Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Information Technology Solutions

Marti Lawrence
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines the social and emotional well-being of foster youth and isolated seniors along with the benefit of intergenerational relationships between them for their health and well-being. An assessment of the current situation of foster youth and isolated seniors in Tarrant County, Texas includes an analysis of the needs and capacities of the stakeholders in this condition.

Dr. Bruce Perry’s research at The ChildTrauma Academy in the areas of childhood trauma, his Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics and supportive network of relationships referred to as a “therapeutic web” is presented. The founding principles of Hope Meadows—the original Generations of Hope community, where three generations care for and learn from each other demonstrate what happens when the focus of problem solving shifts from intervention in community to community as intervention good wording. The Foster Grandparent Program along with other mentoring programs is evaluated for guidance in structuring intergenerational relationship.

Three possible solutions build on stakeholder capacities to meet the needs the intergenerational relationships in the Tarrant County community and how information technology can support them are examined. These are: Each of these solutions incorporates mentoring.

Are these the three solutions? On-line mentoring, community volunteer matching and a hybrid program that utilizes both are discussed. Advantages and disadvantages along with necessary technology requirements and other opportunities or barriers for each option are presented. Resources needed to implement program development are provided throughout and recommendations are made on steps needed to proceed with implementation of a combination of on-line and community based mentoring between foster youth and isolated seniors. Finally, a logic model, guidelines for program evaluation and conclusion are offered.

A concluding statement would be nice, maybe a motivational message. I am not sure who the audience is for this report.

Good summary. However, the summary does not connect Dr. Perry’s work to your solution options.
INTRODUCTION

This report contains an analysis of the emotional and social conditions of foster youth and isolated seniors along with the benefit of intergenerational relationships between them for their health and wellbeing. The stakeholders, their needs and capacities are reviewed and discussed, leading to possible solutions, including, but not limited to information technology based solutions. Current programs that are utilizing intergenerational relationship as therapeutic intervention and/or community building will be presented. Options for building on the identified capacities and meeting the needs identified in the assessment of the situation will be discussed and evaluated relative to their possible advantages and disadvantages of each. Finally, a recommendation will be presented along with a strategy on how to proceed with the solution and how to address the issues raised. A logic model and evaluation strategy will be included in the proposed solution.

-The natural support network of the extended family declined during the industrial revolution as people followed the work into the factories and cities. Increased mobility has placed physical distance between biological families that has created isolation for seniors and lack of mentoring/guidance for youth, and especially at-risk and foster youth. Information technology is reshaping the landscape of the workforce again. The ability to be networked from anywhere in the world has created a global marketplace for the world and extended social service agencies further into the community. Technology is changing the social landscape by providing new ways to bring people together socially and emotionally. Online dating, blogging, and social networking are just some of the ways that new technology is connecting people.

Relationships are being re-defined as it becomes increasingly common to have on-line friendships. For example, Virtual Ability, Inc. is a non-profit corporation based in Colorado that enables people with a wide range of disabilities by providing a supporting environment for them to enter and thrive in online worlds like Second Life. These friendships allow people that are physically disabled to have meaningful relationships as well as physical experiences on-line that they cannot experience in the “real world”. Virtual Ability, Inc. is a non-profit corporation based in Colorado that enables people with a wide range of disabilities by providing a supporting environment for them to enter and thrive in online worlds like Second Life—These relationships impact not only social well-being but the mental, emotional and physical well-being of their participants. The Virtual Ability website, http://www.VirtualAbility.org, features a summary of published medical research about the benefits of using virtual worlds for people with disabilities. The website also has little biographies of members, stating what they gain from being here (Gentle Heron, 6355 class transcript, April 29, 2009).

This paper focuses on foster youth at All Church Home for Children in Fort Worth and is based on this writer’s nine years of experience as a therapeutic foster parent. The examination of intergenerational relationships for other at-risk youth with complex problems such as chronic juvenile offenders developmentally disabled youth and pregnant and parenting teens is not specifically considered here. But these youth would logically have similar characteristics. Foster youth and isolated
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Seniors are two segments of our society that are vulnerable in social, mental, emotional and physical health issues. Intergenerational relationships in a social setting would provide a way they could strengthen each other with comfort and support through affiliation and companionship.

I think you probably edited so much that it is impossible to get a good “outside” perspective to see if your ideas are being communicated well. I made some editorial changes thinking that these may help get your ideas across better. Often, an outside reader can quickly find sentences, etc. which seem to need a little clarity.

Good

ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION

A system or community survives by growing and adapting to meet the needs of its members. People have common social needs to connect with each other, share a sense of belonging and feel that they are significant in some way. The members of a given system or community are the stakeholders. The stakeholders interconnect and exist in the context of their environment. What impacts one part of a system in turn impacts the entire system, so if the needs of part of the community are not being met, there is not balance in the system. The lives of people are normally open systems, in constant interaction with their environment. Foster youth, isolated seniors, and their families and friends are part of the community so based on systems theory, their health and wellbeing impacts the health and well-being of everyone in the community, whether they know it or not. The community is the environment for this system and the people or stakeholders in this system have their own subsystems. The individual’s subsystems focused on here consist of the social, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of the stakeholder (Schoech, 1999). Foster youth and isolated seniors have experienced changes and losses to their open systems that created more of a closed systems environment due to factors such as removal from family, being moved to an environment where they are strangers, abuse in the home, aging, and often for seniors, death of their loved ones. A closed system creates an unhealthy state of decay, disorder and uncertainty (Schoech, 1999). Good weaving in of systems concepts. The next sections will the situation of two major stakeholders, foster youth and isolated seniors in greater detail.

