

# Generation Xchange Program

## Our Mission

To promote greater health and wellness outcomes for retired and senior-aged volunteers while simultaneously supporting greater academic achievement of youth in the Los Angeles.

## Our Team

The UCLA Division of Geriatrics has partnered with the Los Angeles Urban League, one of the nation's leading civil rights and community empowerment organizations in this effort. The program is co-lead by the Los Angeles Urban League's Director of Health Initiatives D'Ann Morris, and Teresa Seeman, Professor of Geriatrics & Epidemiology at the David Geffen School of Medicine.

## Our Sponsors

The Generation Xchange program would not have been possible without the generous support from

- The Ruby Family Foundation (Ken & Wendy Ruby)
- The Eisner Foundation

## What We Do

The LA Generation Xchange (GenX) Project places older volunteers into K-3rd grade elementary school classrooms to help students improve reading and math skills. GenX is designed as a truly inter-generational program, providing benefits to each generation involved in the program.

For the older adults, GenX addresses health promotion by appealing to their interest in helping young children to draw them into a program that is structured to provide health promotion through the social, physical and

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## Giving Back Through Generation Xchange: One Volunteer's Journey



*Linda Ricks, a retired office manager and longtime community advocate, was one of the first volunteers to join the Generation Xchange program when it began at Angeles Mesa Elementary School. Ms. Ricks has done extensive volunteer work within her local community and has contributed greatly to the development of the Generation Xchange program through her tireless volunteer efforts. Currently, Ms. Ricks volunteers an average of 15 hours each week.*

## What drove you to volunteer for the LA Generation Xchange Project?

I have always loved reading to younger children and began doing so at the age of 11. Over the years I continued and was very active in a reading program at my local library. When the program ended I channeled my energy into other community improvement efforts including but not limited to the development of the Hyde Park Miriam Matthews Library. When I learned about the Generation Xchange program and its effort to help the young children in our local school and couldn't wait to sign up.

## How has the program benefited you since you began volunteering?

I really, really enjoy seeing the young people's faces each morning. Children today deal with so much more than I did when I was child. They are exposed to too much, too soon and have a lot on their shoulders. I get so much satisfaction knowing that I'm doing my part to ensure that they get the education they need to be successful. One of these children may be my healthcare provider one day or may be responsible for filling my prescription in the pharmacy. I'm helping to make sure they have what they need to do a good job

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## What We Do *Continued from Page 1*

cognitive activities that are integral to the participation in GenX.

For the children, GenX seeks to improve academic and behavioral outcomes, with particular attention to support for reading proficiency as successful educational trajectories have been shown to depend on learning to read by 3rd grade (e.g., children who fail to achieve such proficiency are significantly more likely to drop out before high school graduation).

Through its intergenerational design, GenX seeks to create a “win-win” situation whereby older adults “win” health benefits through participation in the program that creates academic and behavioral “wins” for K-3rd graders.

## The Program’s Impact

The GenX program is entering its 2<sup>nd</sup> full year of operation. In that time the program has witnessed the following results:

### Student Outcomes

- ❖ 60% decrease in office referrals for classes with GenX volunteers
- ❖ Increased levels of classroom engagement and time on task
- ❖ Decreased absentee and tardiness rates for classrooms with GenX volunteers

### Health Outcomes

- ❖ A combined volunteer weight loss of more than 100lbs
- ❖ 50% of volunteers have increased the number of days they exercise by a minimum of 1 day
- ❖ 75% of volunteer have increased their daily activity level by 20 to 40%
- ❖ 60% of volunteers have increased their intake of fresh fruits and vegetables
- ❖ 20% of volunteers have reported feeling happier and more satisfied personally as a result of their participation in the program
- ❖ Improved mobility and stamina (ability to climb stairs)
- ❖ Increased social interaction

## Giving Back Through Generation Xchange: One Volunteer’s Journey

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keeping me well! I also love seeing the children learn. I never thought I would or could get excited about a child being able to recite their alphabets. After working with a few children last year who were behind and seeing the progress they made over the year, both are now able to recite the alphabet without help, I was

nearly in tears. They love learning and I love helping them learn.

Beyond the benefits to the children, I have witnessed several of my own health benefits. When I started the program I had a hard time going up and down the stairs without stopping once or twice along the way. Now I can go up and down the stairs without stopping and without being short of breath. I walk more and eat healthier foods. I’ve lost over 30lbs since I began with the program. My doctor thinks this program is the best weight loss program since Weight Watchers! Now that my blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and weight are down, he tells me often I should have started volunteering with GenX 10 years ago.

## Would you recommend the project to other people?

I would and I have. GenX is an excellent program. It’s a win-win-win: the school wins because it gets more adults in the schools that can support teachers’ efforts, the children win because they get more caring adults in the classroom and more personalized attention, and the volunteers win because they get to help in their local community and improve their health in the process. What’s not to love about this program? There are many people in our community who feel that the schools are failing, that the students are out of control, that not enough is being done. I say to them, “Get up and get involved. Be a part of the solution”. Our teachers and school administrators have a lot on their plates. More now than ever they have to wear many hats: teacher, mother, father, disciplinarian, nurse, comforter, infuser of morals, etc. The community needs to do its part to help them. The community needs to get back into the schools and help them become what we want them to be. Generation Xchange is a great way to provide that help.

## Contact Us

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