



Sharing Across Generations

It's a largely untapped resource that offers a wide array of benefits. It builds understanding, fosters creativity, strengthens communities, and meets important social needs. It doesn't cost much; it actually can save money. And it can be lots of fun! It's called intergenerational sharing—a simple and timely idea that seemed to happen more naturally in the past, particularly among certain cultural groups.

Due to our busy lives and because extended family members often live far apart, the young and old have fewer opportunities for interaction. Children attend school and play with youngsters their own age; they seldom mingle in adult work settings; and elderly individuals often frequent and live in age-segregated environments. We have created a society where a mix of generations is too often absent.

Yet children and elders have many needs in common and have much to share. All we have to do is bring them together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

You are wise and experienced . . . Share your experiences with younger people. . . . Gently educate them in the priorities of life only you can impart. Simply love and enjoy them, and allow them to love and enjoy you. —Rebbe Schneerson

Recently we have seen a growing number of intergenerational programs and activities. Most are easy-to-do and can be started on a small scale:



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
♦ OLDER PERSONS ♦**

Latchkey children who call elderly volunteers at an appointed time to check in and talk; when a child does not call, the volunteer initiates a process to ensure the child is OK. ✧ Older teens providing services such as transportation and yard work so that neighboring elders can stay in their homes as long as possible. ✧ An oral history project where students tape record interviews with older persons. ✧ A mentoring program where mature elders share spiritual wisdom and guidance with young adults. ✧ A daycare center in a retirement community where both elders and youngsters enjoy interacting.

What kinds of intergenerational programs would work well in your community? In daily life, how might you promote sharing across generations?



Prepared by **Sam Quick**, Human Development & Family Relations Specialist, University of Kentucky.

Copyright © 1999 University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Assistant Director for Family and Consumer Sciences, 206 Scovell Hall, Lexington, KY 40546-0064. Although this publication is copyrighted, you are free to reproduce it in its entirety for non-profit, educational purposes. *Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.*