Foster Youth

The number of Texas children removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect has declined following a series of reforms to Child Protective Services. In the 2008 budget year, CPS removed 14,295 children, down from 15,920 in 2007 and 17,536 in 2006. That’s a decrease of 18.5 percent. A reform in policy to provide services to impoverished families has eliminated the need to remove children due to neglect caused by poverty. The decline in removals is partly due to the reforms and partly to a 5th Circuit Court decision that clarifies that in most cases, CPS must get a judge’s permission before — not after — removing children. An increase of children being placed with relatives, as an alternative to foster care has also increased 32 percent between 2005 and 2008 (MacLaggen, 2009).
A decrease in children being removed from their homes is encouraging news. However, there are still 1,776 Tarrant County children living in foster care, with approximately 30 percent who stay in care for in excess of one year. For those children the absence of long-term meaningful relationships in addition to their foster family is a serious emotional problem. Based on the trends published in June 2007 regarding foster care in the United States (which should be a reasonable approximation of the situation in Tarrant County), the median amount of time children spent in foster care remained stable between FY2000 and FY 2005 at 12.0 months. However, almost 30 percent remain in care in excess of 24 months (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008).

Children experience rapid changes in development, making childhood a time of both great opportunity and great vulnerability. The trauma of being placed in foster care causes disruption of the normal development process and typically impacts longer-term outcomes on the child once grown up as an adult (Hodas, 2006). The affected parts of the brain are linked to critical functions including recognition and response to danger, interpretation of stimuli, self-regulation, memory formation, attention and ability to acquire information, processing of emotional information, control of impulses, planning and learning from experience (Hodas, 2006). I wasn’t aware of the brain development implications of foster care. Seems is a child is removed from a “non-normal” home due to abuse and neglect, then their brain would develop better. I would have to see more research on this to see if those functions are linked to foster care or to an abuse/neglect home.

Foster children need social relationships that help them build trust to offset their past experiences. The adults that should have been providing comfort and nurturing their growth into independent adults were unable to do so. It is difficult for them to make up for these losses later in life. They tend to over identify with their peers and rely on them for their social and emotional support. They have been distanced from the social network that is naturally part of a healthy family. This focus on their peers creates a closed social system. People normally live in more of an open social system where they are in interaction with many other types of people in their environment. A closed system has little or no interaction with other types of people in their environment. Therefore, foster youth, making decisions in a closed environment by relying on guidance from their peers are not experiencing a healthy balance of input (Schoech, 1999). A healthy decision making environment for children should includes people of all ages that they trust and are accountable to. (Try not to end a sentence in a preposition). A natural support network provides other points of view and ideas. The mental and emotional subsystem of foster youth is malleable and their attachment needs are great. Foster youth need something to replace the natural support network that they are lacking. One possible promising The current trend is for youth, including foster youth, is to keep in constant contact with their friends via technology-cell phone, personal data accessory or computer-often a laptop. Good section.

Isolated seniors

The growth of the older population is an important factor in today’s world. Demographers predict that by 2030 the population 65 and older may be as high as 72 million, representing a 100 percent increase over 30 years, compared with a 30 percent growth in the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006c as cited by Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). As people age, their social roles and relationships
change. Children are grown and gone from the home and when they retire they no longer have daily contact with co-workers. The need for social support increases as health, mental and emotional needs change. Thus, as one ages, the open systems in one’s life tend to become more closed resulting in increased entropy and decay rather than in growth and synergy which characterizes open systems. The majority of older people live with someone, but approximately 16 percent of men and 30 percent of women age 65 to 74 live alone. After age 75, these rates increase to 23 percent of men and 50 percent of woman. The rate of persons living alone increased by 1.5 times the growth rate for older people since 1970 (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008).

According to Hooyman and Kiyak, the intergenerational stake hypothesis refers to a model where elder generations are predisposed to instilling upcoming generations with their morals and ethics and are committed to relationships with younger generations. In contrast, younger generations, as a whole are more interested in establishing independence from older generations and therefore report lower levels of intergenerational commonality (Reitzes and Mutran, 2004 as cited by Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008).

“Informal reciprocal relationships are a crucial concomitant of an older person’s physical and mental well-being, cognitive functioning, feelings of personal control, sense of meaning, morale, and even later onset of disability and mortality risk”, (Berkman, 2002; Kraus, 2006; Lubben and Gironda, 2003, Lubben et al 2006, Lyra and Heikkinen, 2006; Uchino, 2004 as cited by Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008, p.335). Isolated seniors rely primarily on the telephone and television for their social networking. They tend to talk with people they have known a long time and have few if any opportunities to meet anyone new.

Not surprisingly, these phenomena are exhibited locally in our community of interest as Senior isolation is a growing problem in Tarrant County. Many of them live alone, in poor health and have little opportunity to see other people. The number of seniors is expected to double in Tarrant County in the next 25 years to almost 400,000 people. Loneliness often leads to depression, substance abuse, a comprised immune system and high blood pressure. Suicide rates are highest among Americans 65 and older (United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County, 2008). The United Way’s Area Agency on Aging of Tarrant County is collaborating with Meals on Wheels and Senior Citizen Services to reach out to these seniors through the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program. Neighbor Helping Neighbor recruits volunteers and professionals from neighborhood and church groups, government, businesses and human service organizations to provide a variety of services to these older adults. The services include transportation, minor home repairs, shopping assistance, wheelchair ramps, safety equipment, yard maintenance, food bank pickup, household chores, information and referral, visits by phone and in-person and meals (Senior Citizen Services of Greater Tarrant County, 2009). So is the problem solved in Tarrant Co.?
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Isolated seniors rely primarily on the telephone and television for their social networking. They tend to talk with people they have known a long time and have few if any opportunities to meet anyone new.

NEEDS AND CAPABILITIES

The preceding analysis can be summarized by analyzing the needs and capacities of the stakeholders involved in this situation.

Stakeholders

1. Foster youth.
2. Isolated seniors.
3. Families and friends of foster youth and isolated seniors.
4. Social service agencies that administer programs impacting foster youth and isolated seniors.
5. Government agencies that develop (legislators) and interpret (courts) policies impacting foster youth and isolated seniors.

