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TEENS DO CARE

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TEENS DO CARE
JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE
71 WEST NORTHAMPTON STREET
WILKES-BARRE, PA 18701



**TEENS
DO
CARE**

SPONSORED BY

**JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE
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TEENS**DO****CARE**

HISTORY

The Wyoming Valley is among the top five areas in the nation with respect to percent of senior citizens. It is important that the different generations develop a respect and understanding of one another so that the Wyoming Valley can continue to grow.

Teens Do Care (TDC) was developed in the late 1980s. At that time a high school student came to Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Greater Wilkes-Barre seeking to do volunteer work with the elderly. The idea that high school students would visit lonely nursing home residents in the Wyoming Valley was created. Students from seven area high schools became involved in the lives of senior citizens in seven area nursing homes. The students not only volunteered, but they also administered the program. In 1991, Teens Do Care was named one of President Bush's 1000 Points of Light, being honored for an outstanding youth initiative.

In the late 1990s, many of the students who kept the program active graduated and left the area to attend college. It was apparent that Teens Do Care needed reorganization. The program's administration became the direct responsibility of JFS of Greater Wilkes-Barre. It was restructured so that seniors in assisted living facilities and senior apartment complexes could benefit from student visits.

TODAY

Teens Do Care is an intergenerational program for students between the ages of 13 and 18. The students meet twice monthly for an hour during an 18-week period. They get together in the community rooms of participating facilities. A qualified, responsible adult supervises all meetings. Each student is trained to conduct a reminiscence. This process not only helps the senior feel a sense of purpose, which raises their self-esteem, but is also a learning process for the student.

Seniors are given the opportunity to tell about the first person for whom they voted, their first driving experience, and other fond memories such as the first time they fell in love. The teens and the seniors have group discussions to learn how views of their generations differ. Students are given the opportunity to bring some of the history they learned in school to life.

At the end of 18 weeks, many of the teens know more about their match than they know about their grandparents. The participants are given an evaluation to complete at the closure



party. This input is an opportunity for JFS to make appropriate changes for the growth of the program, and to maintain it as an asset for the community.

Quote from one teen participant...**"Once after returning home from a Teens Do Care meeting, I was driving up the street that leads to my neighborhood and I had a moment of realization. What I came to understand was that I am truly blessed to have such an incredible opportunity to learn from these wise individuals. My match is not only one of the sweetest people I have ever met, but also a mentor".**

PURPOSE

Outcomes of intergenerational programs have been reported to make a positive difference for both youth and older adults.

TDC is a multipurpose intergenerational program. It eliminates loneliness in the elderly, bridges the gap between generations, and increases self-esteem. The program affords participants the opportunity to transfer culture, knowledge, skills and values between generations.

Teens Do Care students and senior volunteers take pride in giving of themselves. They see the importance of getting to know and understand each other's generations. They become involved in each other's lives by acknowledging that they can learn from one another.

RECRUITMENT

The strength of TDC is based on the volunteers who participate in the program. Student interest is generated at the school level through guidance counselors, clubs, and those who have been involved in the program. Informational get-togethers are held for students and parents to orient them to the program.

Meetings are also held in the community rooms of senior residential facilities. At these times, seniors are given the opportunity to make a difference not only in their lives, but also in the lives of a younger generation. This also creates an opening for improved socialization of the seniors.

THE FUTURE

Teens Do Care seeks to expand its program to new schools, assisted living and senior residential facilities, and senior centers. With a group of caring and ambitious participants, whose goal is to bridge the generation gap, TDC will become a more significant influence in the community.



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