

Sharing Community Stories Project Evaluation

*Prepared for the Minnesota Historical
Society*

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Prepared by:

Ela Rausch

Wilder Research
451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700
www.wilderresearch.org

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Phil Cooper
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April Lott
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Nicole MartinRogers
Ryan McArdle
Jennifer Valorose

Sharing Community Stories Project Highlights

In 2010, with funding provided by the State of Minnesota's Legacy Fund, the Minnesota Historical Society hosted intergenerational projects at 12 different sites across Minnesota. More than 90 youth and 70 older adults in Elk River, Grand Rapids, Granite Falls, Little Falls, Pine City, Saint Paul, Spring Valley, Virginia, Wadena, Warroad, and Willmar participated in projects that used art as a medium for exploring and sharing local history. Collectively known as the Sharing Community Stories Project, these intergenerational collaborations provided an opportunity to build relationships between members of older and younger generations, increase students' appreciation for Minnesota history, and recognize the importance of older adults and their role in transmitting community history. An evaluation of the project was conducted by Wilder Research and Minnesota Historical Society staff. Below are some highlights:

- **99%** of youth participants felt that the older adults in their community had a lot of valuable knowledge and wisdom to share.
- **96%** of youth participants said that the Sharing Community Stories increased their appreciation for Minnesota History.
- **96%** of older adult participants felt that, through Sharing Community Stories, they were able to play an important role in passing along their community's history.
- **96%** of youth and older adult participants would recommend Sharing Community Stories to others.

[This project] allowed me to go down memory lane and express my thoughts. I really liked having our stories be a part of the Minnesota Historical Society. It's a record for posterity. –*Older adult project participant*

Listening to your elders teaches you a lot you never knew about your community. –*Youth project participant*

I hope it expands to include more schools and students. I'm happy my tax dollars are being used for a [project] like this. –*Community member*

[This project was] terrific. When I retire, I'll do this kind of thing. I hope still there will be groups to join! –*Community member*

Introduction

The mission of the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) is to foster among people an awareness of the Minnesota history so that they may draw strength and perspective from the past and find purpose for the future. One of the primary ways that MHS carries out its mission is by providing communities the opportunity to transmit local history through intergenerational collaborations. The use of art as a medium for teaching history is one of their key strategies for promoting community engagement. In 2010, with funding provided by the State of Minnesota's Legacy Fund, MHS hosted intergenerational projects at 12 different sites across Minnesota. Project participants included more than 90 youth and 70 older adults in the following communities: Elk River, Grand Rapids, Granite Falls, Little Falls, Pine City, Saint Paul, Spring Valley, Virginia, Wadena, Warroad, and Willmar. Between the months of April and October 2010, youth ages 7 to 22 worked with older adults in the community to learn about local history and culture through theatre, bookmaking, gardening, film, photography, scrapbooking, quilting, and cooking. Participants at each site explored different historical topics and art mediums. For a detailed description of each project, see Appendix. At all sites, community members were invited to experience participants' final projects at a public event.

In February 2010, MHS contracted with Wilder Research to evaluate these site projects collectively known as the Sharing Community Stories Project. With input from MHS staff, Wilder Research designed self-administered surveys, a focus group discussion guide, and pre- and post-tests to measure the project's outcomes. Wilder also designed comment cards to gather feedback from community members who attended public events that showcased participants' work. MHS staff and community partners were responsible for administering these tools after receiving training from Wilder. To view these tools, see Appendix.

Desired project outcomes included:

- Youth have increased knowledge of community history
- Youth have increased knowledge related to practical life skills
- Youth demonstrate increased interest in history and museums
- Older adults feel that their experiences are an important part of community history
- Youth and older adults have increased positive feelings about one another

Limited time, the disabilities of older adults (including memory loss), and irregular attendance at some sites presented unforeseen evaluation challenges. These challenges were addressed by using a flexible approach to evaluation that included the collection of data from core participants at each site using both in-person and telephone methods.

This report presents the findings of our prescribed evaluation and provides recommendations for improving the Sharing Community Stories Project in the future.

Participant characteristics

Below are the characteristics of core project attendees who participated in the evaluation. This group includes an estimated four-fifths of all youth participants and three-quarters of all older adult participants. All major age and ethnic groups were represented.