Foster youth make the decision whether or not to trust adults in large part based on their past experiences with adults. The decision to follow the instructions of the authority figures in their lives is influenced by their ability to trust adults. Foster youth need patient guidance as they navigate through adolescence toward adulthood. They need to know that someone cares and is interested in listening to them, that there is hope and things will get better. Relationships that provide emotional and social support but are not in a position of authority in their life like the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program would be uniquely valuable to these kids. They also need relationships that are about giving, not just taking. Kids are resilient. They are able to adapt and change in new situations and circumstances. Foster youth are open to new relationships that they perceive have some benefit for them if they have formed the emotional bonds necessary to trust others. As wards of the state, they are eligible for social services from the state. Although, they don’t always see it as such, this is a valuable asset to a child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs of foster youth</th>
<th>Capacities of foster youth</th>
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<tr>
<td>Form emotional bonds to learn to trust others</td>
<td>Resilient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Eligible for social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal Relationships</td>
<td>Knowledge about information technology</td>
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Isolated seniors make decisions based largely on convenience and transportation issues. They use their resources for the necessities, like doctors’ appointments and grocery shopping. Social relationships for isolated seniors are impacted by the loss of family and friends. They need to broaden their network of relationships to make up for those that are dying off. For example, Louise Jeanes is an 81-year-old woman living alone in her home who has outlived all of her friends and family. She meets the criteria designated by the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program as socially isolated. Her grown sons have families of their own. They call on a regular basis and make sure all of her “needs” are taken care
of. She is lonely but doesn’t want to bother people so some days she does not speak to anyone (L. Jeanes, personal communication, March 29, 2009). Isolated seniors need to feel valued by society. They rely heavily on their telephones and televisions to connect to the outside world. This is a limited connection to society. True community has relationships that are about both giving and taking. Seniors have wisdom and patience learned from their life experiences. They have a lot free time and need to make a decision regarding isolation—whether to reach out and make the effort to get involved or to stay isolated. They also have to determine if they are interested in relationships with children as a way contributing to society or if they want to limit their social interactions to other adults and/or seniors.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Needs of isolated seniors</th>
<th>Capacities of isolated seniors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Replace lost relationships</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to community</td>
<td>Wisdom and patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to form new relations</td>
<td>Ability to form new relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Families and friends of foster youth and isolated seniors have to determine how much of their own busy lives they are willing to devote to meet the social needs of foster youth and isolated seniors. They also have the resources, such as transportation, access to computers and finances that they choose to share or not. Their desire to maintain healthy relationships with their family and can be accomplished by showing support for and interest in these new outside relationships. This may be difficult for them due to their own challenges in maintaining the relationship that they once had with their family member. New relationships can actually enrich their current relationships by giving them new and current things to talk about and share in their conversations. Family and friends need to be willing to spend time and energy to help establish and support intergenerational relationships. In the case of the foster youth, their biological families are concerned that they are not getting enough attention and support from their foster families. To illustrate, Becky Boone, a foster parent with All Church Home for Children confirms that this is a concern of hers. She is a single parent caring for four young children in her home and realizes that she doesn’t have enough time to give them all the one on one time that they need (B. Boone, personal communication, February 10, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs of family/friends</th>
<th>Capacities of family/friends</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge that loved ones needs are met</td>
<td>Provide support for outside relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain existing relationship</td>
<td>Show interest in outside relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrich current relationships</td>
<td>Resources such as transportation</td>
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Social service agencies that administer programs impacting foster youth and isolated seniors try to focus on meeting as many of the needs of their client as possible. Assessments of their physical, mental, emotional and social needs are conducted by social workers and efforts are made to provide support in each of these areas. The resources to meet these needs are met with the agency resources, referrals and community volunteers interested in working with their clients. Agencies must determine what percentage of their resources they want to allocate to meet social needs. Social needs are not as essential as meeting the client’s needs for food, shelter and medical care. Collaboration is necessary to assemble the resources to meet the social need for intergenerational relationship. Agencies need to
determine how much autonomy they are willing to give up by working cooperatively. Social service agencies have the technology necessary to operate their organizations and are linked via the Internet to other agencies and resources. Agencies such as All Church Home for Children and Senior Citizen Services have the capacity to provide participants for intergenerational relationships along with the capacity to train and supervise mentor/mentee relationships. These agencies have missions, goals and objectives to support and the capacity to evaluate and advocate for the benefit of intergenerational mentoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs of social service agencies</th>
<th>Capacities of social service agencies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborate with other agencies/resources</td>
<td>Assessment resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine measurement &amp; evaluation criteria</td>
<td>Organizational resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify participants for intergenerational relationships</td>
<td>Missions, goals and objectives compatible with intergenerational relationships</td>
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</tbody>
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Government agencies that develop (legislators) and interpret (courts) policies impacting foster youth and isolated seniors are concerned with keeping kids out of foster care and by providing support to keep seniors in the community. Both issues have social and financial components that impact society. Legislators have the ability to make policies that encourage intergenerational connections like the new program that allows seniors to volunteer to earn college tuition credits for their grandkids. The court system makes the final decision in the cases of foster children and isolated seniors. They base their decisions on the information reported by caseworkers and attorneys. The decision making capacity of the courts is limited by the information about the situation that they receive and what programs/options are available to accommodate the needs of these people. The courts can mandate participation in intergenerational programs. Government agencies have access to sophisticated technology and data. They are a funding source for many non-profit organizations and require reports on the efficacy of social service agencies and their outcomes. Government agencies are very interested in alternatives to institutionalized care for vulnerable members of our society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs of government agencies</th>
<th>Capacities of government agencies</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Data on efficacy of intergenerational relationships</td>
<td>Fund effective programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies to support intergenerational relationships</td>
<td>Develop effective programs like the Foster Grandparent Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives to institutionalized care</td>
<td>Mandate participation in programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A short summary statement would be helpful.

