



IMPACT REPORT:

DOROT's Intergenerational Programs

August 2023*

ABOUT DOROT

DOROT facilitates a dynamic partnership between older adults, volunteers, and professionals to address social isolation and loneliness. For nearly five decades, DOROT has been dedicated to enhancing the lives of older adults to help them live independently as valued members of the community. With support from more than 6,500 volunteers annually, our community of over 6,000 older adults feel valued, engaged, and connected. We are recognized as an innovative leader in mobilizing volunteers, building a vital social community, and delivering supportive services with excellence.

BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Intergenerational programs at DOROT reflect our commitment to bringing the generations together in a meaningful and impactful way. Over 1,500 youth and young adult volunteers engaged with over 700 older adults through our intergenerational programs in the past year. **At the core of our intergenerational programming is a belief in the inherent need for people of all ages to connect socially and develop compassion for one another through relationships and communal responsibility.** Our program engagement is built on the power of meaningful intergenerational connections to create a community where all participants feel valued and important. Each program reflects our commitment to connecting people of different generations to share personal experiences and perspectives, learn and create with one another, and find meaning in each other's company.

Our approach is supported by the 2023 health advisory issued by U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, who put a national spotlight on the "Epidemic of Social Isolation and Loneliness" in our nation. The report notes that older adults have among the highest rates of social isolation, and youth and young adults are among the loneliest. In the report's recommendations, Dr. Murthy notes that "connections with people who are outside of your group," such as intergenerational connections, are associated with improved community health and well-being.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

DOROT measures our impact on youth and older adult participants using a range of strategies. Post-program surveys administered to both populations include open-ended and scale questions to assess self-reported gains in understanding, knowledge, skills, changes in behavior, ability to reduce barriers to relationships caused by ageism, and the benefits of intergenerational relationships for each generation. Teen and college participants complete the Aging Semantic Differential (ASD) scale (Rosencranz and McNevin) to compare pre- and post-program changes in attitudes towards older adults. DOROT also uses the Net Promoter Score (NPS) across all our programs; this is a customer loyalty measure with a range of -100 to +100 that is based on responses to the question “How likely are you to recommend (this program) to a friend or colleague?” An NPS of 0 is neutral, a score of 50 or over is considered excellent, and 80-plus exceptional. Among DOROT’s intergenerational programs, the NPS ranged between 55 and 80. These results indicate that the vast majority of all of our participants would strongly recommend the program to others.



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OVERALL INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAM IMPACT

Teen/Youth/Older Adult Programs

In the past year, nearly 700 middle and high school students engaged in DOROT’s ongoing intergenerational engagement programs. Among post-survey respondents, 99% believed they could apply what they learned at DOROT with older adults in their personal lives. Older adults reported similar benefits, making the mutual benefit of our intergenerational programs highly evident, as the chart below shows.

Youth	Reflection on their relationships	Older Adults
97%	Were able to “bridge the gap in years”	88%
96%	Found things in common to discuss and enjoy	84%
93%	Felt that they “made a difference” in a person’s life	71%

Skill Development among Teen and College Interns

DOROT welcomed a total of 300 teen and college students who interned between July 2022 through June 2023. Interns who completed post-program surveys reported the following benefits:

- 90% - Improved their communication skills.**
- 85% - Gained professional skills.**
- 85% - Became better listeners.**
- 75% - Became better at working in teams.**

DOROT PROGRAMS AND OUR IMPACT

GENUINE CONNECTIONS™

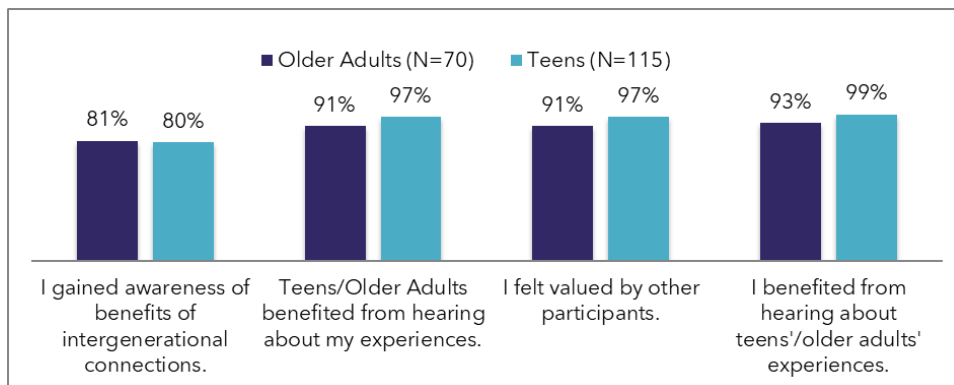
This exclusively online intergenerational community, which was launched during the height of the pandemic, engaged over 370 high school students and 180 older adults who met weekly in small groups for 8- to 10-week terms during the 2022-2023 school year. They participated in activities such as Brain Games, Mindfulness, Chess, Art, Theater, Issues in the News, and Story Circles, leading to the discovery of new and shared perspectives.