1. Youth participant characteristics

Youth	N=75
Gender	
Male	30%
Female	70%
Age	
Under 12	30%
12 to 14	28%
15 to 18	37%
19 to 22	6%
Race	
White	60%
Of Color	40%
American Indian	12%
Asian	4%
Black	3%
Other race	1%
More than one race	16%

2. Adult participant characteristics

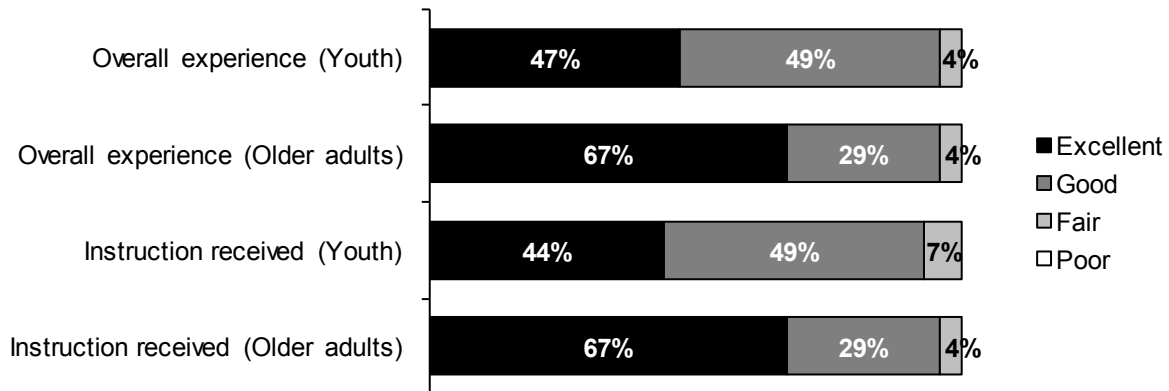
Adults	N=52
Gender	
Male	40%
Female	60%
Race	
White	78%
Of Color	22%
American Indian	4%
Asian	8%
Black	10%
Age	
Under 60	10%
60-69	27%
70-79	35%
80-89	25%
90 and over	4%

Findings

Participants' overall experience

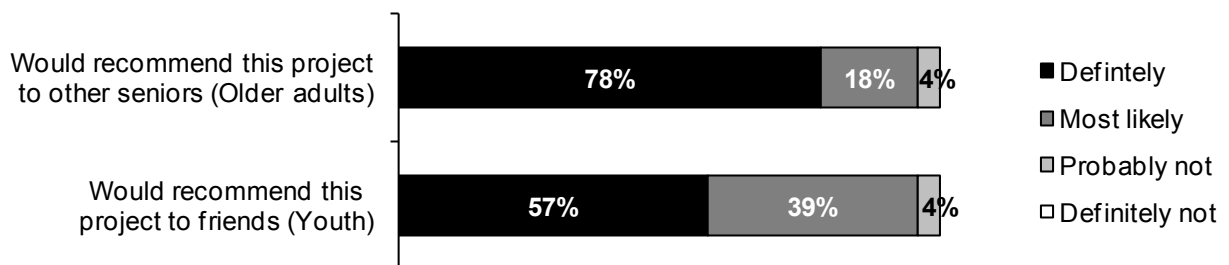
Results indicate that nearly all Sharing Community Stories Project participants had a positive experience. More than 95 percent of youth and older adults who participated in the evaluation rated their overall experience with the project as either “good” or “excellent.” Most participants also rated project instructors highly. More than 90 percent of participants said the instruction they received was either “good” or “excellent.” Older adults were more likely than youth to rate their overall experience and instruction as “excellent.”

3. Participants' rating of their overall project experience and instruction received



Nearly all older adult participants and youth participants said they would recommend Sharing Community Stories to others.

4. Participants' likelihood of recommending the project to others



Below are some comments from youth and older adult participants on what they enjoyed most about the Sharing Community Stories Project. For site-specific comments, see Appendix.

Youth comments

I enjoyed almost everything about the [project]. The lessons were fun. I loved walking around Pine City and learning about the places and the buildings.

Being able to meet new people and being able to be involved in the whole project.

Getting to hear stories and know more knowledge from the older generations.

Getting to learn history and live it. Meeting with the Civilian Conservation Corps men and hearing their stories.

