

Stay Active Through Intergenerational Connections

“Whether we’re a preschooler or a young teen, a graduating college senior or a retired person, we human beings all want to know that we’re acceptable, that our being alive somehow makes a difference in the lives of others.”— Fred Rogers

Intergenerational connections are relationships or experiences that bring together individuals of different generations—usually children or youth and older adults. Combining the experience, wisdom and fresh perspectives of people of all ages can improve lives and strengthen communities. In fact, older adults who participate in intergenerational programs often describe experiencing greater life satisfaction, larger social networks and improved health and well-being.ⁱ



Getting Started

There are many ways to connect with young people in your community, in your neighborhood, in your own family and around the world. Some steps you can take to engage in intergenerational activities in your community include:

- Contact local mentoring and youth service organizations to support youth in your community.
- Reach out to your local elementary school to see if they have volunteer opportunities working with children.
- Look for community arts activities that are open to all ages including music, theater, dance, storytelling or creative writing.
- Read with a child at a local school or contact your local library about starting an all-ages book club.
- Offer to share your special skills such as knitting, cooking, gardening or car maintenance with youth clubs or at a community center.
- Volunteer with people of all ages at your local food bank or organize a neighborhood food drive with multiple generations.
- Talk with your religious/spiritual leaders about possible intergenerational community service opportunities with religious education classes or youth groups.
- Have young people in your life already but struggle to start a dialogue? Find great intergenerational conversation starters online.

ⁱ Generations United, Making the Case for Intergenerational Programs, 2021, <https://www.gu.org/resources/making-the-case-for-intergenerational-programs>.

- Celebrate Grandparents Day, which takes place each year on the Sunday after Labor Day.

Success Story: Eli

A retired aerospace engineer, Eli spends one hour volunteering every Thursday in a seventh-grade math class and on Tuesdays he explains mathematical principles to eighth graders. Occasionally, he helps with sixth-grade math, too! "I guess what's keeping me going is the exercise of the body and the mind," he said.

Eighth grader, Kate, said his math lessons give students "a different perspective on math that we wouldn't learn." Another student, Teddy, said he was inspired to study astrophysics and attend a three-week summer program in New York.

Resources

Use the below resources to find in-person and virtual intergenerational programs, activities and volunteer opportunities.

- Generations United intergenerational program database at www.gu.org.

- Contact the Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov; 1 (800) 677-1116) to connect with your local Area Agency on Aging and learn about other intergenerational opportunities in your community.
- AARP Foundation Experience Corps: www.aarp.org/experience-corps.
- AmeriCorps Seniors Foster Grandparent Program: americorps.gov/serve/fit-finder/americorps-seniors-foster-grandparent-program.
- CoGenerate: cogenerate.org.
- OASIS Tutoring: tutoring.oasisnet.org.
- Grandparents Day Take Action Guide: www.grandparentsday.org.
- Story Corps Great Questions: storycorps.org/participate/great-questions.
- Road Scholar Intergenerational Travel: www.roadscholar.org/browse-collections/grandparent.
- Online intergenerational opportunities including DOROT's GENUine Connections (www.dorotusa.org/genuineconnections) and Big & Mini (bigandmini.org).

In your community, contact:

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