

Motivations and Benefits of Participation in Intergenerational Events and Activities

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INTRODUCTION

- **Context & Gap:** Both older and younger people have reported increased levels of loneliness and social isolation.¹ Having friends of different ages has been linked to better brain health,² improved well-being,³ and enhanced personal growth⁴ for both older and younger people. However, opportunities for intergenerational interactions are limited in most communities.⁵
- **Purpose:** In partnership with Age-Friendly Oxford (AFO), this project explored what drives individuals to attend intergenerational events and what benefits they report afterwards.
- **Impacts:** Insights will inform Ohio's Age-Friendly State initiative, aiming to increase connections between older and younger community members, enhance volunteer recruitment, and encourage younger participants to seek careers in the aging network to address workforce shortages.

METHODS

1. **Setting:** Two types of events in the greater Oxford, OH area (Intergenerational Game Nights and Intergenerational Meets-ups).
2. **Data Collection:** Attendance tracking, post-event survey, and participant interviews
3. **Analysis:** Participant description, frequencies, and thematic qualitative analysis of open-ended survey and interview responses to identify motivations for attending,⁶ benefits of attending,⁷ and suggestions for event improvement.
4. **Sample Size:** 27 unduplicated participants; 46 survey responses; 4 individual interviews

Participation in intergenerational events resulted in **learning something new from someone older or younger, feeling more connected to people from other generations, and feeling happier.**

"...I have a lot more similarities to other age groups than I thought I did."
- Evan (12)

"...it's one thing to sit and have a meal and talk to someone. It's another where you're all interacting with a game, and you're all doing something, and you're occupied...it just helps people loosen up and have a little more fun." - Jackson (55)

"Age didn't seem to matter when we were sitting around the table....We all had something to contribute. and we all had different experiences, so it was interesting." - Dawn (71)



FINDINGS

- **Attendance:** Two Game Nights (n=24); Two Meet-ups (n=27)
- **Motivations:** Attendees primarily participated for enjoyment and social connection. The most common motivations were having fun, socializing, meeting new people, and feeling part of a community.
- **Benefits:** *Learned something new from someone older or younger* (n=36 agree/strongly agree); *Feel more connected to people from other generations* (n=37 agree/strongly agree); *Feel happier* (n=39 agree/strongly agree)
- **Likelihood of Participating in Future Intergenerational Events:** (n=46 somewhat/ very likely)
- **Suggestions for Event Improvement:** Most common suggestions were better advertising and getting more people to attend.

DISCUSSION

- Attendees overwhelmingly agreed that participating in intergenerational events resulted in them learning something new from someone older or younger, feeling more connected to people from other generations, and feeling happier. All attendees said that they would attend future intergenerational events.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Wide and diverse event publicity
 - Balance of structure and opportunities for individual interactions
- Findings can be shared with Age-Friendly communities, senior centers, adult day services, and long-term care organizations to optimize their intergenerational volunteer and workforce recruitment.

Gratitude to the following organizations for hosting the intergenerational events:



References