Just learning something different. Something that is really going to affect our community and not just something in a book.

Older adult comments

Refreshing my memory on local and state history and learning more from the other seniors in the circle.

Meeting and interacting with the young girls. They were interested about the early years of Warroad and that brought back many pleasant memories.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part was working with the students, noting their interest and enthusiasm. Great group of students!

Sharing a new way of life that the youngsters were not aware of. I feel that opened up their minds to a different world.

[This project] allowed me to go down memory lane and express my thoughts. I really liked having our stories be a part of the Minnesota Historical Society. It's a record for posterity.

Project impact on knowledge and skills

Increasing youth knowledge about community history and practical life skills were two primary objectives of the Sharing Community Stories Project. Results show that all project sites were successful in both areas. All youth participants said that they learned at least “a little” new information by participating in the project, and more than half said that they learned “a lot.”

5. Amount of new information learned by youth participants by site

	A lot	Some	A little	None
All sites	53%	40%	7%	-
Elk River Garden	-	100%	-	-
Grand Rapids Civilian Conservation Corps	100%	-	-	-
Granite Falls Theater	44%	33%	22%	-
Little Falls Scrapbook	60%	20%	20%	-
Pine City Photography	60%	40%	-	-
Saint Paul Theater	33%	67%	-	-
Saint Paul Website	36%	64%	-	-
Spring Valley Book	75%	25%	-	-
Wadena Teen Playwright	40%	60%	-	-
Warroad Ladies of the Lake Quilt	75%	25%	-	-
Willmar Documentary	33%	33%	33%	-
Virginia Cookbook	100%	-	-	-

Below are some comments from youth about what they felt was the most important thing they learned.

That listening to your elders teaches you a lot you never knew about your community.

That the involvement of the community matters and affects the transitions of the area.

How much value and importance stories and memories have.

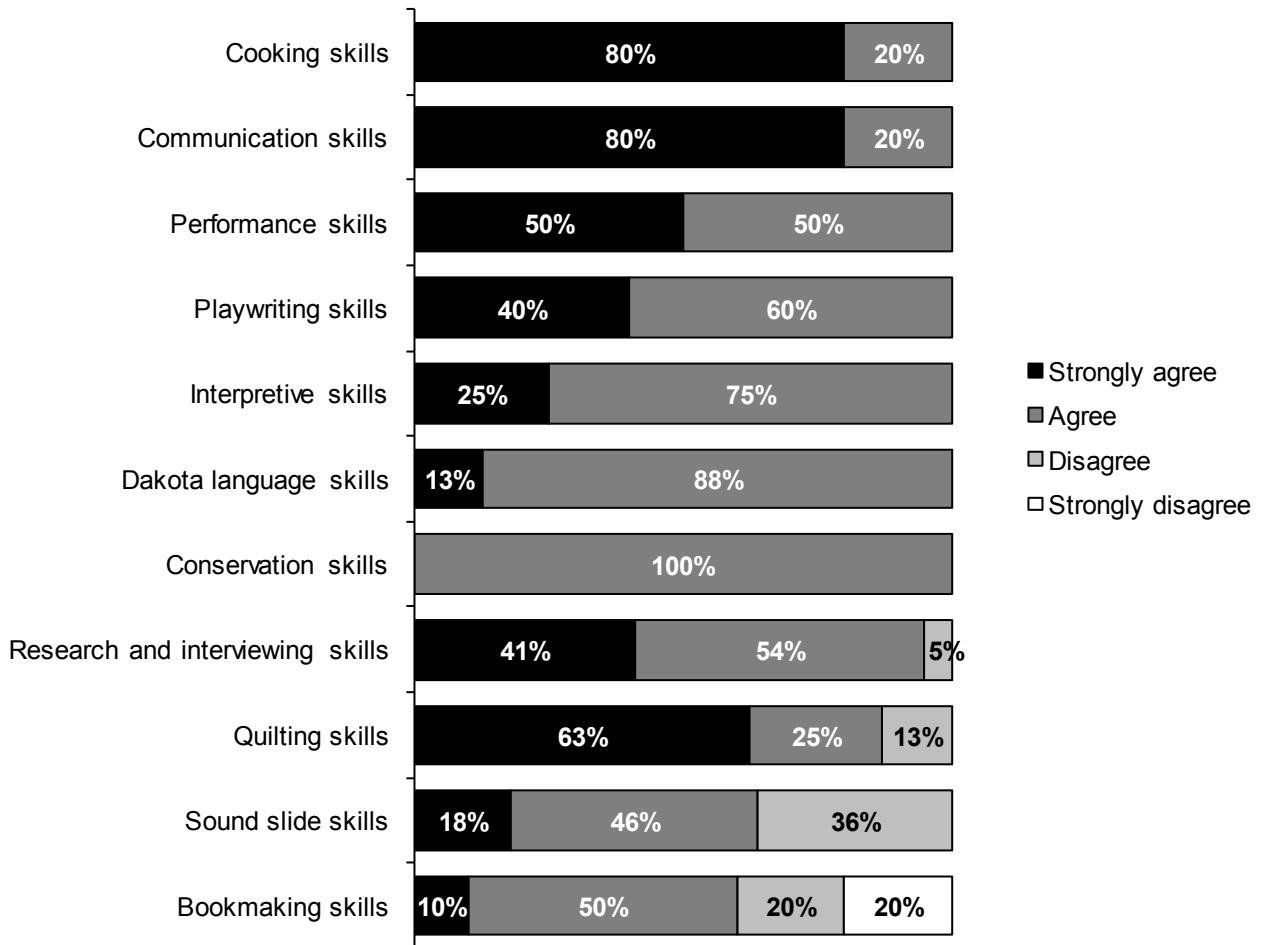
That we should appreciate everything we have now.

