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Intergenerational Programs in South Carolina

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INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SOUTH CAROLINA



What If Intergenerational Programs Could Change The World?

THEY CAN!

The relationship between youth and older adults is one of the most natural in the human experience. Although they represent two opposite ends of the spectrum, these two groups have more in common than you may realize.

Traditionally, families were



more extended and geographically centered. It was not uncommon for children, parents, and grandparents to live in the same house or at least in the same town. There was a sense of community that benefited each member of the family and made the whole unit stronger. Extended families have been a common framework for the sharing of values. Generations living together allowed for the



exchange of knowledge about family, religious, and cultural traditions. Economic, educational, and cultural independence were the results.

Older family members shared the responsibility for raising the children and in turn enjoyed the benefits of continued stimulation, enthusiasm, and learning from their involvement with the younger generations.

Over thirty years ago social scientists began to notice that our changing society had created a vacuum. There were fewer children learning from older adults and fewer older adults teaching children as they grew up. Interaction between these two age groups was markedly absent.

In 1963, the first intergenerational programs to receive federal funding were developed.

Types of Intergenerational Programs:

1. Young People Serving Older Adults

In these types of intergenerational programs, young people may:

- visit older persons in their home or a nursing care facility
- work with Meals on Wheels program to deliver meals to the homebound
- tutor older adults in language or computer skills
- develop a phone buddies project to check on older adults each day
- help older adults with their household chores
- write letters or read for those with vision or other health problems

2. Older Adults Serving Young People



In these types of programs, older adults may:

- Act as a mentor
- Be a caregiver
- Help in daycare centers
- Work in schools and classrooms

3. Older Adults and Youth Working Together

There are many opportunities in every community for these two groups to work together:

- Address community problems that affect both groups
- Develop community beautification projects
- Share creativity
- Serve the frail elderly

Why Intergenerational Programs?

Children need role models. They need to learn life skills, values, and traditions. They need insight that comes from life experiences. They need to be loved, accepted, and nurtured. And most importantly, they need to feel that they belong to a larger family or community.

As older adults retire, they have more time and fewer distractions. They need to share their knowledge and life experiences. They have a greater need to feel of value. Through intergenerational programs, the strengths of one

generation can meet the needs of another generation.

Opportunities are provided for interaction among people of diverse backgrounds, ages, and life experiences.

Youth and older adults have a lot in common. They both have a need to make a contribution and to feel appreciated; both groups are eager to share their knowledge and to learn through new experiences.

Intergenerational service programs provide them opportunities to have meaningful service experiences together.



Intergenerational Programs Are Making a Difference in South Carolina

Over half of the school districts in S.C. are implementing some type of intergenerational program in their schools. Intergenerational service learning projects not only get students into the community working with seniors but also get seniors into the schools. Youth and older adults are working with community groups and businesses to make a difference in communities all over South Carolina.

- **Aiken:** Youth and seniors participate in a campus-based nature center and wetland development project, heritage skills and oral history projects, nutrition education, and performing arts activities.
- **Anderson:** Students serve senior adults at local nursing homes, homebound seniors, and Alzheimer's patients through performing arts, Meals on Wheels, and pet therapy.
- **Columbia:** Children from Child Development Centers team up with Alzheimer's Day Care patients to make crafts.

Youth plan and host an intergenerational Christmas celebration each year for the community's senior adults at a local church.

Senior volunteers provide a nurturing environment at Children's Garden, a day care shelter for the children (0-5 years) of homeless and needy families.

Foster Grandparent Volunteers collaborate with the SC Department of Social Services and the Junior Women's League to provide care, nurturing and comfort to displaced children who are removed from their home due to abuse and neglect.

- **Florence:** Youth and senior adults come together to build relationships while serving the community through building parks, working together with local nursing homes, parenting classes, and performing arts.
- **Irmo-Chapin:** An innovative school-recreation partnership brings senior adults and youth together to create composting gardens, earth-worm farms and community gardens.
- **McCormick:** Students and senior adult volunteers operate six companies to manufacture craft products to sell at their craft shop.
- **Newberry:** RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) volunteer; participate in the "Hands Across Ages" project collaborating with HUD and a local housing project, to work with underprivileged and abused children.
- **Sumter:** Youth and senior adults team up to participate in community education, recreation, performing arts, oral history, heritage skills projects, and meeting the needs of the community's homebound senior adults.

Intergenerational programming is a vehicle to get back to the basics...caring relationships, character education and the ethic of service.

**For More Information on
Intergenerational Programs**

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