

# In your community

May  
2006



*Building Bridges*



Over 15,000 children, youth and  
senior citizens have been reached  
since 2001

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## FOSTERING CARING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN YOUNG AND OLD

Building Bridges is a community-based intergenerational program to help bring generations together for meaningful interactions and experiences. According to research, younger generation's perceptions of growing older are often influenced by lack of interaction with older adults and images projected by the media. Numerous research findings show benefits of bringing young and old together when intergenerational programs are carefully planned.

In order to help bridge the connection between young and old and promote the value of intergenerational relationships, University of Missouri Extension developed the Building Bridges program. With a strong partnership, 39 schools, nursing homes, senior housing, youth groups, and a churches participated in the program during the 2005 – 2006 school year. The program expanded from Kindergarten to university students and included a diverse population. More than 15,000 children, youth, older adults, and frail seniors have been reached since 2001.

Education, friendship, and caring are major components. The program pre and post test results showed that Building Bridges not only helped young generations practice character traits, but also have more positive perceptions of growing old. The majority of children and youth from Building Bridges felt that they showed their caring, respect and sharing with older adults and made older adults happy and less lonely. Through the program, both generations have a better understanding of each other and their comfort zone for conversation and sharing was enhanced.



For more information, please contact  
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## BUILDING BRIDGES PROGRAM IMPACTS:

Ninety-one percent of children learned how they respect older adults and 87% showed how they cared about older adults through Building Bridges activities.

Children and youth who participated in the Intergenerational Pen Pal or Caring project felt that Building Bridges helped them practice writing and or drawing skills and feel good about writing to an older generation.

About 89.4% of children who had regular contacts and interactions with older adults felt they knew older adults better, compared to 45.2% of children who only participated for a short time or did not have enough interactions with older adults.

## BUILDING BRIDGES PARTICIPANT COMMENTS:

“My students have begun to recognize what things occur as people go through the aging process. They have also experienced how wonderful a friendship with an older person can be. It is very unique.” (from teacher)

“I liked talking to the elder people and hearing about their life and accomplishments.” (from student)

“It was delightful watching the reaction of the Senior Companions when they read the notes and saw the pictures the children drew. I felt the children warmed their hearts and really made them smile.”(from Senior Companion Program)

“I like Building Bridges for one reason; it brings the elderly people and young people together.” (From Palestine Gardens resident)

“I think it is a terrific program. I think it is good for the children to hear how it was when we “oldies” grew up.” (from senior citizen)

**For more information about the Building Bridges Program  
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