

CONNECTING GENERATIONS Update November December 2014



Connecting Generations Advisory Committee meeting November 19th 2014

Elearning course

Glen Woodley of the Salt Spring Foundation Grants Committee attended our Advisory Committee meeting on November 19th to award a grant to the School District for an elearning course that will support mentors (and mentees) who participate in Connecting Generations or Salt Spring Literacy programs.

Our objective for **Connect and Learn** is to develop an online course that will address the needs of community mentors who have already volunteered their time to assist in the programs and also those of community members who are looking for inspiration, encouragement and support in order to become involved as mentors. The online course will present guidelines, suggestions and interactive opportunities for users and will include videoed interviews with community members who have already been involved with Connecting Generations.

Holly McDonald of Spark and Co will be mentoring Dexter Nash a Grade 12 student throughout the process. At each stage of its creation we will be inviting input and asking for feedback from committee members, community mentors and students who have been/are involved in Connecting Generations.

GISS

New volunteers

12 new adult volunteers have joined Connecting Generations this Fall. Among the “new” conversations that are taking place:

ESL

With 3 newcomers there are now 7 adults regularly spending time in the English Language classroom, helping international students on a one-to-one basis with their written and oral language skills and by being there, welcoming them to our community!

Classroom visitors

Following a visit to a Grade 11 Socials class in October, Nigel Fisher, Canadian diplomat and recipient of the Order of Canada, met with a group of enthusiastic students last week to talk about ***how young people can connect with Order of Canada holders to engage other Canadians in conversation about Canada.***

Mentorships

A retired educator is meeting with a Phoenix student to share an interest in photography.

A retired lawyer is meeting with a Grade 9 student who is autistic, helping him to work on his social skills.

A local artisan is offering a Grade 12 student an apprenticeship in leatherwork that will include the possibility of a summer job.

GISS Intergenerational Writers' Group

We have 11 regular student members and now 4 adults attending weekly meetings. During the last 2 weeks before Christmas we started the **Travelling Writers' Workshop Tour**, to share the fun of recording and speaking our words and creating images. So far we have visited 3 classes and in January we are booked to go into 4 more.

Paper Airplanes Anthology

On December 18th, we launched last year's anthology of writing contributed by student and adult members of the GISS Writers' Group. The event was well attended and special guests included Emily Dunsmuir who has beautifully prepared the book for print and Kathy Page, Salt Spring based novelist whose encouragement 2 and a half years ago led to the founding of our group.



Launch party December 18th

Other Connecting Generations activities at GISS

ESL tutoring

A Grade 12 student meets with a young man from Thailand to tutor him in English during a "Flex Block" once a week. The connection, organized jointly through Salt Spring Literacy and Connecting Generations will count officially as work/volunteer experience for the GISS student.

Plugged-In

2 students in Grades 9 and 10 are the core of our Plugged-In program this year. In addition to coaching 2 adults during a lunch hour once a week, these students are paying home visits to a couple needing help to set up a computer.

SIMS

A dance and yoga instructor is teaching the SIMS Dance Club once a week. Her fees are to be paid via the SIMS PAC.

A student interested in apprenticing in glass blowing will be spending the afternoon at the Glass Foundry in January.

FERNWOOD ELEMENTARY

In addition to the ongoing weekly meetings of a retired educator and a grade 4 student with a mutual interest in paleontology, 2 more adults are now meeting with elementary students.



Showing off the first birdhouse

Jeff and Liam have been building birdhouses during the last 6 weeks. In January a retired professor of Physics is looking forward to spending time once a week with a student interested in “solving logic problems”. The Big Brothers, Big Sisters program will be expanding to Fernwood in January. As part of the promotion the 2 programs (CG and BBs, BSs) will be collaborating to support one another through articles in the newspaper etc.

Some statistics...

We compiled some Connecting Generations statistics recently for a grant application. Here they are, updated to reflect current activities:

- We have the names and short bios of over 400 participants on the *Living Links* database including more than 200 adults who have expressed interest in being involved in **Connecting Generations**.
- Over the last 3 and a half years 180 adults have engaged in conversations with youth, on a one-to-one basis, in small groups, with a class of students and/or at a forum.

- Representatives of upwards of 14 organizations have participated in **Connecting Generations** programs
- There are 170 students on the database of whom 143 are alumni who have already been involved with **Connecting Generations** at some point during the last 3 years. This does not include whole classes who have participated in the program when adults have visited their classroom.
- So far this year 25 students have engaged in one-to-one or small group conversations and 8 classes have had adults visiting, either to work with students on a one-to-one basis or to have a presentation followed by a dialogue with students during class time. Of these, 7 conversations are an ongoing weekly event and 4 of the students are engaging in conversations around their particular interests with the explicit goal of supporting them with social/emotional/mental health issues.
- During the last 3 years of the program we have witnessed more and more the social and emotional rewards that come with face-to-face conversations between adults and youth. By focusing on this aspect of the program in building our elearning course we hope to promote the long-term benefits of intergenerational contacts for individuals and for our community.