That communicating with the older generation is very important, and that knowing history is very important too.

That you should remember everything that is important in your life because some day you might want to share it with people.

In addition, most youth agreed that the project activities they participated in helped to improve their skills. At some sites, youth indicated that they were not very involved in creating the final product; instead it was developed by the adult participants and instructors. This factor may explain why some youth felt that their skills did not improve.

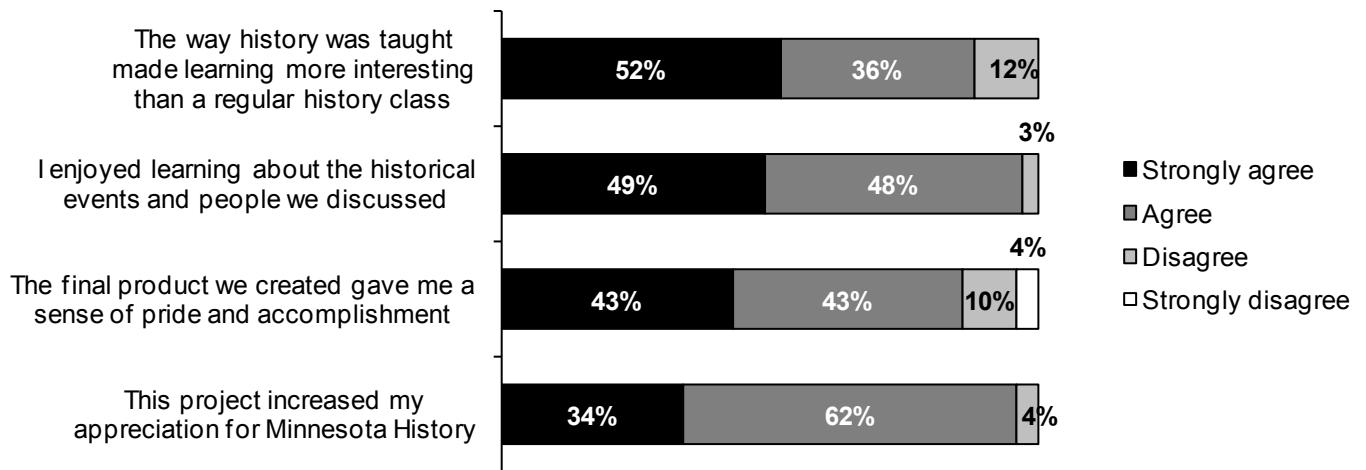
6. Youth perception of project effectiveness in improving practical life skills



