San Diego County, California
Community Slogan: Live Well, San Diego!: A Healthy Community For All Ages

Think of San Diego and you probably focus on its physical beauty: the sandy beaches and imposing canyons, the charming historic area, and, of course, the lovely weather. But if you concentrated solely on the physical attributes, you’d miss out on one of San Diego’s most appealing traits: its commitment to making life better for all generations.

With three million residents strong, the County of San Diego believes in the need to support intergenerational connections. In 2001, it backed up that belief with serious funding by adding a full-time staff position of Intergenerational Coordinator at the county’s department of Aging & Independence Services (AIS). That investment has paid big returns: through intergenerational programs it has employed residents’ strengths to expand services and address serious challenges. Residents benefit by having the opportunity use their talents and creativity to contribute to the county’s well-being and vibrancy.

Description of Community:
The County of San Diego is 4,261 square miles.

Demographics (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey – One Year Estimates, 2010):
- Total population: 3,095,313
- No. under 23: 1,039,850
- No. over 55: 681,041

Website:
www.sdpublic.sdcounty.ca.gov

Current Program Examples:
- Young and older adult leadership initiatives
- Annual Intergenerational Games and County-wide health initiative
- Kinship Programs
- Intergenerational Art, Math, Reading, and Jazz Clubs
- Intergenerational Garden Program
- Connections to schools through mentoring, safe routes to school, breakfast in classrooms

Intergenerational Fact:
In 2000, the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors established a full time Intergenerational Coordinator position at Aging & Independence Services, with the goal of helping to establish, implement and sustain intergenerational programming throughout the county.
Over the past 11 years, the county’s commitment to intergenerational programs has only strengthened as the economy has weakened. By sharing sites and resources, it has maximized financial resources. It has also challenged traditional ways of funding. For example, AIS allocates funding from the Older Americans Act to support intergenerational program development. It also requests and receives funds from other county agencies to support intergenerational programs. Recently, a $16.1 million dollar Centers for Disease Control Healthy Works grant included an intergenerational thread that supported Safe Routes to School, Breakfast in the Classroom, Community gardens, and Community Engagement.

In San Diego today, all types of county services and programs have an intergenerational aspect. Libraries and Parks and Recreation offer intergenerational art, math, reading and jazz programs. Older adults take part in a Workforce Academy for Youth, mentoring foster youth for six months as they get ready to leave the foster system and join the work world. Young people have the opportunity to join the Legacy Corps Program where they serve caregivers and learn about the aging process. The county also works with providers that serve older adults and youth to sponsor Resident and Youth Leadership Academies. These academies train older adults and youth in leadership, and primarily focus on community planning principles and environmental prevention strategies. The list goes on.

This June, county agencies, non-profit organizations, for-profit agencies and faith communities will conduct a summit: Live Well, San Diego! Building a Healthy Community for All Ages. Speakers and activities will focus on how to make healthy choices and create living environments that encourage safe, active lifestyles. The event will take place in five locations to ensure all San Diegans have access to the information and activities.

San Diego’s efforts have resonated well with residents of all ages. As retired volunteer and community gardener Rich Rogers noted, community gardening “has turned into a labor of love. Gardening is as “grass roots” as you can get and teaching and mentoring kids of all ages increases my desire to be a positive influence and asset in my community.”

And for Alexis Wilson, a college student, her labor of love is to volunteer to meet with an older adult who has Parkinson’s disease. As she describes it, “Phil’s wife recently told me he sometimes forgets I’m not part of the family. Spending time with Phil reminds me I’m not going to be young forever. I would want the same help when I am that age.”