Good Ideas and Strategies for
Enhancing Intergenerational Civic Engagement

From November 2017 FCA Summit Table Rounds

The wide range of ideas generated in Table Round discussions fell into the following overall themes:

Educational resources and older populations

- Establish life-long learning curricula to include multi-generational classroom experiences in middle/high schools, college campuses as well as senior centers. These educational offerings should be interest-focused informed by surveying youth as well as older adults to determine categories such as the arts, sciences, history, and political leadership.
- To promote service among high school-aged Floridians, Bright Futures scholarship community service opportunities should include inter-generational connections including oral history projects.
- Create oral history projects. Get seniors to share stories about how they were growing up
- Boomers moving to college towns to enjoy amenities—this is an opportunity to create intergenerational engagements and retirement developments that foster this
- Need to make connections between college communities (students) and older populations.
- Have NASPA training including making connections
- AASCU as well
- Work to help college students consider connections to older residents (they tend to think about younger people than themselves)
- Work with public schools to facilitate intergenerational efforts
- Arrange inter-local agreements for older residents to use school athletic facilities
- Connect school programs to community residents (e.g., plays, concerts, fairs)
- Form Grandparent PTAs
- Senior prom with youth and seniors.
- Faith communities and their older members are a resource, especially for elementary and middle school populations

1 Thanks to David Klement, Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions, St. Petersberg College, who compiled the “good ideas” generated at Summit roundtables for each of the 4 civic practice areas.
• Manatee Library- included a large size chess set for kids. Also had an older men’s chess club. The Chess club is teaching kids on Saturday mornings.
• Story Corps NPR- encourage young people to interview older people over Thanksgiving and other holidays (“Great Thanksgiving Lesson”, archive storycorps.org). Record any issue and then archive with Library of Congress. A was to start intergenerational dialogue. (can download app).
• "The Florida Family Album"
• Atlanta History Center- has a booth where anyone can go in and record what they know about an issue that was prompted by the display.
• To address the challenges developing connections in rural communities, create agricultural, gardening, wildlife protection, pet care and environmental preservation projects organized by Agriculture Extension, 4-H and Future Farmers organizations.

Multi-generational housing and public spaces
• Public spaces for all ages together are needed to recapture good model to work inter-generationally.
• Design public spaces with elder and youth in mind- check in with both in surveying what the community needs are.
• Use existing infrastructure/forums for community forums to specifically provide safe venue to address fears between age groups.
• In Holland: student housing is combined with assisted living to foster intergenerational engagement.
• Intergenerational zoning ordinance to provide incentives for developers to create affordable multi-generational communities (i.e., density bonus for developer).
• Highlight the builder/developer/planner visionaries who are taking the risks and building communities that encourage intergenerational interaction.
• Homebuilders award for taking risks and creating affordable housing.
• Dealing with deed restrictions and zoning issues that interfere with multi-generational households
• Talk with municipalities, APA, homeowner associations
• Mapping data to identify multi-generational community opportunities for residences and activity centers. Identify a pilot community.
• Age friendly community initiatives, should be all-age friendly, not exclusionary communities.
• Gentrification is an issue dividing older and younger generations.

Mentoring
• Significance of mentors—provide opportunities for older adults to mentor younger ones.
• Immigrant youth literacy program - use older volunteers to help recent immigrant kids with reading and writing skills
• Pair older adults with young writers
• Adult team - older volunteers to teach life skills to teens, such as shaving, balance checkbook, open an account, cook, home repairs, etc.
• Reverse mentoring: have young teach/help older citizens how to do on-line banking
• Younger generation can help older citizens understand how to protect themselves from online scams - basic email and internet safety.
• Within university setting, grad students with undergrads, etc.; teach mentorship at earlier age.
• Acknowledge technology’s role in generational gap
• Have a “tech table” at public library for young people to teach seniors how to use devices
• Build strong bridges between teen/young adult-focused service clubs and community service organizations such as Zonta, Kiwanis, Rotary.
• Have seniors meet with pre-voting young people or new voters to discuss issues.
  ▪ WWII vets—shrinking population, need to be utilized in schools.

Age Segregation
• Create community conversations which promote involvement in strategies which reduce segregation of age groups and enhance integration through projects such as community gardens, mentoring and civic organization service opportunities.
• Need to bring together in multicultural, multi generation community conversations
• Older people need younger people as much as reverse, especially in ALFs. To that end:
  ▪ Get young people to “adopt” grandparents.
  ▪ Read to older adults
  ▪ Provide training for younger people on how to interact with older adults with challenges (dementia, etc.)

Media
• Promote media coverage of model inter-generational programs which highlights the inspiration for creating the idea, implementation strategies, leadership profiles and benefits accrued.
• Balance reliance on technology connections by promoting face-to-face convening to personalize relationship-building and develop cross-cultural common ground opportunities.

Miscellaneous ideas
• Transform “involvement” to “engagement” by including public policy strategies and skills development priorities in all community service programming.
• Transform the language for community service from “volunteerism” to “time philanthropy.” This change of terminology would elevate the importance of the gifts of time and enhance how the community values service.
• Tie together their interests, like pets, work with their passions, so they will engage in intergenerational activities around things they already have a passion for.
  ▪ In Tallahassee the Fraternal Order of Police met with city commission and stakeholders, on agreeing how officers are expected to interact with community, everyone was at the table. Young people’s involvement in campaigns (block-walking, speaking, etc.); creates relationships
  ▪ Get young people involved in campaigns (block-walking, speaking, etc.); creates relationships
  ▪ Let young people do more talking in meetings.

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National organizations

- Encore.Org
- GU.org (Generations United)
- Generation Citizen: notion of helping kids get traction on issues by pairing them with older, influential adults
- Story Corps Big Listen
- Senior Corps engagement to work with high school student service hour activities
- RSVP may be the most promising senior organization
- Generation Citizen: notion of helping kids get traction on issues by pairing them with older, influential adults