Project impact youth attitudes about history

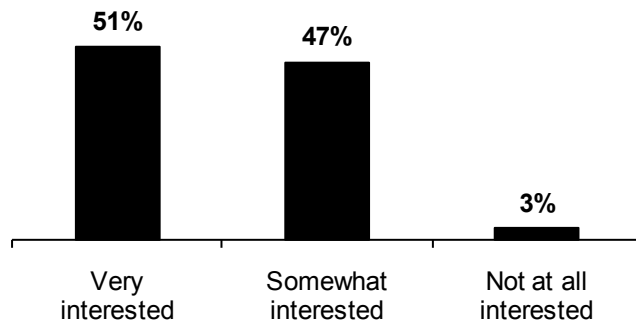
Another objective of the Sharing Community Stories Project was to increase youth interest in history and museums. Results indicate that project activities not only increased youth participants' appreciation of Minnesota history (96%), but they also made learning more enjoyable (88%), and gave students a sense of pride and accomplishment (86%).

7. Project impact on youth attitudes about history

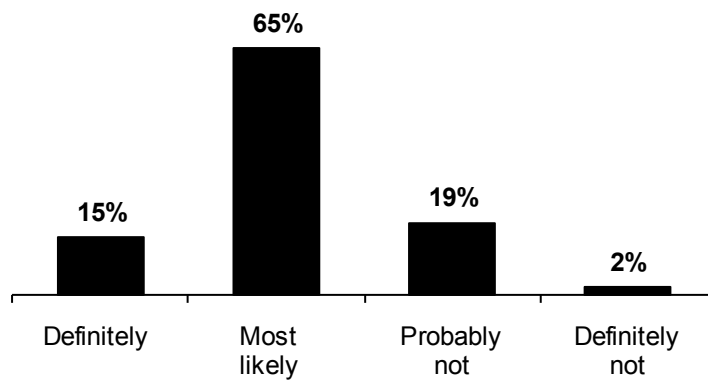


Nearly all youth participants (98%) indicated that they were either “somewhat” or “very” interested in visiting other historic sites or museums now that the project has ended. While most said they would “definitely” or “most likely” visit a historic site or museum with family or friends in the next six months, 14 youth who said they were interested indicated that it was unlikely that they would have an opportunity to do so. This factor suggests that there may be barriers to access for some students.

8. Youth participants' interest in visiting other historic sites or museums in the next six months



9. Youth participants' likelihood of visiting other historic sites or museums in the next six months*

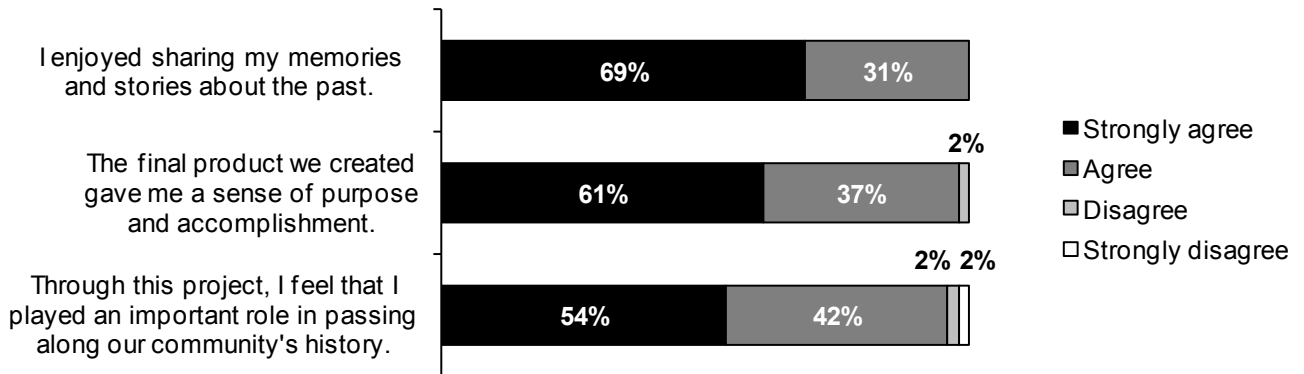


* With family or friends – not a school trip

Project impact on older adult attitudes about history

For older adults, a primary objective of the Sharing Community Stories Project was for them to feel that their experiences are an important part of community history. Older adult participants at all sites said that they enjoyed sharing their memories and stories and nearly all (96%) felt that this project allowed them to play an important role in transmitting their community's history. In addition, most (98%) said that the final products that were created gave them a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

10. Project impact on older adults' perception of their role and value in transmitting community history



Project impact on intergenerational relationships

The Sharing Community Stories Project was specifically designed to build bridges between youth and older adults in communities and increase both groups' positive feelings about one another. Results show that all sites were successful in this area. Most youth and older adult participants said that they enjoyed working with each other. Additionally, all youth participants felt that the older adults in their community had a lot of valuable knowledge and wisdom to share. This factor was palpable for the older adult participants, all of whom agreed that they felt their knowledge was valued.