Good section.

HOW OTHERS HAVE APPROACHED THE SITUATION

There is substantial research to support that social relationships matter to the well being of people in a variety of ways. Intergenerational relationships linking older people with school children, high-risk youth, children with special needs and young families are rapidly growing. After school telephone support, tutoring and assistance at day-care programs are provided through Retired Seniors
Volunteer programs (RSVP). Kinder Korps and the Foster Grandparents Program supply tutoring and mentoring to youth. Careful planning is necessary to ensure that interactions are age and developmentally appropriate, and ensure choice and autonomy for elders (Hayes, 2003; Saliari, 2002 as cited by Hooyman & Kiyak, 2008). One well documented and researched intergenerational relationship service model is used at The ChildTrauma Academy in Houston, which is a has developed a rational that supports transgenerational relationships based on the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) which will be covered in this section. Hope Meadows in Illinois, the original Generations of Hope Community, will also be presented as an example of how others have approached the need for intergenerational relationships. Hope Meadows incorporates meaningful intergenerational relationships and purposeful engagement as therapeutic tools focusing on community as intervention (Eheart, et al. 2008). The National Foster Grandparent Program will be discussed as a model exemplifying the benefits of intergenerational relationships that would be beneficial both to foster youth and isolated seniors. Good transition sentence.

The ChildTrauma Academy

Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D. is the Senior Fellow of The ChildTrauma Academy, a not-for-profit organization based in Houston that promotes innovations in service, research and education in child maltreatment and childhood trauma (www.ChildTrauma.org). Dr. Perry explains that human beings are biological creatures and the human brain has evolved from living millions of years in a natural world. One of the most important features of this natural world was the rich, transgenerational relational environment. "We are born dependent and grow to be interdependent" (Perry, 2006). The way in which humans are neurobiologically connected to each other enhances our ability to survive as a species. The most powerful rewards and the most intense pain come from relational experiences. In contrast to our ancestors, we live in a relationally impoverished world (Perry, 2006). Therefore, it is important to provide a supportive network of relationships that Dr. Perry calls a "therapeutic web". If as Dr. Perry states, all children benefit from the natural design of a rich, transgenerational relational environment, then perhaps it stands to reason that these transgenerational relationships would also benefit isolated seniors in similar ways. The fact that children have been traumatized by the experience of being placed in foster care is further distressed by the loss of whatever long-term meaningful relationships they had. Therefore, it is important to provide an essential network of relationships ("therapeutic web") to support youth during this rapidly changing time of development. For foster children, especially the almost 30 percent that remain in care more than 24 months, the absence of these long-term meaningful relationships is significant.

The Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) was developed by Dr. Perry and colleagues over the past fifteen years at The ChildTrauma Academy. "This model is a developmentally-informed, biologically respectful approach to working with high-risk children" (ChildTraumaAcademy, 2008). NMT proposes that the goal of therapeutic treatment is to find the appropriate set of therapeutic activities that match a child's current need in various domains of functioning (i.e., social, emotional, cognitive and physical). Patterned, repetitive and developmentally-appropriate activities in context of nurturing relationships are the keys to effective intervention. Active participation by caregivers and other adults in the child's life is important to the success of the NMT; indeed by weaving various activities throughout
the child’s various relationships and environments, the majority of "therapeutic" experiences are provided outside the actual context of conventional therapy. When I originally became a foster parent, I thought that the therapist was the one who helped the children “solve their problems”. Over time, I realized that what Dr. Perry says is very true. The healing and teaching moments occur when you least expect them, during the business of everyday life.

A therapeutic web created by utilizing an intergenerational practice model builds on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them. Intergenerational initiatives directly impact those involved as well as their communities. Participants may experience increased self-esteem from being able to give to and receive from others. They can experience improvements in health and a greater sense of being valued members of their communities. Older people can provide younger people with positive role models while young people represent a link to the future for older people (Center for Intergenerational Practice, 2008). Intergenerational bonds seem to occur when youth are receptive due to being lonely, at a time of crisis, ready for change and open to adult contact. Elders are enthusiastic but are also lonely and looking for meaningful roles in their senior years. The elders are in a unique position because they don't play the role of either parent or professional, leaving them relatively free of role constraints or the obligations of positions of authority (Freedman, 1989). Good although a little long.

Hope Meadows

Hope Meadows is the original Generations of Hope Community that began over a decade ago in Illinois where neglected and abused children who have been removed from their biological parents for their safety, find a permanent and caring home, as well as grandparents, playmates and an entire neighborhood designed to help them grow up in a secure and nurturing environment. Hope Meadows is a place where children, adoptive parents and surrogate grandparents develop supportive relationships capable of healing the hurts of abuse and neglect - a place where three generations care for and learn from each other (Eheart, B.K. Hopping, D. Power, M.B., Mitchell, E.T. & Racine, D., 2009).

A Generations of Hope Community (GHC) is deliberately designed to be a geographically contiguous intergenerational neighborhood, where some of the residents are facing a specific challenge around which the entire community organizes. The first principle that a GHC is built on is the residents, including those whose social challenge is the focus of the community, are viewed as “not as problems-to-be managed, but as ordinary people requiring the same embeddedness in family and community that we would want for ourselves” (Eheart, et al., 2009, p.47). The second principal is the “enduring capacity of the individual to care” (Eheart, et al., 2009, p.48). These two principals are the foundation of the Intergenerational Community as Intervention (ICI) that Generations of Hope Communities are built on.

