

Intergenerational Projects

The Problems

An increasing number of children are in child care at an early age. In the United States, more than 60 percent of preschool children and some 78 percent of school-age children have mothers who work outside the home. In Canada, 70 percent of preschoolers' mothers work, and 86 percent of mothers return to work within a year of child bearing. At the same time, more children are in single-parent families.

These trends have resulted in more child-care centers and home-based providers, but the need for child-care is greater than the available supply. In addition, the child care centers have difficulty attracting or retaining trained workers because of low pay and limited career opportunities. In the United States, almost half the child care employees leave their positions each year.

At the same time, the number of persons age 65 and older is rising. Thanks to medical advances, better nutrition, and more exercise, they enter this age typically more healthy and active than did seniors only a few years

ago. Many older people want to have productive roles in society, and a large number would like part-time employment.

Benefits of Intergenerational Child Care

Programs that involve adults in child care can help fulfill two needs. They provide meaningful activity--and possibly employment--for older workers, and add to the number of adult care providers for children. These programs develop the sense of self-worth of many older workers, giving them opportunities to socialize outside their age group, share their knowledge, and learn new activities. Similarly, young children have opportunities--often for the first time--to talk to, learn from, and work with older adults. They overcome fears, discard stereotypes, give and receive affection, work together, and learn about a time their parents don't even remember.

Kiwanis Involvement

A Kiwanis club can serve as the catalyst and recruiter of support for an intergenerational child-care program. This will not be a project for members by themselves to set up and manage. Rather, the club will have to find the experts in two different fields—children and older adults—and help find the resources for them to develop a joint program.

Kiwanis involvement must start with an analysis of needs in the community. This will involve surveys or interviews with community experts:

- ☐ Directors of child-care and senior citizen programs
- ☐ Residents of retirement villages
- ☐ Other older adults
- ☐ The community's child-care resource and referral agency
- ☐ Employment experts
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ Adult education programs

- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Other older adults.

This research effort could be a project for a university professor or students in a gerontology program.

A successful intergenerational child-care program requires strong leadership in the child-care program that is committed to working with the larger community. Of course, there must be interest among older adults. Also, the club needs to identify those resources serving the older-adult community that can support such a program.

Creating a Partnership

By the end of the needs analysis process, the club will have most of the members for a local partnership on intergenerational child care. If there is a general agreement that an intergenerational program should be developed, the club and other members of the partnership will want to recruit additional partners among civic groups, the business community, government agencies, and possible funding organizations.

The partners involved will have to determine what kind of intergenerational program they wish to develop and how it will be supported. Programs could range from weekly visitation programs to regular employment of older adults as child-care workers. Costs will vary accordingly. Generally, the intergenerational program requires a coordinator (part-time salary), training materials, additional supplies, transportation, meals, and either appreciation awards or

salaries for the older workers. Wheelchair accessibility, comfortable chairs for senior citizens, and play equipment they can handle may be additional concerns. Space requirements will vary with the number of participants.

Program Design

The way any program is designed will depend on local conditions. There seem to be three basic types:

Weekly visits—Programs that provide one or two visits from (or to) older adults each week can enrich the lives of children and adults. This approach does not place the seniors citizens in supervisory roles but pairs them with children for specific activities that are generally planned by the staff. In some cases, an older adult will bring a skill or activity to share with the group. Such a program can involve a larger number of—and less active—senior citizens. It requires a staff person to plan and oversee activities, a coordinator for the seniors who recruits participants (at a facility or in the community), and a transportation system that brings the adults to the children or the reverse.

Daily volunteer support—Programs that regularly bring older volunteers into child-care settings will usually provide support to the child-care program. In some cases, multiple volunteers will be trained for the same role in the classroom and will handle the job on different days of the week. In other cases, one or two volunteers will participate for a few hours each day of the week, accepting a range of supervisory roles. Such volunteer

workers need thorough training—like any other regular volunteer or part-time employee. The program director will need to make sure the volunteers are recognized or shown appreciation for their generous support of the program.

Transportation may be an issue.