11. Project impact on intergenerational relationships in the community

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Youth perceptions				
I believe that older adults in our community have a lot of valuable knowledge and wisdom to share.	73%	27%	-	-
I enjoyed learning from older adults in the community.	59%	41%	-	-
Older adult perceptions				
I enjoyed working with the youth in the community.	86%	14%	-	-
I feel that my knowledge was valued by the youth.	45%	55%	-	-
My perception of youth in the community has improved because of my participation in this project.	38%	57%	4%	-

Below are some comments from participants about the relationships that they formed with one another.

Youth comments

I enjoyed interviewing the elderly.

Seniors and teens relate so much more than you would think.

Teens and seniors are both the same; you have to accept each other.

I enjoyed being able to be myself around Eileen, my senior partner, and the other people here. I can laugh and know that we all get along.

Older adult comments

I like how the kids worked together. They were dedicated; they did a good professional job. I didn't know them, but felt close to them when we worked together.

Working with Alex was great. We had many things in common despite our age difference.

I enjoyed meeting girls of other ethnic backgrounds. I enjoyed visiting and talking. I would have enjoyed being able to ask *them* more questions.

Everyone involved with the project shared a mutual passion for photography. My partner James was a very pleasant young man. I hope we will be friends for a long time.

Project impact on the community

Community members who viewed the sites' final projects were invited to share what they thought of Sharing Community Stories. More than 120 community members provided feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive. Below are some of their comments.

Very good [project]. I hope it expands to include more schools and students. I'm happy my tax dollars are being used for a project like this.

Very worthwhile project. I agree that we all need more of a connection. When one takes the time to learn and investigate our local history, there is a connection in more than one way.

I was very impressed with this event. The interaction between teachers, students, and community was obviously a great learning experience. The students were definitely "into" the project.

This was an excellent event for fostering intergenerational education. I think everyone involved was enriched in their knowledge and love for Minnesota history. Knowledge of history creates gratitude for what we have and respect for people of the past, present and future. As a newcomer to this community from another part of Minnesota, it was so helpful to share what we have in common, learn what is unique about Fillmore County, and get to know my neighbors – young and old – better. Thank you!

[Our son] really retained and gained a lot from this experience. I really hope you can continue this through the 1940's and hopefully [our son] will be lucky enough to be chosen [to participate] again.

Whatever can be done to keep the connection between the older generation and the youth is priceless. Stories like this are not found in books and are something that must be constantly communicated. Thank you for doing this.

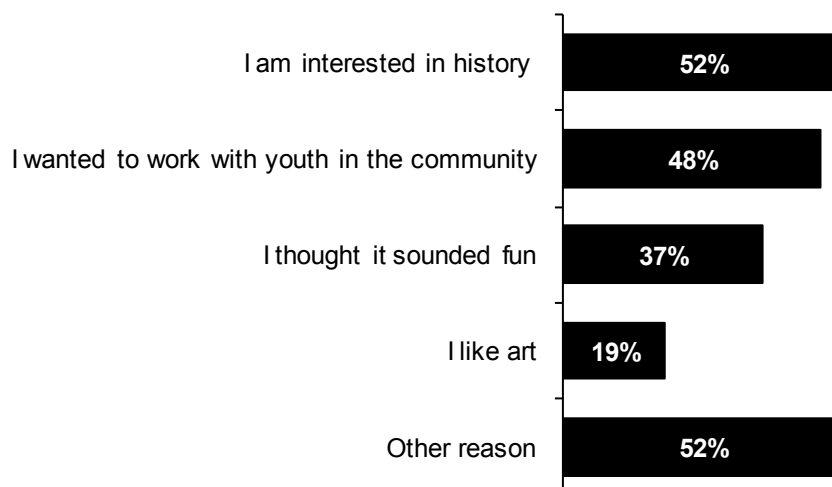
It's a great concept! It's really cool to have pulled from two different generations to put together a picture tour of Pine City! I loved it!

