Westchester County, New York: Promoting a Sense of Worth and Connection

Westchester County, New York is a good place to grow up and grow older...together. Whether you live in the county’s rural northern section or its big-city southern region, you’re sure to feel at home, no matter what your age.

This community really knows the value of intergenerational living; they’ve been at it for quite a while now – more than 16 years. It also is a master at bringing groups together to continually find new ways to improve life for all. Westchester boasts more than 40 intergenerational programs – shared site, individual on-site, and four Communities for All Ages based on the model developed by The Intergenerational Center at Temple University. Westchester stands out as a model for how to enhance collaboration across sectors, build leadership of civic engagement of all ages, increase social cohesion among the generations, and address a broad range of critical concerns from a lifespan perspective.

“A really like the Peekskill Community for All Ages because we do fun stuff with kids my age, my mom’s age, and my granddad’s age. At first, it was my mom’s idea for me to work with the team, but now I am part of the team and I look forward to it.”

Malachi McDonald, Fifth-grade Student

A strong public/private network of motivated individuals, not-for-profits, United Way, a private foundation, and government funders has fostered and supported a growing variety of intentional and ongoing intergenerational programs and initiatives. NYSigN-Westchester, a local educational/advocacy group of individuals and organizations, is committed to promoting intergenerational thinking across the county. The group meets bi-monthly to share, strategize, and keep Westchester on track as an outstanding intergenerational community.

Need more evidence of Westchester’s commitment? The county also has nine Livable Communities regions. Each acts as a hub of information and collaboration for all ages.
Perhaps most critically, Westchester has used an array of intergenerational strategies to effectively leverage the assets of all generations and address their key challenges. Over the past 10 years, the county’s intergenerational programs and initiatives have:

• increased access to healthy, affordable food and physical activity for all
• improved housing so as to address changing needs across the life course, enhanced protective factors for local youth
• increased access of older adults to social media and technology
• built trust and connections across generations
• developed inclusive practices that encourage all generations to become civically engaged
• built strong collaborations among organizations that previously worked in age-segregated silos.

The result is a community that people are happy to call home and where everyone can have a voice.

“THERE ARE MANY EXPECTATIONS SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE FOR THE PLACE WHERE THEY LIVE, AMONG THEM ARE DECENT SCHOOLS, CLEAN WATER, SAFE ROADS, POLICE AND FIRE PROTECTION….BUT THERE IS ANOTHER TOTALLY UNEXPECTED BENEFIT THAT I HAVE FOUND HERE IN YONKERS… AND THAT IS A PROFOUND SENSE OF PURPOSE AND CONNECTION.”

**MS. DORA MEJICOVSKY, OLDER ADULT**