Part-time employment—Programs that employ older adults make the greatest commitment to intergenerational care. Training and transportation concerns need to be addressed with daily volunteers. The costs of this approach probably will require funding from government programs or foundations.

Whichever model is chosen, the purpose of the program must be well defined, with clear goals and quantifiable objectives. For instance, a weekly visitation program could have a goal of better communication between generations. The objectives could specify the number of participants and visitations or could seek an increase in the length of time children and adults interact during a visit. Developing these measurements helps to show that the program is successful and may make it easier to seek funding.

Funding

Acquiring start-up money for an intergenerational project can be as simple as two community organizations informally agreeing to use money from two small projects to support one larger project or as complex as researching and writing a grant proposal for a private endowment.

Local funding can support some of the less expensive intergenerational

programs. Funds might be shifted from an existing programs to a new one--or from one social service agency to another. Programs that support child care, help at-risk families, provide general social services, and manage projects for the elderly all are potential funding partners.

Applying for financial assistance from local government departments, or grants from local foundations, can generate larger sums of money for more ambitious projects. Any number of partner organizations may apply for a single grant for a project that will serve a significant number of citizens. Funding by local government can sometimes be more creative: in one community senior citizens work in the public school system to earn credits that help pay their property taxes.

Local government departments can recommend the most effective ways to approach state and/or federal government units for enough money to initiate programs that serve larger audiences--or that serve as models for state and/or federal programs.

Major corporations have foundations that provide funding for many different kinds of worthwhile community projects, often related to the corporate industry. If you hear of any that support intergenerational projects, check with the nearest branch office and request the name of a contact and an address or phone number.

Lists of private foundations can be found in libraries, as well as in some of the books on intergenerational child care listed at the back of this bulletin.

Actively seek out "in-kind" donations. If a business owner offers to supply free remodeling

materials or voluntary skilled labor instead of writing a check, consider the donation as good as money in the bank. Initial support can generate continuing assistance for the life of the project if the donor believes in the spirit of your intergenerational project.

Let the staff of the child-care and older adult programs make the final choices about initiating requests for funding. Let Kiwanians use their contacts and resources to expand the available options.

Club Support

Once the club has helped to launch an effort for an intergenerational program, there are several ways to continue support, leaving the experts in child care to control the in-class efforts.

Fund Raising—If club members can provide support with writing grant proposals and applications to government programs, the help will certainly be appreciated. Most clubs, however, will feel more comfortable raising funds in other ways. The club can take charge of canvassing support from businesses, churches, synagogues, and individuals. Or, it could undertake a traditional fund-raiser, such as selling tickets to a sports event or dinner, conducting a raffle, or selling a product. The fund-raiser should be promoted as benefiting the intergenerational program.

Advertising—The intergenerational program may need assistance in recruiting senior citizens who want to participate. The club could help advertise the program by developing posters or printing a brochure. These could

be distributed to doctor's offices, drug stores, grocery stores, shopping malls, adult education centers, libraries, senior centers, beauty shops, and churches. Print ads or press releases can be provided to local papers or to churches and senior centers for use in their publications. Public service announcements can be provided to radio and television stations. This advertising needs to emphasize the rewards of caring for young children.

Personal Recruitment—

Another route to recruiting is personal contact. Club members can communicate with friends and neighbors about this opportunity for senior citizens. They can make presentations at meetings of older adults at churches, activity centers, and retirement communities. The club could sponsor an open house at the child-care center for older members of the community.

Children in the program can take home notices to grandparents. Peer recruiting is likely to be more effective, so, once the program is operating, the participants should be used in recruitment.

Transportation—One of the greatest challenges for intergenerational programs is convenient, safe transportation for the senior participants. A club could set up a car pool run by members, fund taxi rides, or arrange for an additional stop by a mini-bus program.

Recognition—If the intergenerational program uses senior volunteers, there should be recognition for their contribution. The club could provide plaques and present them at a club meeting, inviting parents of the children at the center to attend too. It may be more convenient for the volunteers and families if the honoring event

is a dinner. Teachers and children at the child-care center may suggest a more personal gift instead of a plaque. Another method of recognition could be paying registration or travel costs for a senior volunteer to attend a conference on child care.