Research has shown that human relationships are the basic building blocks of healthy development (Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Vaillant, 2002 as cited by Eheart, et al. 2008) and both mental and physical health throughout the lifecourse are affected by ties to other people (Cohen, 2004; Helgeson, Cohen , Schultz & Yasko, 2000; National Council on Aging, 2002; Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996 as cited by Eheart, et al. 2008). As both a program and a place to live,
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

GHCs are grounded in research and theory. All children need nurturing, stable and consistent relationships that provide responsive and reciprocal interactions in a safe, predictable environment (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000 as cited by Eheart, et al. 2008). To age well, older adults need purposeful engagement and meaningful relationships in their daily lives (Power, Eheart, Racine, and Karniik, 2007; Rowe & Kahn, 1998 as cited by Eheart, et al. 2008). Research that defines the components of effectiveness of an intervention program states that effective programs support children in the context of the family and the family in the context of community (Schorr, 1989, 1997 as cited by Eheart, et al. 2008).

A Generations of Hope Community demonstrates community as the intervention. Meaningful intergenerational relationships and purposeful engagement are the tools that complement social services. “Social services are dramatically changed when the focus of problem-solving shifts from intervention in community to community as intervention” (Eheart, et al. 2008).

Foster Grandparent Program

The Foster Grandparent Program (seniorcorps.gov) through Senior Corps (a program of The Corporation for National and Community Service) is another example of an intergenerational practice model. The Foster Grandparent Program pairs low income adults with troubled, disabled or hospitalized children. Foster Grandparents give children 15-40 hours every week of warmth, kindness and attention at hospitals, homeless shelters and special care facilities. Texas has 1,352 people serving as Foster Grandparents to more than 14,000 children and youth (Texas Senior Corps, 2008). Foster Grandparents volunteer in schools, Head Start centers, hospitals, drug treatment centers, correctional institutions, and day care centers. Foster Grandparents strengthen communities by providing personalized services to special needs children that human service budgets cannot afford and by building strong bridges across generations.

Foster Grandparents must be at least 60 years of age and meet certain income-eligibility requirements. They serve an average of 20 hours per week. Foster Grandparents participate in pre-service orientation and ongoing in-service training. A stipend of $2.65 per hour is paid to offset the cost of volunteering along with reimbursement for transportation and some meals provided during service (Texas Senior Corps, 2008). A Foster Grandparent Program is currently being implemented by The Senior Source in Dallas. In 2007, The Senior Source reports that 100 low-income grandparents had meaningful roles and financial support while 1,875 children with special needs-handicapped children, babies affected by drug abuse, homeless and hospitalized youth and children with AIDS-received one-to-one support and care for 100,407 hours at 21 volunteer stations during the year (The Senior Source, 2008).

Senior Citizen Services of Greater Tarrant County operates the Senior Corps RSVP program. RSVP stands for Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. It is for anyone over 55, retired or not that wants to volunteer in Tarrant County. This purpose of RSVP is to help senior adults find places of meaningful volunteer service, help area nonprofits and medical facilities find volunteers and to report those areas for the local and federal government to show the difference those senior adults make
OPTIONS FOR MEETING NEED FOR INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

The following section examines three possible solutions to meet the needs the intergenerational relationships in the Tarrant County community and how information technology can support them. Each of these solutions involves mentoring.

“Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee. A mentor is an adult who, along with parents, provides a young person with support, counsel, friendship, reinforcement and constructive example. Mentors are good listeners, people who care, people who want to help young people bring out strengths that are already there. A mentor is not a foster parent, therapist, parole officer, or cool peer” (Mentoring.org, 2009).

On-line mentoring, community volunteer matching and a hybrid program that utilizes both will be explored. Each section will discuss advantages and disadvantages along with necessary technology requirements and other opportunities or barriers.

On-line Mentoring Program

On-line mentoring is currently being utilized to help students with homework questions, helping an adult learn skills or find a job, or help prison inmates with studies or programs. Rachel Daugherty, a UTA MSW student and employee at Communities in Schools of North Texas reports that they are using on-line mentoring to provide positive adult role models for children that don’t have one present in their life (R. Daugherty, personal communication, March, 6, 2009) Good to use a colleague as an expert source. Appendix A provides resources that they recommend for successful mentoring. Jayne Cravens wrote an insightful article about the time and commitment required for on-line mentoring based on her personal experiences as an on-line mentor in the article, Being an Online Mentor: A Real Relationship, A Real Commitment. She emphasizes the risk of causing harm to the person being mentored if the volunteer does not make the relationship a priority. Some of the things that she stresses as important for success as an on-line mentor are to work with a well-run, credible organization, keep the program goals in mind during all exchanges and to set a time every day, or twice a week to read messages and write a response (Cravens, J. 2008).

On-line mentoring between foster youth and isolated seniors would be one option to meet the need that they each have for supportive, social relationships. Youth would build on their knowledge of computers and further develop their skills in technology by using it more. It builds on the capacity that the seniors have to devote the time necessary to on-line mentoring and provides a vehicle for them to pass on their wisdom and experience. Seniors would be developing new computer skills which is be
healthy for their self-esteem and empowers them to investigate other ways in which the internet would be useful to them. Social networking sites such as Facebook have potential to host on-line mentoring communities but may not be appropriate for this application due to the supervision necessary to protect the vulnerable nature of these participants. Ning is a social networking platform that is customizable where users can build their own features. There is a small cost, but it addresses the privacy issue. As stated previously, mentoring is a relationship based on trust. An on-line community like Ning could function as a support group for on-line mentors. Good.

