Oberlin, Ohio

Community Slogan: Live, Learn, Lead

The City of Oberlin, Ohio, with approximately 8,300 residents, has many points of pride: it has a nationally-ranked liberal arts college, a strong abolitionist history, a rich and varied cultural life, and a legacy that all individuals matter.

Oberlin’s commitment to the importance of intergenerational opportunities is evident in the city’s logo, which includes the tagline “Live. Learn. Lead.” That tagline underscores the city’s commitment to encouraging all residents to live their lives to the fullest. Oberlin backs that commitment by offering opportunities for them to become lifelong learners (and help others learn) and to become leaders—locally, regionally, and globally.

Collaboration and community service are a big part of life in Oberlin, as the City of Oberlin has built strong alliances with community organizations that ensure that Oberlin is an intergenerational community. The local government, Oberlin College, Oberlin City Schools, Kendal at Oberlin (a retirement community), Oberlin Community Services, Oberlin Heritage Center, Mercy Allen Hospital, and many other local organizations work closely together to develop programs that support and encourage interaction among different generations.

Students from Oberlin College’s Bonner Center for Service and Learning work with the many community organizations to address concerns and challenges, using many intergenerational techniques to achieve the goals. The Oberlin Early Childhood Center draws senior citizens, Oberlin College students, and Lorain

Description of Community:
Oberlin is a city that encompasses 4.78 square miles

Demographics (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 QuickFacts):
- Total population: 8,286
- No. under 24: 4,321
- No. over 55: 2,001

Website: www.cityofoberlin.com

Current Program Examples:
- The Listening Post: Elementary and Older Adult conversations
- Oberlin Early Childhood Center programming
- Oberlin College’s Bonner Center for Service Learning programming
- Kendal at Oberlin Retirement Community & Kendal Early Learning Center programming
- Grandparent Reader Program
- Community Technology Center

Intergenerational Fact:
Older adults contribute 40,000 hours annually in volunteer hours, many of which provide intergenerational opportunities.
County Joint Vocational School students who volunteer in a variety of ways: in the classroom; in the kitchen, even helping prepare grant proposals.

The Kendal at Oberlin Retirement Community is a beehive of intergenerational programs as well. Its Volunteer Clearing House—initiated by a resident—matches the interests, skills, and expertise of senior volunteers with the needs of local organizations, many serving children and youth. The Kendal Early Learning Center, located in Kendal, provides daycare in an intergenerational setting. Oberlin Elementary Schools have a Grandparent Readers Program and a Listening Post Program, providing opportunities for children in interact regularly one-on-one with older adults.

These are just a few examples of how the generations are working together in Oberlin and all with no one organization or office in charge of engagement or intergenerational matters. Residents credit the community’s emphasis on intergenerational connection with improving their own lifestyle and outlook.

Says Oberlin High School student Rachel Mentzer, “I have attended the Oberlin City Schools since kindergarten. My life has been enriched in many ways because our community is committed to multigenerational projects and many of these revolve around community service. From elementary school through high school, we are learning how important it is to do something for others in even greater ways.”

Adds octogenarian John Dixon Elder, “We Kendal [retirement community] residents live with a lot of old people—very fascinatingly talented, experienced and wise old people. But we keep our curiosity, creativity, and intellectual capacity alive thanks to the extraordinary intergenerational opportunities that Oberlin provides.”