Participation—The club may have members who can support the intergenerational program by volunteering to participate. This may be particularly helpful when the program is first starting.

Program Design—The club could purchase materials listed below for use by the child-care center in developing the intergenerational program. The center's director may want to learn more by visiting other intergenerational programs, and the club could assist with travel costs or providing assistance at the child-care center that day.

Training—All care providers need training to be effective, and the older adults recruited will be no exception. The club could supplement the usual training provided by the center to new employees and volunteers by purchasing videotapes or a printed training program, or by sponsoring a series of presentations by child-care experts from a nearby university. In addition, the children and other workers at the center will need to be educated about the limitations aging may have imposed on some of the senior citizens, from difficulty with handling small objects to being hard of hearing. Preparing both groups can help them understand and appreciate one another.

Evaluation—As with any service project, it is important to evaluate the effects of an intergenerational program. If it is not achieving its goals, the program

needs to be changed or the goals re-evaluated. The best evaluation models involve a pre-test of some sort, determining the attitudes or behaviors before the program begins and six to 12 months after the program has been implemented. The evaluation can address changes in attitude by children, older adults, teachers and parents. Or, it can look at observed changes in the behavior of children and seniors, both in terms of activities and the process of the activities. This evaluation also could include a survey of parents to see if behavior at home has changed. The club can support the evaluation process by paying for the printing of an evaluation questionnaire, having club members perform interviews, or arranging for someone from a local university to conduct the evaluation. The club could also assist in publicizing the evaluation, to help the community learn about the program and support additional recruitment.

Sources of Information

Generations United
1333 H Street, NW, Ste 500 W
Washington, DC 20005
202/289-3979
Fax: 202/289-3925
www.gu.org

Provides an excellent descriptive list of intergenerational materials available from various sources and a strong list of links.

United Generations Ontario (UGO)
1185 Eglinton Avenue East,
#604B
Toronto, Ontario M3C 3C6
Canada
416/426-7115
Fax: 416/426-7421
info@unitedgenerations.ca
www.unitedgenerations.ca

United Generations (linking young and old)—Contact between the generations benefits both the young and the old. While outcomes of a given program are unique, certain benefits can be anticipated from a well planned intergenerational program.

National Aging Information Center (US)
Administration on Aging
330 Independence Avenue, SW -
Room 4656
Washington, DC 20201
202/619-0724
Fax: 202/401-7620
www.aoa.dhhs.gov

The Web site provides an extensive list of links on intergenerational programs.

National Children, Youth and Families at Risk Initiative
Department of Agriculture (US)
www.nnfr.org/igen/cprog.htm

The CYFERNet Web site is a resource provided by the US extension service. The Web page listed leads to pages that descriptions of four intergenerational day care programs and a dozen programs that encourage communication between generations.

Rainbow Bridge
P.O. Box 12675
Denver, CO 80212-0675
303/623-1176
Fax: 303/623-2152
rainbowbridge@cmconline.com
www.rainbowb.org

Rainbow Bridge is a non-profit organization that initiates and cultivates ongoing relationships between nursing home elders and youth, families, individuals, and community organizations.

**Illinois Department on Aging
Intergenerational Programs**
421 East Capitol Ave., #100
Springfield, IL 62701-1789
800/252-8966
317/785-3356
Fax: 217/785-4477
www.state.il.us/aging

The agency promotes a number of intergenerational programs.

**National Child Care Information
Center (NCCIC)**
243 Church St., NW, 2nd Floor
Vienna, VA 22180
800/616-2242
Fax: 800/716-2242
TTY: 800/516-22
www.nccic.org

Has materials on seniors as members of the child-care workforce.

**Wisconsin Intergenerational
Network (WIN)**
PO Box 6664
Madison, WI 53716
608/224-0606
Fax: 608/224-0607
E-mail:
bonitaschmidt@yahoo.com
www.win.org/resources.htm

To promote intergenerational understanding through programs, education and advocacy.

