manor, a center in Manhattan for blind youth, adults, and seniors. The 92 youth assist with reading, shopping, household chores, and technology to over 100 older adults with vision loss.

<http://www.visionsvcb.org/visions/programs/Seniors/>

Technology

The Gerontechnology Program at Pace University in New York offers undergraduate students a service-learning course that trains them on providing technology instruction to older adults living in independent living, assisted living, and nursing home facilities. The students also learn about the process of aging. Evaluation has shown that the older adult participants gained a greater sense of well-being and self-worth, a more positive outlook on life, increased cognitive functioning, decreased levels of depression, and reduced social isolation.

<http://csis.pace.edu/gerontechnology/>

Living (well through) Intergenerational Exercise and Fitness (LIFE) is a program of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach that improves wellness and increased physical activity for adults over 60 through “exergaming” (video games that integrate game play with physical activity) with college students. Iowa State University students majoring in dietetics, kinesiology, education, and human development and family studies were trained in using a Wii gaming system, leading interactive games, and offering assistance and applying safety precautions when working with older adults as they engage in physical activity.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/content/our-story-living-well-through-intergenerational-fitness-and-exercise>

Weaving Memoirs on the Web is a program of the Toronto Public Library - Albert Campbell District Branch in Toronto, Canada. The program pairs older adults interested in telling their stories with high-school-aged youth volunteers comfortable in using technology. The youth help the older adults learn to digitize pictures, music and words, and make their memories easy to share. Older adults have the choice of setting up a blog using a Blogger/Google account, and/or developing a slideshow using Windows Movie Maker.

<http://ww.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>

Career Training/Workforce Development

The Geriatric Career Development program at Jewish Home Lifecare prepares high school students in the New York City area for careers in geriatric care. Students commit to the program for three years with sessions two or three times a week, and participate in five-week internships in areas like adult day care, nursing, and social work. Each student has an elder mentor; together, they work on projects such as making crafts and exploring each other’s life

histories. Students can earn healthcare certification and have the opportunity to receive stipends. <http://www.jewishhome.org/help-us-help-others/make-a-gift/career-development>

The H.O.P.E (Healthcare Opportunities Providing Employment) program at the Hebrew Home at Riverdale in New York, is an intergenerational volunteer and vocational training program which provides at-risk youth with the opportunity to complete their education while receiving job training skills. Since starting in 2004, more than 200 students have completed the program and 15 students have been hired by The Hebrew Home and are currently on staff. Each year, approximately 30 students from local schools in the Bronx study and work daily at the Home. For several hours a day they receive job training in a variety of fields, ranging from food services to nursing. Students are given the opportunity to engage with residents who have a lifetime of knowledge and experience to share. <http://www.hebrewhome.org/hope-program.asp>

Care and Services

Time Out Respite, a program of the Intergenerational Center at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, has a team of more than 100 trained college students who provide companionship and supervision for older people and respite for their family caregivers. Students, who are paid \$8 per hour, help with meal preparation, laundry, changing bed linens, and grocery shopping. <http://templeigc.org/time-out-respite-program>

Project Care is a student-run senior center at Boone High School in Valparaiso, IN for adults 55 and older in the community. The program was founded in 1995 to provide local older adults with a place to meet. Currently, older adults visit the high school throughout the school year for exercise, crafts, lunch with the students, movies, games, and camaraderie.

Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders), a national initiative coordinated by the Intergenerational Center at Temple University, mobilizes students at 14 colleges and universities across the country to teach English to older immigrants and refugees, prepare them to become U.S. citizens, and help them to access health care services.

<http://templeigc.org/project-shine>

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