



# Better Together – Intergenerational programs in care centres and community

LINKages Society of Alberta  
November 12, 2019

# Why are intergenerational programs needed?

Research shows that:

- For the first time in Canadian history, the number of seniors eclipse the number of youth
- 1 in 5 seniors are at risk of isolation due to mobilization and societal changes
- Social isolation is as harmful to your health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day
- Youth are just as at risk of isolation as seniors
- [CBC clip](#)

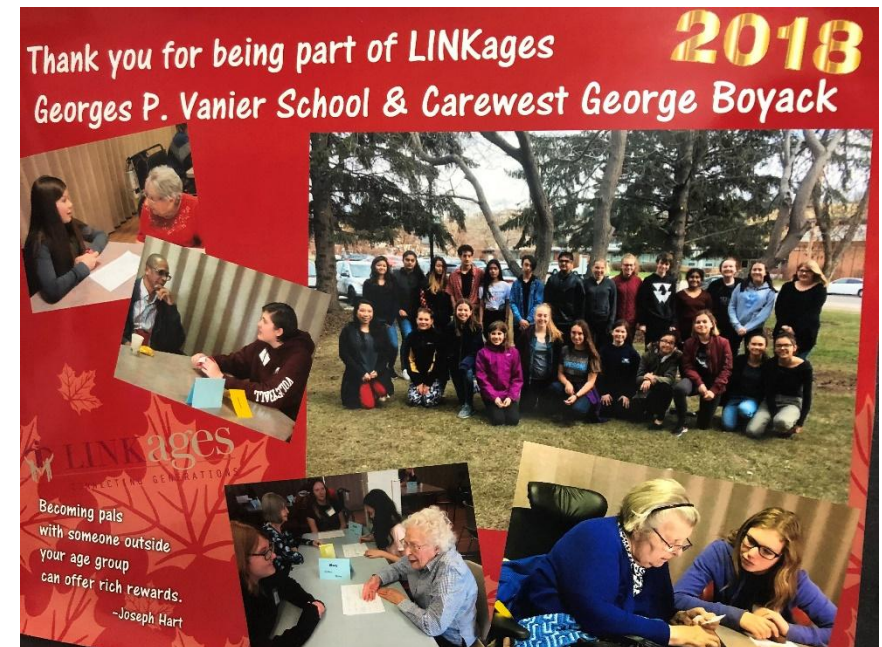
# LINKages Society of Alberta

- Founder Brenda Wood - “Friends of Seniors” began 1994
- 25 years serving Calgary and area
- 15 Care centre/School programs (Memory care, Calgary After School)
- Community programs in all quadrants of the city (Project Inspire, the Performance of your Life)
- Intergenerational Training For Trainers (IG T4T)
- Rural LINK
- Music2LINK
- Serving over 800 seniors and youth annually
- Students volunteer over 15,000 hours each year



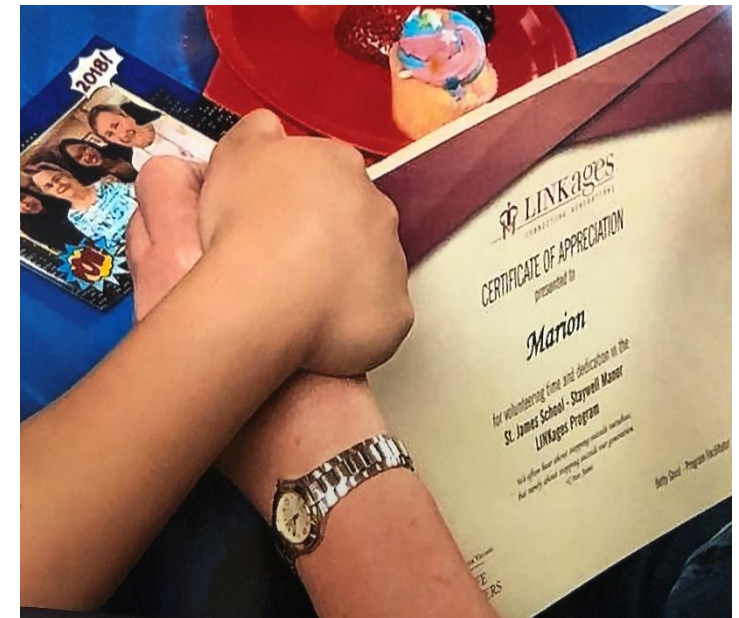
# Core components of intergenerational programming

- First and foremost – Make it fun and engaging
- Based in safety, respect, and shared learning
- Structured programming sets stage for success (at least to start)
- The younger the youth, the more structure required
- Pre-training for youth (aging, boundaries, dementia, compassion, grief and loss)
- Pre-training for senior mentors (teenaged brain, technology, pressure)
- Enough structure to engage, enough open space for discussion
- Longer term (6 months – 3 years +)
- Participant feedback and evaluation (pre, post, sessional)
- Celebrations



# Stronger communities - One intergenerational connection at a time.

- > 80% of seniors AND youth report an increase in self-esteem
- Youth - confidence and interpersonal skills
- Seniors - renewed sense of purpose
- Protective factor for both against isolation, depression, and suicide
- Strong social connections shown to delay onset of dementia and cognitive decline (ie. letter game)



# Stronger communities – One intergenerational connection at a time

- Reduction in bias, racism, ageism (both ways!)
- Increased likelihood to engage with other generations after program ends/multi-year involvement
- Increased inclusion = increased health outcomes
- Next generation of decision makers grow up age-friendly, dementia aware, compassionate, and caring
- Increased awareness of healthy aging/aging well, grief and loss, marginalization and social justice

# Photos from the field



# Common questions and challenges

- One-off visitations
- Unstructured programs – can increase negative impression of youth (the younger the youth, the more structure required)
- Lack of pre-training (ie. behaviours and boundaries)
- Daycares in Care Centres
- Student apartments in senior housing
- Non-voluntary participation versus application-based
- IG programming requires a foundation



# Stronger communities – One intergenerational connection at a time

## Intergenerational options:

- Shared housing/independent living – post-secondary students provide basic care and companionship in exchange
- Low income seniors housing/foster families (Bridge Meadows, Portland)
- Intergenerational camps (Grandparents and students go to University for the weekend)
- Intergenerational learning classrooms (Saskatchewan)
- Digital connections – using technology to reach isolated seniors (shared photography project, learning FaceBook, etc.)

# Ope and Nadine



# Final thoughts

- What else can we learn about the far reaching impacts of intergenerational programming?
- Where else can we try intergenerational programming?  
(Hospice, Hospitals, Home care)
- How can we work better together to ensure a high quality care continuum for senior Albertans?



THANK YOU!

Questions?