**American Association of Retired
Persons (AARP)**
Grandparent Information Center
601 E Street, NW, B5-Room 270
Washington, DC 20049
202/434-2440
Fax: 202/434-6474
www.aarp.org/grandparents

AARP provides information for grandparents who are raising grandchildren or who want to have a positive role in their grandchildren's lives. In addition to tip sheets, a newsletter, and publications, they provide links to a number of other organizations with information for grandparents.



Sample Needs Survey Letters

Kiwanis Club of
Harrington
4242 Apple Street
Harrington, WA 92461
October 15, 2001

Rita Feynman
Peter Rabbit Day Care
112 Central Avenue
Harrington, WA 92461

Dear Ms. Feynman:

The Kiwanis Club of Harrington is researching the possible benefits and local interest in an intergenerational program that would involve older adults with children in child care. We would very much like to discuss with you the questions listed below.

- Do you feel intergenerational programs benefit young children?
- Are you aware of any existing opportunities for young children to interact with older adults?
- Would you like to have some form of intergenerational program in your child-care center?
- Is there a need for reliable child-care workers in the community?
- Could older adults--either as volunteers or employees--work in a center like yours?
- Would you be interested in having a group of older adults shared in partnered activities with children in your center?
- Can you recommend other people in the community whom we should consult?
- Would you be interested in working with us in developing an intergenerational program?

I will call you next Wednesday to arrange for an appointment to discuss these questions. I look forward to talking to you.

Sincerely,

Rick Fermi, Chairman
Intergenerational Committee

Young Children: Priority One Committee
Kiwanis Club of Wachussetts
2314 Alfred Boulevard
Wachussetts, MA 99503
April 23, 2001

Neils Bohr, Director
Einstein Senior Center
109 Apple Way
Wachussetts, MA 99503

Dear Mr. Bohr:

The Kiwanis Club of Wachussetts is investigating the need and potential for an intergenerational program that would involve older adults with preschoolers in child-care centers. We would like to learn your views on such a program. Here are the questions we have for you:

- Currently, are there opportunities for young children to interact with older adults?
- Do you feel there would be value in setting up such a program?
- Are there senior citizens who use your center who would enjoy regular activities with preschoolers?
- Are there seniors who would be willing to volunteer at the child-care center on a regular basis?
- Would you be willing to work with us in developing an intergenerational program?
- Can you recommend other people in the community with whom we should consult?

We would greatly appreciate it if you would respond to these questions and send your answers the address above or call one of the members of the Young Children committee:

Max Planck 838-0397
Mary Heisenberg 923-4582
Edwina Rutherford 844-4120

Thank you for helping address the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

Edwina Rutherford
Young Children Chair

Sample Coalition Invitation Letter

Edward Teller
President
Bank of Whiting
1335 Indianapolis Blvd.
Whiting, IN 46200

Dear Mr. Teller:

The Kiwanis Club of Whiting has researched the potential benefits of instituting an intergenerational child-care program and concluded that such a program should be developed in our community. Now, we need the advice of business leaders like you and the support of other civic organizations. We have arranged for a meeting on Tuesday, November 8, at the Whiting Community Center, and we would appreciate it if you would attend.

During the meeting, the experts we have consulted on child care and senior citizens will describe the benefits of an intergenerational program. We have invited representatives from city and county government, the two local universities, churches, synagogues, service clubs, and several local businesses. Most of these organizations will need to participate in a partnership effort to bring about an effective intergenerational program. We hope that you will participate in this partnership because we need your expertise and business acumen.

I will call you to confirm your attendance at the meeting.

Sincerely,

Roberta

President,

Oppenheimer

Kiwanis Club of Whiting

Sample Advertisement/poster (use a picture if possible)



Do you enjoy playing games with young children?

Do you know stories that delight young children?

Would you like a few extra hugs each week?

Are you 60 years of age or older?

Sign up for the Golden Volunteer Intergenerational Program.

Golden VIP will provide training, transportation, and an opportunity to work with children 2, 3, or 5 times a week.

Call 877-2945 for more information.



Program Development Department
Kiwanis International
3636 Woodview Trace
Indianapolis, IN 46268-3196 USA
317/875-8755, ext. 212 Worldwide
1-800/549-2647 North America
317/879-0204 Fax
service@kiwanis.org
www.kiwanis.org