



Waltham Connections
for Healthy Aging

Waltham Sages & Seekers Program Evaluation, May 2024

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Introduction

In April 2022, Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging organized an Aging Summit. At the Summit, intergenerational activities were selected as an area of interest in Waltham. An intergenerational planning group of volunteers was formed, and the Sages & Seekers program was selected for replication. Sages & Seekers is a national, award-winning program that brings seniors (Sages) and young adults (Seekers) together to share their experiences through one-on-one conversation. Bentley University's Service Learning and Civic Engagement program agreed to become our partner.

This spring, 14 Sages and 7 Seekers met weekly over seven weeks, for one hour each week, to share their knowledge and life experiences. Both groups learned from one another, building a community based on mutual respect and understanding. The following report captures the results of a post-program survey for both Sages and Seekers.



Sages & Seekers Spring 2024 cohort.

Sages Evaluation

12 senior respondents were asked to circle yes or no for each question with the option to provide a written explanation.

Do you feel the S&S program enhanced your overall well-being?

100% said Yes

- ❖ “It was wonderful to speak with our new generation and learn that we are in good hands for our country”
- ❖ “Something to look forward to on Monday morning (instead of exercise)”
- ❖ “It was wonderful to connect on such a deep level with a college student”
- ❖ “I looked forward to Mondays”
- ❖ “More positive about the future after knowing these positive young people”
- ❖ “Yes, made me less nervous about younger people”
- ❖ “So nice to connect with a young person, share stories and experiences
Increased confidence in the future of the world”
- ❖ “I really enjoyed talking to my seeker. I looked forward to our weekly meetings”
- ❖ “Looked forward to it. Developed a great relationship”
- ❖ “The program let me meet great kids”

Do you feel the S&S was successful in promoting a positive image of aging?

100% said Yes

- ❖ “I came into this thinking, ‘what does anyone want to know about me’ and learned immediately how much we have in common with the youth of today and how we can impart our experiences to help them manage the good and bad times in life”
- ❖ “All people in this group appeared active and positive-otherwise they would not be here”
- ❖ “Absolutely – it gave students a chance to see that age doesn't always mean decline in thinking, connecting or physical ability”

➤ *The Seekers noted this in their presentations*

- ❖ “I think when you get to know someone on a personal basis, age doesn't matter”
- ❖ “Every Sage presented a positive image of aging”
- ❖ “I think us sages did a pretty good job of promoting that. Or more realistically presenting the rich mixed thing that is aging. It is in some ways wonderful and in some ways a drag”
- ❖ “Yes, and positive image of ‘youngsters’”
- ❖ It showed that we don't stop learning at an old age”

Do you feel that S&S was successful in connecting and engaging?

100% said Yes

- ❖ “We will probably contact each other next fall”
- ❖ “Definitely, it was terrific to have 5 weeks to talk to our seeker and build a strong bond”
- ❖ “I was surprised at how we connected”
- ❖ “The standard questions helped initiate conversations”
- ❖ “We all seemed deeply connected and engaged”

Do you feel your Seeker contributed to your life?

100% said Yes

- ❖ “It was a joy to get to know each of the students and the conversations flowed so easily”
- ❖ “I realized a lot of young people, especially at Bentley, wanted to be involved in this program”
- ❖ “Very much so. I think I have made a friend for life. I feel appreciated, heard, understood, and cared for”
- ❖ “She was a very positive person – loving and caring”
- ❖ “I looked forward to Monday mornings!”
- ❖ “Yes, it helped me understand my own past”

- ❖ “So nice to hear the perspective of a young person. So impressed with all the seekers!”
- ❖ “Gave me a better understanding of younger people's lives”
- ❖ “Yes, but I hope I contributed more to hers.”
- ❖ “Discussions brought new perspectives”

Do you feel you contributed to your Seeker's life?

100% said Yes

- ❖ “It was reflected in the beautiful and rewarding letter I received”
- ❖ “To realize you can be an adventurer at any age”
- ❖ “Yes, I shared information I've learned over decades and she spoke her gratitude”
- ❖ “I hope so. I hope my experiences that I shared may be helpful to my Seeker”
- ❖ “My life experience gave him a heads up on what he could encounter”
- ❖ “I hope so,” *this was echoed by another Sage*
- ❖ “Definitely. On lots of topics. I hope and think some of what we discussed will change my seeker's life for the better”
- ❖ “Was able to share things about my life that she related to”

Seekers Evaluation

7 young adult participants gave verbal responses

Do you have more interest in meeting older adults now?

- ❖ 100% said yes

Do you feel more empathy for older adults and the process of aging?

- ❖ 100% said yes

Have you learned something about yourself through your conversations?

- ❖ 100% said yes

Do you feel you contributed to your Sage's life?

- ❖ Only one stepped forward confidently, the rest said something to the effect of "I hope so but I can't be sure"

Did you enjoy having an hour to speak with someone who listened?

- ❖ 100% said yes

Do you feel the S&S program enhanced your quality of life?

- ❖ 100% said yes