



**WILSON
HOUSE**

United Methodist Retirement Center

Intergenerational connections...

Why are they important to children and Older Adults?

The concept of intergenerational care is founded on the belief that intentionally bringing the generations together benefits both. This model of care for seniors and children was popularized in the 1990's and has been growing ever since. Intergenerational Programs are social vehicles that offer younger and older generations the opportunities to interact with each other on an on-going, mutually beneficial basis through planned activities and interaction.

Research suggests that children find unconditional love and unique acceptance in their relationships with older adults, particularly grandparents, and this benefits them emotionally and mentally. Grandparents are very often role models and mentors for younger generations. They are also historians -- teaching values, instilling ethnic heritage, and passing on family traditions.

The typical American family today looks very differently than it did 50 years ago. In many cases grandparents have not been a big part of their grandchildren's lives because they live so far away from them. It's for this reason that intergenerational programs are so important to the development of children as well as for the health and wellbeing of older adults.



Benefits for Children:

- Preschool children involved in intergenerational programs had higher personal/social developmental scores than preschool children involved in non-intergenerational programs.
- Children who regularly interact with older adults have enhanced perceptions of older adults, persons with disabilities and nursing homes in general.
- In schools where older adults were a regular fixture (volunteers working 15 hours per week) children had improved reading scores and fewer behavioral problems than their peers at other schools.
- Children have enhanced self-esteem and independence because seniors help present more familial relationships and provide a home-like setting.
- The vast majority of parents surveyed believe the intergenerational program is beneficial for their children.



Benefits for Older Adults:

- For older adults, regular interaction with children results in an atmosphere that is more "family/home-like" and promotes social enrichment and a renewed interest in others.
- Older adults who regularly volunteered with children burned 20% more calories per week, experienced fewer falls, were less reliant on canes, and performed better than peers on a memory test.
- Seniors have the opportunity to serve as nurturers, mentors, historians, and storytellers. They gain a sense of satisfaction and giving back as they share their talents with this younger generation.
- 90% of family caregivers indicated that their family member benefited from the intergenerational program.
- (97%) of adult participants in a shared site indicated that they benefited from the intergenerational program and reported feeling happy, interested, loved, younger, and needed. The most common aspects of the program that they enjoyed were the children's playfulness and affection.

Intergenerational programs in long term care communities are so important to both the children as well as to the older adults who live there. The children's lives are filled with the unconditional love and attention that the residents, or Grandma and Grandpa as they are known in the communities, freely give. The laughter and joy that children pass on without even trying are exactly what these "Grandmas and Grandpas" need to live healthy, meaningful lives. Early childhood development sets the course for the rest of a child's life. 80% of the brains neural connections are forged by age 3 and 90% by age 5 so allowing memories to be created during those formative years with an intergenerational program will last a lifetime!

Wilson House Residential Care Facility is an intergenerational community where generations learn and grow together. 1625 Center St. NE • Salem, Oregon 97301. To learn more, visit www.umresalem.org or call 503.585.6111