

INTERGENERATIONAL SOLUTIONS TO SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS OF SENIORS

Lori N. Marks, PhD

Executive Director, Link Generations

Adjunct Professor, University of Maryland Global Campus

LONELINESS: A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH RISK FACTOR



- COVID-19 has magnified social isolation and loneliness as public health risk factors for all ages
- Pre-Covid, national survey estimated that $\frac{1}{4}$ of people over age 45 feel lonely and $\frac{1}{3}$ of people over age 65 are considered to be socially isolated
- Older adults are more likely to be at risk for loneliness and social isolation

LONELINESS AFFECTS ALL AGE GROUPS

- 61% of 18-25 year-olds surveyed in Oct 2020 reported high levels of feeling lonely
- Young adults and older adults reported to be the two age groups with highest levels of loneliness



CREATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT ADDRESS LONELINESS



“While the negative impact of loneliness cannot be denied, the treatment can be relatively simple. Part of treating loneliness is creating moments for genuine human interaction.”

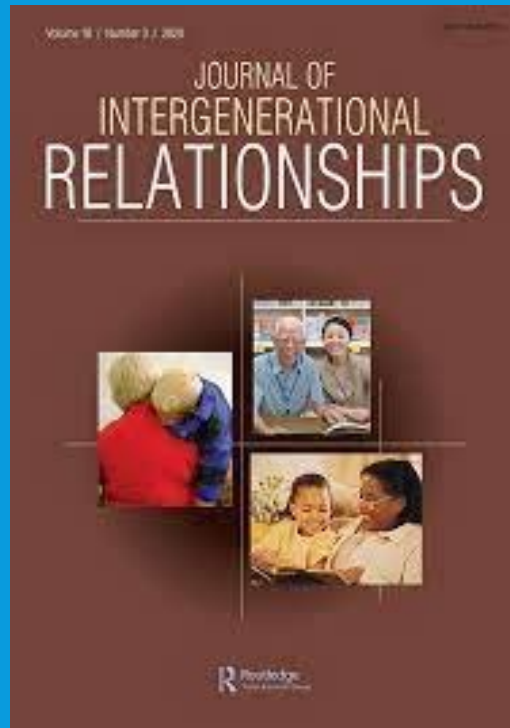
– Surgeon General Vivek Murthy speaking about the “epidemic of loneliness”

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Intentional with specific goals
- Bringing together different ages
- Mutually beneficial
- Planned, purposeful
- 92% believe intergenerational activities can reduce loneliness



EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES FROM RESEARCH



- Positive changes in attitude and comfort level towards each other
- Improved quality of life
- Reduced negative stereotypes of aging and increased empathy
- Increased civic engagement
- Decreased social isolation

WHO BENEFITS? YOUNG CHILDREN

- Young children learn academic lessons, empathy, and compassion when interacting with older adults.
- Example: AARP Experience Corps tutoring K-3



WHO BENEFITS? MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

- Middle school children improve peer relations and problem solving skills
- Example: JCA Heyman Interages Center



WHO BENEFITS? HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- High school students improve self-confidence and mental health.
- Example: Link Generations

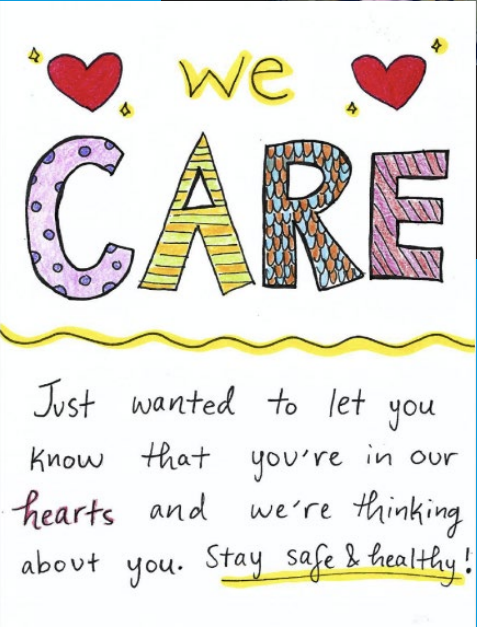
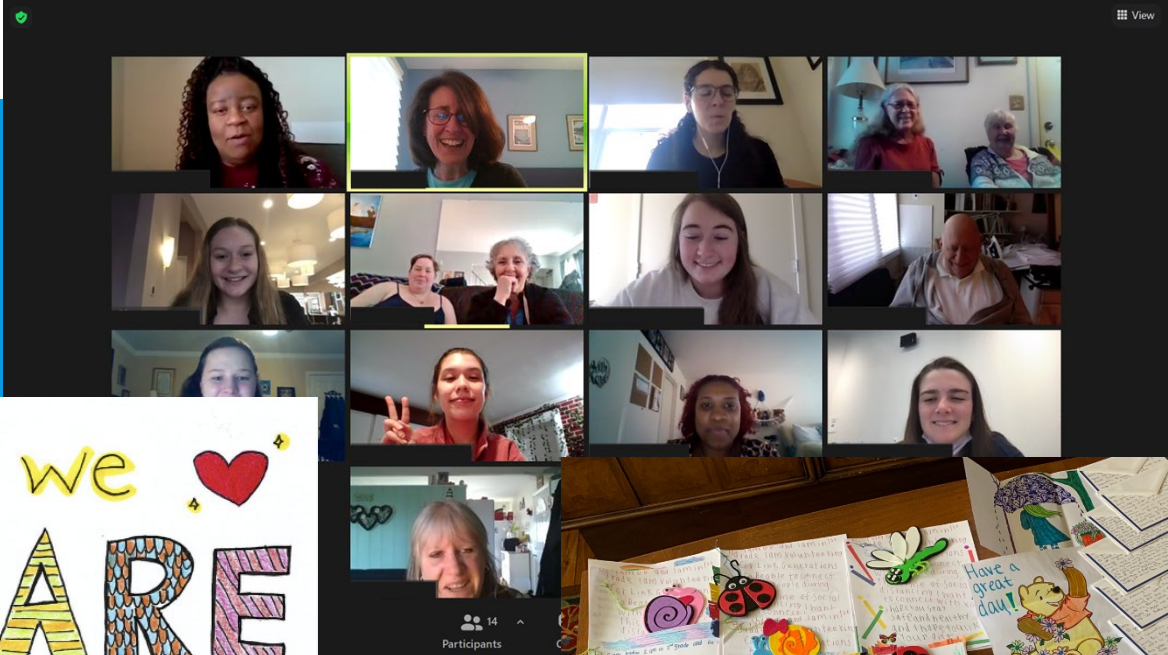


WHO BENEFITS? OLDER ADULTS

- Decreased social isolation
- Enhanced quality of life
- Sense of purpose
- Improved cognitive health
- Example: OASIS Intergenerational Tutoring



CONNECTING DURING COVID



CALL TO ACTION

- Encourage partnerships and collaborations
- Increase awareness
- Strengthen advocacy to make loneliness a top public health priority and fund research and intergenerational programs that decrease social isolation and loneliness
- Thank you!