Terrific! Each one a moving experience in its own way. When I retire, I'll do this kind of thing. I hope still there will be groups to join!

Motivating factors for participation

Project participants were asked to share their reasons for participating in the Sharing Community Stories Project. An interest in history and a desire to work with youth in the community were the most common reasons why older adults chose to participate. For youth, fun and an interest in history were the top two motivating factors.

12. Older adult motivating factors for participation*

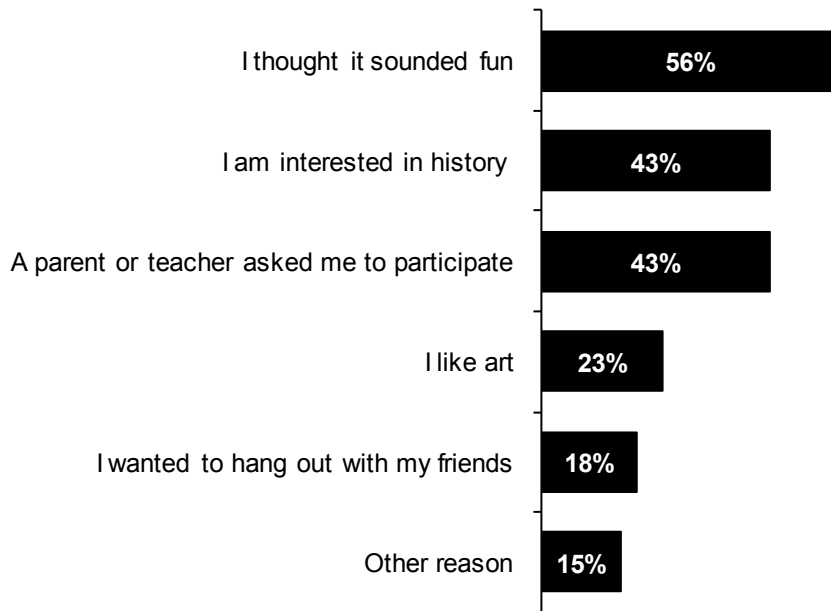


* Participants were allowed to select more than one reason.

For older adults, other primary reasons included:

- Received an invitation to participate
- Wanted to tell my story
- Wanted to facilitate communication across generations

13. Youth motivating factors for participation*



* Participants were allowed to select more than one reason.

Participant suggestions for improvement

We asked participants what they would do to improve the Sharing Community Stories Project. At all sites, many youth participants felt that the length of the project was too short and expressed interest in having more time to work on creating the final products they produced, i.e., cookbook, documentary film, play performance, etc. At some sites, youth also expressed an interest in playing more of a lead role in creating the final product. At two sites, youth expressed the need for clearer instructions and better organization from project organizers. Many older adult participants also said they wanted more time to work on their projects and present the final results. Some adults who were interviewed also expressed a desire to know what the interview questions were ahead of time. Finally, many older adult participants and community members said they would like to see more students involved in the project. For site-specific suggestions, see Appendix.

Recommendations

Evaluation results indicate that the Sharing Community Stories Project fulfilled all five of its intended objectives, including:

1. Increased knowledge of community history among youth participants
2. Increased knowledge related to practical life skills among youth participants
3. Increased interest in history and museums among youth participants
4. Increased positive feelings between youth and older adults in participating communities
5. Increased sense of purpose and value among older adult participants

Based on participant feedback, Wilder Research recommends that the Minnesota Historical Society consider the following suggestions when planning future intergenerational projects:

- Expand the length of project sessions by two weeks to allow enough time to work on projects and present the final results.
- Provide older adult participants with a list of general questions prior to being interviewed in order to prime the pump.
- Involve youth in the decision-making process as much as possible when creating the final products.
- Work to ensure that youth receive clear instructions about what is expected of them.
- Find opportunities to involve more youth in projects.
- Identify youth barriers to visiting historic sites and museums and work to increase access for students in need.

