

# CONNECTING ALL AGES

How to Build Intergenerational Programs





Many organizations have begun to include intergenerational programming in their event schedules—and with good reason.

These events are designed to simultaneously appeal to children, teenagers, adults and the elderly in order to build bridges across generational age gaps, while also drawing interest to your program and increasing attendance.

Intergenerational activities help connect people of all ages through common interests and shared experiences. Incorporating events and activities that appeal to various age groups helps build interconnectedness in your community by encouraging collaboration, dispelling age-based stereotypes and sharing resources from across the lifespan.

Your program can facilitate these connections by providing opportunities for your community to come together. Here are five ideas for intergenerational events your program can easily implement that can help foster the relationships across generations.

**1. Family Movie Nights**

Give younger community members a chance to explore films from before their time, while older generations revisit childhood favorites or explore newer films they may not be familiar with. Pair your movie night with an outdoor picnic at a local park or drive-in theater, and consider showing a film that demonstrates the power of intergenerational bonding, such as *Up* or *The Karate Kid*. You can even begin the night with some icebreakers to emphasize the advantages of cross-generation interaction.

**2. Community Service Events**

Local volunteer opportunities appeal to all age groups as an opportunity to do good, all while reinforcing the mutual values of the community. First, consider what your area could benefit from, such as litter cleanup, public gardening, tree planting, local school repairs or animal shelter support. You can even have a public or online forum to gauge which local causes generate the most interest.

Once the endeavor is decided, collect volunteers from all age groups by marketing your event through a variety of methods: post on social media, send announcements by both email and traditional post and display flyers in public spaces.

**3. Book Fairs**

Bring members of every generation together over an exchange of used books. Organizing a public book fair provides older members of the community with an opportunity to pass on their favorite books to younger generations, while the younger members will enjoy discovering new favorites of their own. Book fairs also create a market for local authors to promote their works to the community. Bring members of all ages together by hosting your book fair in a public space, like a park or gymnasium, to make access easy for your community.

**4. Craft Shows**

Working together in a shared, creative activity provides an easy platform for multiple generations to connect. Select a craft that is accessible to a wide variety of ages, such as painting or pottery, then have participants work together through the steps you’ve provided.

Alternatively, plan a craft show that will bring your community together and showcase local artistic talent. For this larger event, you will need to secure a venue and coordinate with local artists and vendors to create and advertise what you have planned, but both young and old will love perusing the aisles of artisan products available.

**5. Group Exercise Events**

Organizing group workout sessions that are appealing to all ages is an excellent way to include a range of age groups and promote healthy habits. Partner with a yoga or tai-chi teacher to lead a weekly session for young and old participants, or establish a non-competitive 5K or Color Run that supports a local charity or cause. Not only will this facilitate interaction across age groups, but it will help encourage healthy choices and a love for exercise in your community.

**Staying Active at All Ages**

When your program offers activities that appeal to a variety of different personalities and ages, you are also encouraging the mentorship, interaction and connection that benefit every age group. In return, these offerings help you reach a broader audience, increasing registration and engagement with your program.

Learn how ACTIVE Network can easily help you manage your program offerings.

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