

Information Guide

Topic: Senior Centers

Who?- A senior center is a place where older adults can live to have their emotional or physical needs taken care of. The average age is 75 years old.

Where?- There is usually 1 senior center in every town/city/community. You can find out where your local senior center is!

When?- Good volunteer hours for senior centers include during holidays, especially Valentine's Day and Christmas. Make sure to check your senior center's volunteer days and hours. Holidays can be an especially hard time for seniors if they do not have someone to share it with, and they always look forward to having fun with volunteers.

What?- There is a wide range of opportunities to help local senior citizens and many activities to choose from. A list is as follows;

- making and passing out holiday cards
- choose your favorite book and bring it to a senior center to read to someone
- Play board games and card games
- talking with a senior about their life and interests (discussions)
- arts and crafts
- meals (if center allows)
- etc.

Why?- Senior centers help people (who usually don't have anyone capable of taking care of them), get their needs taken care of whether it be medical, physical, emotional,

or mental. They provide an adequate home for aging people to meet their needs and desires.

How?- These centers rely on many different forms of funding such as government funding, special events, public and private grants, businesses, and most importantly, volunteers! Most centers rely on 3-8 different sources for funding.

Before:

Have a discussion with your child about what to expect when they enter a senior citizen center. Be sure to explain how age can sometimes affect a person's personality or behavior. Give your child a few conversation starters for the seniors (especially ones that relate to your interests) such as;

- What's your favorite book?
- What was your job?
- Have you ever been to an interesting places?
- What did you like to do when you were my age?
- What's your favorite food?
- What's your favorite board game?
- Do you have a favorite sport?

Also, talk to your child about their expectations. Ask them if they are nervous, excited, etc. Be sure to describe what you will be doing during the experience. If the child will be going into the area concerning people with mental disabilities, prepare the child and tell them what to expect. You should also have a discussion before you go into the senior center. Here are a few questions you can ask your child.

- How do you think senior centers help our community?
- Why are senior centers important?
- How can we make this experience the best it can be?
- What do you think you can learn from talking to people of varying experience and age?

During:

- Observe experiences your child has had to discuss later.
- Take pictures!
- Provide guidance for your child during the activity

After:

Have a reflection on the experience. Talk about your experiences and what you have learned. Comment on what you noticed about your child's experiences and who they met and talked to. Additionally, discuss the accomplishments your child achieved.

Reflection Questions:

- How has the experience helped you become a better person? (skills they have learned)
- How do senior centers help people?
- Did you encounter anything different or unusual? Discuss.
- How do volunteers make a difference in the lives of seniors?

Resources:

- *The Giving Tree* By Shel Silverstein

This book, great for all ages, tells the story of a tree and a boy and the art of helping others.

- *Mr. George Baker* By Amy Hest

Friendship can last throughout a lifetime. George Baker and his young neighbor, Harry, are learning to read at the same time. Follow their friendship through their journey in tackling this new skill.