Participants from each generation reported similar levels of personal gains and perceived mutual enrichment.

More than 90% of teens and older adult respondents reported benefiting from online intergenerational connections, and 8 in 10 participants reported being more aware of these benefits after completing the program (see graph below). Attitudinal differences (measured by the ASD) became more favorable. At the completion of their program, participating teens showed significant improvement in all three constructs — their perception of older adults' **effectiveness** (e.g., productivity), level of **autonomy**, and **acceptability** (e.g., friendliness) became significantly more favorable after participating in the program.

PARTICIPANTS TOLD US HOW THEY EXPERIENCED MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS.

- "The ability to let down one's guard to an extent and to be freer with others." - Older Adult*
- "Being able to bond with people over a common interest and having a space to try new things." - Teen*
- "The opportunity to connect and discover similarities between generations." - Older Adult*
- "I liked the interactions and the character-building of getting to know one another." - Teen*



**OLDER ADULTS AND TEENS
SHARED WHAT WAS MOST
IMPORTANT ABOUT THEIR
EXPERIENCE:**

- *“Something I got from DOROT that I didn’t expect was deep, sustainable friendships with other teens and older adults... I feel as though I can maintain these friendships for an extended period of time, if not for life.” - Teen*
- *“The variety of music/songs heard from/shared by adults and teens was memorable, educational and transformative, in learning about the diversity of experiences through music.” - Older Adult*
- *“I gained a lot of social confidence. I also reevaluated my values concerning friendships, especially in school.” - Teen*
- *“It was outstanding. Looking forward to participating next year because the program is much needed for teens as well as adults.” - Older Adult*



TEEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Over 200 teens participated in our Teen Internship Program this year, completing 8,250 community service hours and engaging with nearly 300 older adults. This program offers two formats. The first, an immersive 4-week summer program that meets four days per week. The second, a semester-based program during the academic year in which teens dedicate a minimum of one afternoon per week. High school students in both programs develop leadership skills and build relationships with older adults through activities including intergenerational chess, discussion groups, home visits, one-on-one phone calls, creative arts, and tech assistance. Teens shared their perceptions on developing leadership skills with the following benefits reported:

89% - Strengthened/developed leadership skills

82% - Became better at taking initiative

82% - Increased their understanding of how intergenerational engagement can break down social barriers caused by ageism

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

DOROT partners with schools to bridge the generational gap. More than 120 elementary, middle, and high school students engaged in ongoing intergenerational programming with 96 older adults this year.

Middle and high school students reported that they:

- 100% - Got to know an older person.**
- 91% - Learned from an older person.**
- 95% - Want to volunteer more with older adults.**

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS TOLD US:

- "This program inspired me to begin my poetry project."*
- "I love sharing our ideas and opinions on things and learning about cultures and what really the older adult enjoys in life and her stories."*
- "I could connect with people outside of a normal setting, which allowed me to build so many communication skills."*

