

## 5 Ways Communities Can Bring Youth and Seniors Together

Many studies have shown how valuable connections with children and teens can be for seniors. Seniors who interact with youth report improved quality of life and feelings of belonging and self-worth. For some seniors, these relationships can even sharpen memory and improve cognition.

And it's a two-way street – young people have much to gain from interacting with seniors. For example, seniors bring a wealth of life experience to share and can help children better understand the aging process and develop compassion.

Here are a few ways senior living communities can bring youth and seniors together.

### 1. Tap into youth volunteer requirements.

Many public schools, churches, synagogues, and clubs like the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts require teens to complete service hours. Teens can serve your community in a number of ways, including helping with arts and crafts activities, reading to residents with vision impairments, or simply taking the time to have conversations.



### 2. Bring young performers in.

Local schools and private arts programs can be a source for dancers, jazz groups, choirs, and other young performers who are looking for a stage. Students have the opportunity to perform for an appreciative audience while residents can enjoy a command performance.

### 3. Shared service projects.

Consider bringing seniors and teens together to complete a service project. Collecting donations for a local charity, writing letters to military service members, or assembling book bags or care kits are all activities teens and seniors can do together for the good of their community.

### 4. Bring together teens and seniors with common interests.

Do you have residents who like to play chess? Does your local high school have a chess club? Bring them together! The same goes for history buffs, knitters, book worms, or any other activity that lets seniors and teens connect and learn from each other.

### 5. Give seniors a space to share stories.

Seniors have a lifetime of experience and a wealth of stories to share about their childhoods, military service, careers, and families. Partner with schools and community groups to encourage visits from children and teens to give them an opportunity to hear fascinating stories and learn more about how things were decades ago – and to make seniors to feel appreciated and valued.