

## How LITA's Bridging Generations Program Mitigates Social Isolation in Older Adults

### Social Isolation in Older Adults is Commonplace and Unhealthy

Social isolation is related to a host of medical, psychological and personal health implications in older adults. According to a recent UCSF study:

- People 60 years and older who reported feeling lonely faced a 45 percent increased risk of mortality.
- More than 40 percent of older adults experience loneliness on a regular basis.

### LITA's Bridging Generations Program Builds Friendships

LITA's Bridging Generations program links elementary school students with residents of Marin long-term care facilities for monthly visits during the school year. During each one-hour visit, students work with residents on art projects, games, life stories and engage in other fun, meaningful ways. As much as possible, one or two students remain linked to a participating resident for the entire school year.



### In the News

January 17, 2018

**The New York Times**

*U.K. Appoints a Minister for Loneliness*

September 18, 2018

**The Washington Post**

*Empathy, patience and more – when kids visit assisted-living facilities, everyone benefits*



Marin County's Board of Supervisors deemed 2018 'The Year of the Older Adult.' LITA supports the County's efforts to ensure that not only 2018, but every year will be "The Year of the Older Adult."



## Findings: 4 Years of Bridging Generations Surveys

### Bridging Generations' Impact on Students

During the past four years, 135 students in 11 classes completed questionnaires in the Spring and Fall to assess what they learned about older adults as a result of the Bridging Generations program. A dramatic change in how the children view older adults occurred over the school year.

Prior to their first visit and after their last, students were asked to list 2 words that describe an older person. A 35% increase in the use of positive words took place over the year.

There was a 69% increase in the number of students who used two positive words to describe older persons from Fall to Spring as well as a 58% decrease in the number of students using only negative or neutral words.

**NICE cool Wise Sweet Kind FUN**  
**Happy Funny**

*When does someone become old?*

By Spring the average response was 70 years old, a 4 year increase from the Fall

## Creating Intergenerational Understanding and Abating Loneliness

### Teachers' Evaluations of the Bridging Generations Program

At the end of the school year, participating teachers were asked how things had gone for their students. Some teacher comments include:

- "I talked with a former student who said her most meaningful memories of my class were our visits to the nursing home."
- "It is such a special opportunity for my students – they value their time with the residents. For some, this is one of only a few opportunities they've had with older adults."

### About LITA

Since 1975, LITA has improved the quality of life for Marin's older adults living in long-term care facilities by matching volunteers with residents for regular visits.

Read the full study at:  
[litamarin.org/bridginggenerations](http://litamarin.org/bridginggenerations)

### Activity Directors Describe Bridging Generations' Impact on Residents

When Activity Directors at participating facilities were asked what impact they saw on residents over the course of the year, comments included:

- "The program does an about face on our residents' mood levels - most definitely. We see smiles light up their faces! Grumblyings turn to grins. They begin to think outside of themselves away from physical and emotional pain. It is beautiful to see. The children are full of life and so compassionate."

*"There is so much love from the children – what a joy it is for me!"*

- "The residents will often only get visitors on the weekends, if at all. The children's energy boosts their energy and spirits. In fact, some of our residents who like to stay to themselves often surprise us and choose to join this activity!"