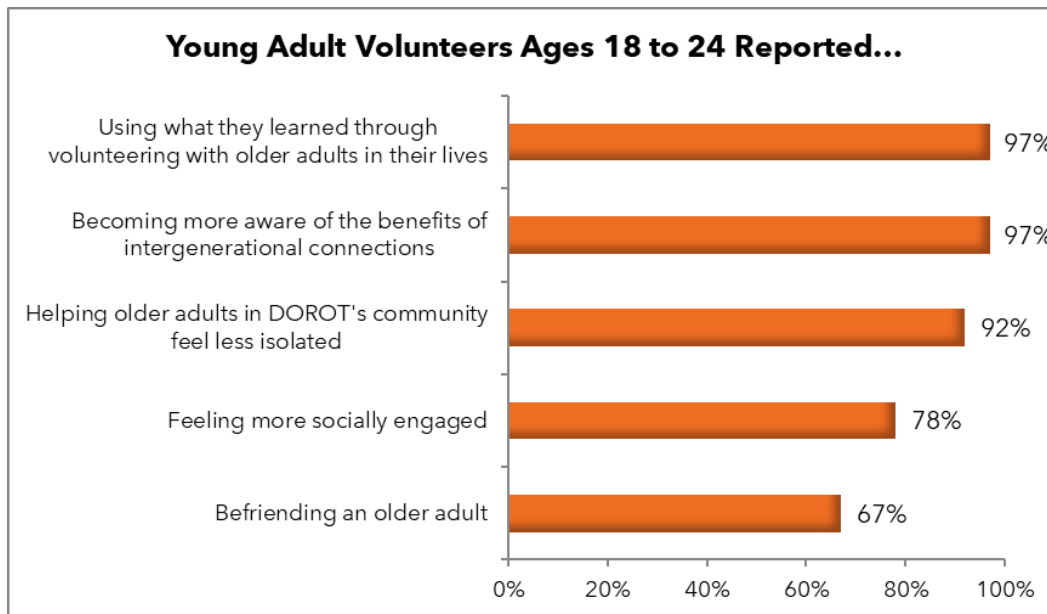
Civic engagement in adolescence and early adulthood positively predicts educational attainment and income potential in adulthood. - The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory

WHAT YOUNG ADULTS VALUE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING WITH DOROT:

- "I value spending time with the older adults since I do not know my grandparents I get to experience hanging out with the older adults for a while."*
- "I loved being able to connect with a person more than 4 times my age. It helped me put some added perspective into my life and I am grateful that I was able to offer my time to a lonely person."*

YOUNG ADULT VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT (AGES 18 TO 24)

Over 400 young adults volunteered to be Tech Coaches, Friendly Visitors, deliver packages, run errands, and participate in Caring Calls friendships. In our online survey of all volunteers (see key results in the table below), **97% said they would use what they learned from the DOROT experience with older adults in their lives** and have become more aware of the benefits of intergenerational connections. In addition, **78% shared that volunteering helped them feel more socially engaged**, and two-thirds made a friend through their volunteer assignment. Results for young adult volunteers highlight the effectiveness of personal engagement as a volunteer to increase the sense of belonging and value – key factors in reducing isolation and loneliness.



College Internship Program

DOROT offered college internships to 48 students who joined us for either the summer or the semester-long, part-time program. Students are placed throughout the organization, work with professional staff, and support our programs. They have opportunities to work directly with older adults onsite, virtually, and through home visits and gain skills in a range of administrative, nonprofit management, and leadership roles. In addition, summer interns also participate in professional development and teambuilding activities.

Among college students who interned with DOROT this year:

100% - Rated the program as an "excellent/very good" learning experience.

93% - Have a better understanding of issues facing older adults.

87% - Gained confidence in work situations.

They also reported changed behaviors towards older adults:

89% - Became more friendly toward older adults.

89% - Changed the way they talked to older adults.

89% - Changed the way they talked about older adults.

76% - Took more notice of ageism in the media.

COLLEGE INTERNS SHARED THEIR EXPERIENCES:

- *There is so much value in building upon a connection continuously. It feels really great to ring someone up and hear how excited they get when they realize it's you. I had the honor of being matched with...an extraordinary woman who is always reminding me of my own wisdom.*
- *I feel more equipped to work with the older adult population. I also think that working with older adults this summer has challenged a lot of my internal biases about the specific population.*



CONCLUSION

DOROT has a rich and successful history in building a vital social community and intergenerational connections for older adults ages 60-100+ to alleviate social isolation and loneliness. Our expertise and service delivery models have been prominently recognized by the Eisner Foundation as a recipient of the “Eisner Prize for Intergenerational Excellence” and by Generations United as a “Program of Distinction.” The heart of our work is participant engagement and community building. We take great care in training staff, volunteers, interns, facilitators, and teaching artists to solicit comments

and input, encourage dialogue, and ensure that everyone has an opportunity to express themselves and build bonds with others. Our programs are interactive, demonstrate mutual benefit for both older adults and volunteers, and are regularly informed by both quantitative and qualitative participant feedback.

To learn more about DOROT’s programs, please visit our website at www.dorotusa.org or call Ali Hodin-Baier, Chief Program Officer, at (917) 441-3711.

