

Introduction

Older adults are at higher risk for social isolation and loneliness. Studies suggest that the lack of social connection increases physical and mental illness (NIH.gov, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social isolation and loneliness, especially in marginalized and underserved communities. Through intergenerational engagement, my project sought to improve social connection and empower community.

Logic Model

Outcomes

- Reduced social isolation and loneliness
- Reduced physical and mental health risks
- Improved social connection

Outputs

- Improved LSNS scores on post-surveys
- Older adults report reduced loneliness
- Younger adults share their stories and appreciation for connecting with older adults

Activities

- Community Conversations at SocialVenture
- Community outings with Woodlawn matriarchs
- 1v1 conversations with project participants
- Landscaping/harvesting projects at JVTF
- Community quilt project at SocialVenture

Inputs

- 200 volunteer hours
- Facilitator training
- Listening ears
- Money (for outings with older adults)

Impact

Using the Lubben Social Network Scale, project participants reported reduced social isolation and loneliness through intergenerational engagement. By partnering older adults with Jones Valley Teaching Farm apprentices, our project facilitated communal conversations that nurtured a sense of belonging through discussions on mental health, food & nutrition, and social justice.



Woodlawn Matriarch imparting wise words on JVTF Apprentices



JVTF Apprentices embrace Woodlawn Matriarch

Critical Assessment

Initially, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a great challenge in our ability to interact as much as we wanted to in-person. Thankfully, we already established good rapport and were able to sustain conversations via telephone, particularly during COVID-19 spikes. We are a resilient group, and I am thankful for the connections we’ve made through ASF. A quote that our Community Site Mentor of the Year (T. Marie King) honoree shared with us is that “we are constantly in a storm, coming out of a storm, or going into a storm – have the stamina to endure by investing in each other as a community.”

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