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Quick Tips: Establishing Intergenerational Service-Learning Programs

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Recommended Citation

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Service Learning, General. 330.
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Elements of Service-Learning

- ▶ **Participant Ownership**—participants have a voice in designing, implementing, and/or evaluating the project.
- ▶ **Genuine Community Need**—it is important that the project meet a need that is genuine, significant, and recognized by both the participants and the community they serve.
- ▶ **Project Preparation**—provide for participants needed information such as specific training, orientation, or research before you begin.
- ▶ **Connection to Learning**—participants understand they are learning something new through involvement in the project, new knowledge, skills, etc.
- ▶ **Partnerships**—organizations other than your own are involved in the project.
- ▶ **Reflection**— occurs before, during, and after the project.
- ▶ **Celebration**—there is some type of recognition for participants and recipients of the service.

Recruiting Participants

Recruitment is easy if you . . .

Identify goals for the program.

- ▲ What is the purpose of the program?
- ▲ What types of activities will participants engage in?
- ▲ How often will participants meet and for how long?
- ▲ What will the program look like if it is successful?

Determine the characteristics you want participants to have.

- ▲ Do they need specific skills, background, or interests?
- ▲ Does the project require youth of a particular age range?

Identify benefits for both groups of participants.

- ▲ Learn new skills.
- ▲ Increase connectedness to community.
- ▲ Feel productive.
- ▲ Address social issues in new ways.
- ▲ Make new friends.
- ▲ Make a difference in the community.

Form partnerships with youth organizations.

- ▲ Youth Development Organizations such as Boys & Girls Clubs and Scout Troops
- ▲ Head Start Programs
- ▲ Faith-Based organizations with a Focus on Youth
- ▲ Colleges & Universities

Provide Training

While specifics of each program may vary, training should . . .

- ▲ Introduce seniors to the philosophy of service-learning as well as the objectives and structure of the program.
- ▲ Help them understand the scope and limits of their role.
- ▲ Explore attitudes toward aging and youth, break down age-related stereotypes, and sensitize participants for working with people in a different stage of life.
- ▲ Help seniors develop the skills and confidence they need to perform well in the program.
- ▲ Provide information about the particular group of children, youth, or families with whom they will be working.
- ▲ Clarify expectations, address and reduce fears, and answer questions seniors may have about the program.
- ▲ Provide information about program support systems and community resources available.
- ▲ Build relationships among seniors and program staff.
- ▲ Get seniors and youth excited about the program.

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And Don't Forget . . .

- ✓ **Draw on Past Experiences**
- ✓ **Make it Interactive**
- ✓ **Have Fun !**

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Keep in mind the barriers that keep people from participating in Intergenerational Programs

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Myths and misperceptions about the other age group ✓ Lack of confidence in ability to contribute ✓ Limited knowledge of Service-Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Physical limitations ✓ Financial issues ✓ Transportation ✓ Fear for safety |
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Helpful Hints for Facilitating Intergenerational Programs

- ▶ **Provide sensitivity training.** Sensitivity training prepares both younger and older participants to work more effectively with one another. Discuss stereotypes about each age group and ways to overcome those stereotypes before your first intergenerational mixer.
- ▶ **Choose your venue wisely.** Have intergenerational mixers in a place that is comfortable and convenient for both seniors and youth. Be sensitive to hearing and visual requirements of all participants.
- ▶ **Make people comfortable.** Be sensitive to accommodation requirements of all participants (hearing, vision, handicapped parking).
- ▶ **Begin each session with an icebreaker activity.** Icebreakers help participants interact informally and feel comfortable with each other.
- ▶ **Encourage people to talk, but don't force them!** Provide plenty of opportunities for seniors and youth to get to know each other, share feelings and develop trust both formally and informally.
- ▶ **Have fun!** Intergenerational programs should be enjoyable. Make sure seniors and youth are enjoying themselves.

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serving as the Atlantic Regional Center
for the National Service-Learning Exchange,
a project of the
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