The IT infrastructure required would be utilizing internet hardware and software. The system of Internet sites that are used on the World Wide Web use a language called HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) where each site has a uniform resource code (URL) similar to the address of a house (Schoech, 1999). This URL would be to the website address where participants would go to connect with their mentor/mentee. The homepage for on-line mentoring would require a special password-protected online platform, so that exchanges are private and can be easily monitored. A safety precaution might be to hide the identities of the participants and have them identified as user names. An intergenerational community created in Second Life would be another potential platform for on-line mentoring. This would be a good opportunity for participants to learn more sophisticated computer skills in a fun and interesting way. So who would recruit, train, match, followup, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asynchronous, mentors and mentees don’t have to be on-line at the same time.</td>
<td>Not everyone has access to computers/internet in their home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transportation required.</td>
<td>Resistance and/or fear of the internet by seniors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cost to participant.</td>
<td>Social screening concerns. Both populations vulnerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizes barriers, age and appearance less important.</td>
<td>Another potential loss for participants if “match” doesn’t work. Good point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows contact to continue when youth move or return home.</td>
<td>Possible loss of? Confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Mentoring Program**

Community mentoring programs have a commendable history of success. Mentoring programs are faith-based, school-based, community-based or agency-based. Studies show that mentoring programs can play a powerful role in reducing drug and alcohol abuse, youth violence and dropout rates (Sessums, 2009). Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (bbbs.org) is the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. They have been providing one-to-one youth service for more than a century and developing positive relationships for children, ages 6 through 18. National research has shown that positive relationships between youth and their Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentors have a direct and measurable impact on children’s lives (Big Brothers Big Sisters 2009). According to Judith N. Vredenburgh, president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters, it takes three to six
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

months for trust to develop. Their organization offers structured support during the early days of the relationship, with the safety of the children the most important concern. Big Brothers Big Sisters serves 255,000 children through its 394 affiliates across America. Likewise, the Foster Grandparent Program discussed previously and Mentoring Children of Prisoners: Caregiver’s Choice (mentoring.org/caregiverschoice), that bring together mentors and children whose parents are incarcerated are other community mentoring programs.

There would not be any additional IT infrastructure required for organizations that are currently operating volunteer/mentor programs. The RSVP program at Senior Citizen Services of Tarrant County currently uses Volunteer Match to post their volunteer opportunities. Volunteer Match (volunteermatch.org) is an internet application that allows potential volunteers—individual and corporations to learn about volunteering through stories, webinars and searches. It highlights 18 non-profit “preferred partner” organizations. This site has assembled an easy to use system linked to geographic areas. It allows human service agencies to solicit for volunteers in one central location See Appendix A. Database software would be needed for the tracking of participants. If additional database support is needed, Tarrant County Access, who has developed an intentional systems integration program for the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition, offers consultation and IT services for non-profits in Tarrant County. Tarrant County Access has experience setting up networks that meet all of the confidentiality criteria required by non-profits and HIPPA (Steve Braun, personal correspondence, April 1, 2009).

Jackie Manes, RSVP Coordinator and Melvina Lenton, RSVP Director/Volunteer Services Manager stated that they would be interested in using Volunteer Match to recruit seniors for a Volunteer Grandparent program in partnership with All Church Home for Children or other like-minded organizations that provide foster care. This would operate as part of the RSVP program in Tarrant County. They did not express interest in a Foster Grandparent Program for Tarrant County (J. Manes and M. Lawson, personal communication, February 5, 2009). This would be impactful for foster youth but doesn’t incorporate the isolated seniors.

The Neighbor Helping Neighbor program focuses on identifying and serving isolated seniors through multiple agencies in Fort Worth. Meals on Wheels and Senior Citizen Services are currently receiving grant funding from the United Way to implement this program, but the intent is to turn it over to the community itself once it is established. In addition to neighborhood meetings, the telephone is the technology utilized to reach the seniors. This program has no connection to any youth.

It would be nice to summarize this solution again since you present a lot of complex information about concepts, agencies and programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer coordinators have screening protocols in place.</td>
<td>Transportation is a challenge for both isolated seniors and foster youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well established organizations in place.</td>
<td>Challenge of schedule coordination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream acceptance. Acceptable to people not comfortable with the idea</td>
<td>Supervision and support would require participation of another adult, changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of on-line mentoring.</td>
<td>the whole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Low cost, no IT equipment required for participants, only for program management.  
Physical location needed to meet.

Good evidence of efficacy.  
Restricted by geographic area.

Preferred Solution-Combination of On-line and Community Mentoring Program

Intergenerational relationship between foster youth and isolated seniors are especially complex due to the unique needs and vulnerability of each population separately. The trust needed for foster youth to build relationship will not come quickly or easily. Isolated seniors are accustomed to their routine and are unlikely to be interested in moving quickly. They tend to be thoughtful and patient, which is a good match for the impulsive and anxious condition of children in foster care. The seniors have transportation limitations, which makes the idea of an on-line component useful. However, many seniors are resistant to the idea of using a computer and don’t have one in their homes. The convenience of on-line mentoring is an advantage that will enhance the time frame of the relationship building process, but face to face will enhance the trust building component. Jayne Cravens’ states that “Online networking is nothing unless it leads to something *tangible*” (J. Cravens, internet chat, March 4, 2009). Good to cite class chat. She goes on to explain that most online volunteers are also onsite volunteers. She explained that her husband didn’t know he was an online volunteer until she told him he was. He is a volunteer fireman, and is in charge of the organization’s web site, which he does from home. Online volunteers are just like any other volunteers. They just happen to use online tools to communicate with the organization they are supporting and, sometimes, with the organization’s clients they are supporting (J. Cravens, internet chat, March 4, 2009). The challenge of finding ways for them to “get started” will be easier to facilitate in actual face to face settings.

The community mentoring component is important for other reasons. With community mentoring, proximity is obviously the primary criterion. Hope Meadows builds on the idea of community as the intervention by creating a physical location where the intergenerational relationships become extended family, actually living together in the same neighborhood. This illustrates the recreation of the rich, transgenerational relational environment found in the natural world that Dr. Perry recommends. As discussed previously, the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics proposes that the goal of therapeutic treatment is to find the appropriate set of therapeutic activities that match a child’s current need in various domains of functioning (i.e., social, emotional, cognitive and physical). Patterned, repetitive and developmentally-appropriate activities in context of nurturing relationships are the keys to effective intervention. Therefore the success of the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics relies on a “therapeutic web of support”. The therapeutic web of support is the active participation by caregivers and other adults in the child’s life weaving various activities throughout the child’s various relationships and environments providing the majority of “therapeutic” experiences are provided outside the actual context of conventional therapy. These patterned, repetitive and developmentally appropriate activities are simple things like sharing a meal, taking a walk, listening to music, rocking in a rocking chair. These are activities that foster youth and isolated seniors living in community would participate in together. Tarrant County does not have a generations of hope Community, but it does have an infrastructure of strong non-profit agencies serving the needs of foster youth and isolated seniors. Based on the capacities utilized and the needs met of the stakeholders, the preferred solution to the current condition is to link those agencies together utilizing both technology
and community centers to provide opportunities for intergenerational relationships between foster youth and isolated seniors. Good ideas weaving together all the components you discussed thusfar.

