



Age-Friendly & Intergenerational Communities

Good news: People are leading longer and healthier lives! However, communities must adapt to these demographic changes and provide support to enhance the wellbeing of all of its members. The Eight Domains of Livability Communities – outlined by the World Health Organization’s Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities – are designed to enhance the quality of life of older adults.

Livable, age-friendly communities are those that promote health, economic growth, and happiness **as well as provide support for all of its members**: People should live comfortably **together**. How can we do that? Deliberate and meaningful intergenerational (IG) programs can help communities *truly* become age-friendly and thereby improve the wellbeing of all. An IG mindset can lead to engagement opportunities that *address documented needs and promote wellness*.

“Intergenerational” is both an approach and a culture. Below are concrete examples of how IG programs can be incorporated to strengthen your community.



Tip! Convene community leaders **of all ages** to plan and carry out this important work!

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Create spaces—indoors and out—where people of all ages can gather.

- Build a playground/recreational area with equipment for people of all ages and abilities.
- Organize a field day and invite older adults and children from the neighborhood to enjoy outdoor activities such as an obstacle course, a ring toss or a soccer tournament.
- Start an IG community garden. Bring older people and young people from the area together, start growing fruits and vegetables – and maybe even cook together!



2. Transportation

Provide options for people to get around.

- Consider having organizations share shuttle buses. For example, can a school bus transport elders in between pick-up and drop-off? Can a senior center shuttle bus help with transporting students on field trips during the day?
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 - Time on school buses can be challenging. Pay older adults a stipend or train them as volunteers to be monitors and “senior friends” on the bus.
 - Hire high school or college students to ride the senior van to check in with the elders as well as be an extra set of eyes and ears for growing issues in their lives. These “young riders” can then report back to a senior social worker about any concerns.
 - Develop an app/website for college students to get paid to drive older adults.
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3. Housing

Make affordable housing accessible to people of all ages.

- Provide community programming to increase the interaction between older and younger people in affordable housing developments. Neighborhood parties provide a vehicle for people to come together to share their food and culture.
 - Older homeowners and tenants can provide lower rent for college and grad students in exchange for assistance around the house. (See the recent launch of the Boston Intergenerational Homeshare Pilot or nesterly app.)
 - Design a planned IG community for elders and youth in a specific target group (i.e. wounded veterans, single moms, LGBTQ teens, youth aging out of foster care) where all residents are committed to engaging with others and enjoy intentional scheduled activities.
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4. Social Participation

Initiate accessible and affordable social activities to reduce the level of loneliness and social isolation for all community members.

- Start an IG book club in the community. The book club may take place in different homes or at a local coffee shop. Take turns choosing a book to read. Members might

also consider launching a “Books on Wheels” program — think of Meals on Wheels but deliver library books to homebound elders.

- Organize an IG walk in the community – include a scavenger hunt!
 - Host an IG party or dinner at a community or cultural center. Invite people of all ages to come enjoy different activities and games. Move around and dance. Have a diverse playlist with music from all decades and different parts of the world.
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5. Respect and Social Inclusion

Promote mutual respect among generations to increase the feeling of acceptance and self worth. We all have something to offer and learn from one another.

- Run the Bridges Program Curricula in your community. Convene your own IG leadership team and find volunteers to participate in educational programs that increase understanding between the generations and decrease ageism, either in school, after school, or at the library.
 - Host monthly IG movie nights where a leadership team selects movies and then leads discussions and activities — examples of movies include *UP*, *The Karate Kid*, and *St. Vincent*.
 - Have a community dinner that is either potluck or offer food provided by a local caterer/restaurant. Incorporate educational and edu-tainment programming – use the opportunity to teach about nutrition, life skills, community support services, etc.
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6. Civic Participation and Employment

Facilitate older people choosing to continue being active members of the community by working or volunteering their skills.

- Create volunteer and/or paid opportunities for older adults to work at the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club or schools and interact with youth. Note: A training program is important for both the older adults and the organization/school’s multigenerational staff.
- Celebrate Election Day by having older adults go into the schools to share why they vote and how they express their democratic freedoms.
- Host a Career Day, a dedicated time when older people can go into schools and share about 1) their career paths, 2) the choices they faced, 3) the people who have mentored and sponsored them and given them tools and resources to be successful.
- Hold a World Café conversation-style gathering. World Café facilitators pose questions about relevant topics and then, in small groups, participants brainstorm

answers. Each group reports back to the large group with their top two or three responses. The leadership team then gathers the answers and decides on next steps. It would be helpful to do this with IG pairs of facilitators at each table where the question is about a topic facing the community.

7. Communication and Information

Determine the most effective ways to publicize information for all parties.

- Invite middle, high school, or college students to host afterschool or weekend workshops to teach older people how to effectively use technology.
 - Create a project-based partnership between senior organizations and local high schools, vocational technical schools and colleges. An oral history project has proven to be popular, and the media, history or political science departments are great places to start!
 - Pick a current event or issue to promote dialogue. Create posters or flyers about relevant issues, and perhaps host a forum for a discussion or a local cable TV show. Consider how social media might be used to publicize events and initiatives.
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8. Community and Health Services

Everyone has a right to receive affordable health services.

- Invite vocational tech, community college and medical school students to provide free check-ups to older adults in their housing or at the senior center. Services could include blood pressure or blood sugar checks as well as podiatry clinics.
 - Hold a health fair with an IG focus. Have educational and fun booths with activities and screenings. Create a mural for people to share healthy habits.
 - Lead an IG program in the schools to explore aging as a lifelong journey and identify steps to promote wellbeing across the lifespan — Bridges: Lifelong Journeys, for high school and college students with active older adults, does just that!
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Intergenerational engagement is more than a subcategory of social inclusion or civic participation and engagement. “Intergenerational” is a way of life that fosters our vision that every child and older adult will experience the richness of intergenerational relationships and interdependence.