5 Easy Ways You Can Bring Generations Together

We know that intergenerational engagement has tremendous benefits for young and old alike. So what can your senior center to do boost intergenerational connection? Generation to Generation (Gen2Gen) -- Encore.org’s campaign to mobilize 1 million people over 50 to help kids thrive and a proud partner of the National Institute of Senior Centers -- offers these five easy, do-it-yourself ideas.

1. **Plan an intergenerational walk.**

Walking is something everyone can enjoy – whether on their own feet or in a carriage or wheelchair – and being outside enjoying nature and fresh air can be invigorating. And any time is a good time for taking a walk.

[Bridges Together](bridgestogether.org) offers a tip sheet -- “Walking: An Intergenerational Recipe for Success” -- with suggestions on connecting with local schools and homeschool organizations or local community groups like the the Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and others. Take a look for great ways to make your walk a rich intergenerational experience.

2. **Host a salon that leads to change.**

A salon is an old-fashioned word for a social gathering bringing together people from all walks of life. Why not host an intergenerational salon? Salons can be “two-way wisdom bridges,” built on multiple generations’ assets and collective strengths, with the goal of empowering the next generation to be change-makers.

[Global Co Lab](globalcolab.net) offers tips for hosting salons that connect multiple generations to explore important issues - - and generate real, concrete action.
3. Host a watch party, inspire mentors.

Many movies feature stories about intergenerational mentoring relationships. Host a mentoring movie night at your center or in your home. Invite people to watch a great mentoring movie together and discuss it afterward. Think Karate Kid, Star Wars, To Sir With Love, and so many others! Ask your center’s volunteer coordinator, current volunteers and organizations that welcome older volunteers to speak about local ways to make a difference.


4. Create a literacy center in your laundromat.

Wash time can be reading time! Connect with your local laundromat owner to see if you can start a literacy corner, where older adults can read to children. Set up the corner with donated books and a comfortable chair.

Too Small to Fail, an initiative of the Clinton Foundation, can help you with guides and tips. Through their partnership with the LaundryCares Foundation, you may soon be able to get a starter kit with essential items like books, shelves, a rug, etc. Get started at the Talking is Teaching website (TalkingisTeaching.org).

5. Create something cool for kids.

How about building a Little Free Library outside your center or in a nearby park? Anyone can take a book or leave a book, making these little libraries a heartfelt neighborhood resource.

Or come together to build Birthday Parties in a Box. Fill a shoebox with all the party essentials -- cake mix, candles, streamers, a book, or a little stuffed animal -- and send it off to a young child who may not have these resources.

For more info, see Little Free Library (littlefreelibrary.org) or The Birthday Giving Project at Family-to-Family (family-to-family.org).

All these links and more are available on the Gen2Gen website: iamgen2gen.org/take-action. Send questions to hello@gen2gen.org.