In addition to the RSVP and Neighbor Helping Neighbor programs, Senior Citizen Services of Tarrant County has a congregate meal program that operates in community centers and senior center facilities located throughout the area. There are currently 30 senior center locations in Tarrant County. Many of the community centers have computer labs that are available for use. These labs contain the hardware and software necessary to provide basic computer skills training to seniors. It also provides access to a computer for on-line mentoring if they don’t have one in their home. Foster youth are likewise spread throughout the community and would have easy access to these facilities. Community centers have multi-purpose rooms where Senior Citizen Services, All Church Home for Children and other like-minded agencies could base bi-monthly congregate meals and activities for the foster youth and isolated seniors. This venue allows staff the opportunity to facilitate and observe. Another benefit of this arrangement is that it relieves the social pressure that might be present as strangers get to know each other. These congregate meals would function much like mixers to introduce people. The foster youth and seniors might attend multiple times before developing a relationship that has the potential to evolve into a mentoring relationship that could then conveniently continue on-line. The youth’s roles might be positioned as computer trainers for the seniors to enhance the reciprocity of the relationship. Another benefit of this combined approach is that there is not a high risk of loss for participants. Attending the communal meal itself would be one measure of a success for participants. As people leave the program for various reasons, the community continues to exist to support each other in the loss of the individual. Seniors have experience with loss and will have the capacity to teach children how to cope with it. The children will provide the vision of the future for the seniors to invest in and stay connected to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well established organizations in place.</td>
<td>Organizations have not worked together before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure of community centers in place that is equipped for congregate meals.</td>
<td>Participants (foster youth and isolated seniors) have not been involved together before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds community on dual levels allowing greater chance of success and sustainability.</td>
<td>Funding for staff, food for meals, training, etc. not currently in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizes technology, building skills for participants.</td>
<td>Need buy-in from multiple agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure supports both community mentoring and individual mentoring.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are multiple steps to be taken to advance this solution to the social and emotional condition faced by foster youth and isolated seniors. First, a meeting between a representative of the foster care department at All Church Home and a representative from Senior Citizen Services and/or Meals on Wheels that works with isolated seniors to identify a community center that would be geographically appropriate along with potential participants for a pilot of this program. A program presentation would need to be developed and presented to the Boards of Directors of interested organizations seeking permission to proceed with the program plan. If the entities approve the program, then requests for proposals must be searched and applied for, in hopes of securing funding to develop the intergenerational relationships on-line and in the community setting. After hypothetically receiving funding, the IT departments of the participating organizations would determine the best way...
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Simultaneously, the program coordinator would need to collect data about on-line mentoring since these agencies have not engaged in it previously. Communities in Schools of North Texas is implementing an on-line mentoring program that would be a valuable resource. Jayne Cravens suggests finding an online community for a TV show, movie or band that attracts younger people, and lurk for a while to learn how the younger people communicate online. Conduct the same effort for groups that target senior citizens in order to get training on the different ways people communicate online (J. Cravens, internet chat, March 4, 2009). The Virtual Volunteering Guidebook by Ellis and Cravens provides a wide variety of resources to draw from and can be downloaded free at serviceleader.org/vv. A protocol as to how the on-line component would operate and be supervised would need to be researched and developed. The technology to supervise on-line forums is currently being utilized and is readily available on the internet (give some URLs). Criminal background checks are part of the necessary screening for participants in any mentoring program, but a structured interview process and a way to record and supervise messages is better for screening. The interview also helps people understand the length and depth of commitment that online mentoring requires. People typically underestimate the time required when they think about it being on-line (Ellis & Cravens, 2000). Volunteer Match is another great resource for training. The following Webinars can be registered for on their website:

VolunteerMatch 101
Best Practices for Recruiting Online
Skilled Volunteers: How to Maximize their Potential
Managing Difficult Volunteer Transitions
Successful Volunteer Interview Strategies
Boomer Volunteer Engagement Webinars
Introduction and Overview
Structuring for Innovation
Creating Positions, Networking, and Cultivation
Sustaining the Collaboration

Twitter is a popular IT product that would be incorporated in the program implementation. It allows basic updates to be communicated in real time to people via their technology of choice—cell phone or computer. It is designed to be used quickly and frequently. Agencies can utilize Twitter to prompt clients to attend the congregate meals or to contact their mentor or mentee. This is a great tool for the program coordinator to use to encourage participants by reminding them of how important what they are doing is. Twitter can help connect family members and friends that want to be invested in the program. Good idea.

Summary sentence or two?

LOGIC MODEL

Introductory sentence?

If foster youth need social relationships to help build trust to offset their past experiences, and
Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

If foster youth are lacking their natural support network, and
If isolated seniors need social relationships to replace those they have lost, and
If informal reciprocal relationships are a crucial component of an older persons’ physical and mental well-being, and
If friends and families of both foster youth and isolated seniors have limited time and resources to meet these needs, and
If as Dr. Perry states, all children benefit from the natural design of a rich, transgenerational environment, and
If older people can provide younger people with positive role models while young people represent a link to future for older people,
Then intergenerational relationships between foster youth and isolated seniors will help fulfill the social and emotional needs of foster youth and isolated seniors, and
Then social service agencies that serve the needs of foster youth and isolated seniors would be able to provide and support intergenerational relationship for their clients via the recommendations made by this paper, and
Then the focus of resolving the condition of a lack of intergenerational relationship in community shifts from intervention in community to community as intervention, and
Then the community is a healthier and more balanced system, and
If Tarrant County has senior citizens programs targeting isolated elderly citizens, and
All Saints has foster care youth in need of intergenerational relationships, and
Adequate nutrition sites exist with computer facilities for linking seniors with foster care youth, and
You spell out your solution conceptually, but not programmatically.
Then this might be an “A” paper.

EVALUATION

Program evaluation would be conducted annually by on-going participants or as people end their participation in the program by competing a survey at Survey Monkey.com. Survey Monkey allows people to complete a survey on-line that can be used for free and provides a multitude of options for collecting and analyzing survey data. The survey will be designed to measure satisfaction with the overall project and its management, as well as the individual participants in the program. The survey will be clearly presented as an opportunity to improve the program by learning from the experiences of the participants and thank them for their feedback. Staff from all participating agencies that coordinate and supervise participation in the program will complete an annual survey for a pilot program, you need much more feedback than annually. A system like our web-phone system could get feedback weekly at
In order to raise the probability of success, program evaluation must reenter the system as input to control the growth and direction of the system. This is considered utilizing a feedback loop and creates a powerful form of control (Schoech, 1999). There are many possible dimension measures to assess when evaluating the technological application implemented as explained by Schoech in Guidelines for IT Success. Planning is the first and probably the most important step toward success in IT. A long range written plan with clear, up-to-date purposes, goals, objectives, system requirements and mechanisms for evaluation and revision is needed (Schoech, 1999). The characteristics of the application would be evaluated, including: “month of operation, sources of application, application scope, application size, accessibility, flexibility, primary orientation, privacy protected, documentation and reflection of agency operations” (Schoech, 1999, p.357). In order to evaluate the on-line mentoring program, the most important characteristic to evaluate would be accessibility and use. User involvement occurs at multiple levels. Not only are the participants communicating on-line, but involvement of the steering committee, assessment of open communication and involvement in implementation of the program can also be assessed (Schoech, 1999).

A short summary of this solutions part might be useful here.

CONCLUSION

Analysis results indicate that a program providing a social and emotional support network for foster youth and isolated seniors would benefit the social and emotional condition of these populations greatly. However, the populations would have to want to participate. People are not always interested in doing what is good for them. Ideally, the roles of the participants in the program would be ambiguous in order to maintain a balance of reciprocity in the relationship. The isolated seniors would provide mentorship to the foster youth and the foster youth would provide friendship and support to someone that is alone and lonely. This would create a culture of mutual respect. It would imitate the natural design of a rich, transgenerational relational environment that enhances our ability to survive as a species that Dr. Perry talks about. “A community so old-fashioned it is new” is how Ted Koppel of Nightline described Hope Meadows-the community as intervention program. As people continue to live longer, our society will need new and creative ways to meet each other’s needs. Bringing young and old together to nurture each other is a step in that direction. Ft. Worth is a community with transgenerational relational needs. It has the infrastructure readily available to implement a pilot program to test a more online transgenerational model. This model overcomes many of the limitations of previous geographic limited program models while incorporating the strengths of both youth (technology) and seniors (time) to address the relational needs of both. The program if successful could serve as a model for other communities because...
You have a well thought out model which you need to publicize here in the conclusion.
REFERENCES


Intergenerational Relationships between isolated seniors and foster youth

Appendix A - Communities in Schools of North Texas

The mission of Communities in Schools of North Texas is to provide and coordinate community-based solutions that improve learning opportunities and student success for all students. They work to ensure that every student in every school is healthy, safe, engaged, and challenged.

The Search Institute (www.searchinstitute.org)

The Search Institute website provides information on how adults can build bonds in youth by working in their neighborhoods and schools. It also provides research on the social and emotional development of youth.

The Corporation for National & Community Service (www.nationalservice.gov)

This site provides information on available service opportunities, including federal volunteer programs.

What's Hot - Top Mentor Publication (http://www.mentors.org/mentors.html)

This site offers a directory of mentor programs and information on how to become a mentor.

Leadership Development Services (http://www.leadershipdevelopmentservices.com)

This site offers resources and programs for developing leadership skills.

TRACK: TANDS Knowledge and Core Knowledge (http://www.r构思dah.in/)

This site provides information on the Teaching and Learning Knowledge and Core Knowledge Frameworks.

CISNT Criminal Background Check Form (click here to download (pdf)), (click here to download (html))

This site offers a form for conducting a criminal background check.

Student Visit Journal (click here to download (pdf))

This site offers a journal for tracking student visits.

For more information, please contact:

United Way (940) 575-7700

If you have any questions or become a mentor, please call (940) 575-7700. You can also complete an online volunteer application.
Appendix B - Volunteer Match

Find a Place to Volunteer

Enter your ZIP code, city or state and keywords describing the opportunity you're looking for. Or enter the skills you have or would like to develop.

Advanced Search

About VolunteerMatch

VolunteerMatch strengthens communities by making it easier for good people and good causes to connect.

1,175 active opportunities
80,364 participating organizations
4,895,473 referrals since 1999

We rely on the generosity of people like you to help transform people's passions into action.

Donate to VolunteerMatch

Virtual Opportunities

Virtual Opportunities have no set location and can usually be completed from home or anywhere.

Education, Health, Advocacy, Animals, Children

Keyword

Enter a keyword to find the right virtual opportunity for you.

Would you like to help Weyman Johnson, who has MS and is looking for a volunteer to help with his daily activities? He is looking for a volunteer who can help him with daily tasks such as eating, walking, and basic hygiene.

Donna Pool

Donna Pool needs help with her gardening project. She is looking for a volunteer who can help her with planting flowers and vegetable plants. She also needs help with weeding and watering the plants.

Enter Your Organization