Appendix

Youth survey

Adult survey

Focus group protocol

Project descriptions and site-specific feedback

Minnesota Historical Society 2010 Intergenerational Project Youth Survey

Part I: Tell us about your [insert project name] experience

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. This program increased my appreciation for Minnesota history.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
2. I enjoyed learning about the historical events and people we discussed.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
3. The way history was taught made learning more interesting than a regular history class.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
4. The activities we did helped me to improve my research and interviewing skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
5. The activities we did helped me to improve my [insert type] skills.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
6. The [insert final product] I created gave me a sense of pride and accomplishment.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
7. I enjoyed learning from the older adults/elders in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
8. I believe the older adults/elders in our community have a lot of valuable knowledge and wisdom to share.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹

9. How much new information did you learn?

- ⁴ A lot
- ³ Some
- ² A little
- ¹ None at all

10. What was the most important thing you learned?

11. What did you enjoy most about this program?

12. How would you rate your experience overall?

- ⁴ Excellent
- ³ Good
- ² Fair
- ¹ Poor

13. How would you rate the instruction you received?

- ⁴ Excellent
- ³ Good
- ² Fair
- ¹ Poor

14. Would you recommend this program to your friends?

- ⁴ Definitely
- ³ Most likely
- ² Probably not
- ¹ Definitely not

15. If you could improve one thing, what would you change about this program?

16. Now that program has ended, how interested are you in going to visit another historic site or museum in the next six months?

- ³ Very interested
- ² Somewhat interested
- ¹ Not at all interested

17. How likely are you to visit a historic site or museum on your own time (with family or friends—not a school trip) in the next six months?

- ⁴ Definitely—already planning on it
- ³ Most likely
- ² Probably not
- ¹ Definitely not

Part II: Tell us about yourself

18. What is your gender?

- ¹ Male
² Female

19. What is your age? _____

20. What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)

- ¹ American Indian/Native American
² Asian/Pacific Islander
³ Black/African American/African
⁴ Hispanic/Latino
⁵ White/Caucasian
⁶ Some other race

21. Why did you decide to participate in this program? (Check all that apply.)

- ¹ I am interested in history
² I like art
³ I thought it sounded fun
⁴ I wanted to hang out with my friends
⁵ A parent or teacher asked me to participate
⁶ Other (Please specify: _____)

22. Which days of this program did you attend? (Check all the days you attended.)

- ¹ Session 1
² Session 2
³ Session 3
⁴ Session 4
⁵ Session 5
⁶ Session 6
⁷ Session 7
⁸ Session 8

Thank you for your feedback!

Minnesota Historical Society 2010 Intergenerational Project Adult Survey

Part I: Tell us about your [insert project name] experience

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I enjoyed sharing my memories and stories about the past.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
2. I enjoyed working with the youth in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
3. I feel that my knowledge was valued by the youth.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
4. My perception of youth in the community has improved because of my participation in this project.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
5. The [insert final product] we created gave me a sense of purpose and accomplishment.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹
6. Through this program, I feel that I played an important role in passing along our community's history.	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹

7. What did you enjoy most about this program?

8. How would you rate your overall experience with this program?

- ⁴ Excellent
- ³ Good
- ² Fair
- ¹ Poor

9. How would you rate the instruction provided?

- ⁴ Excellent
- ³ Good
- ² Fair
- ¹ Poor

10. **Would you recommend this program to other older adults/elders in the community?**

- ⁴ Definitely
- ³ Most likely
- ² Probably not
- ¹ Definitely not

11. **If you could improve one thing, what would you change about this program?**

Part II: Tell us about yourself

12. **What is your gender?**

- ¹ Male
- ² Female

13. **What is your age?** _____

14. **What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)**

- ¹ American Indian/Native American
- ² Asian/Pacific Islander
- ³ Black/African American/African
- ⁴ Hispanic/Latino
- ⁵ White/Caucasian
- ⁶ Some other race

15. **Why did you decide to participate in this program? (Check all that apply.)**

- ¹ I am interested in history
- ² I like art
- ³ I thought it sounded fun
- ⁴ I wanted to work with youth in the community
- ⁵ Other (Please specify: _____)

16. **Do you have any other comments you would like to share?**

Thank you for your feedback!

Focus group protocol

Minnesota Historical Society Intergenerational Project Discussion Protocol

Question 1: What did you enjoy most about this program? *Suggested prompt for youth: What did you think was the most fun activity?*

Question 2: What was the most interesting or surprising thing that you learned? *Suggested prompt for youth: What was the most memorable thing that you learned?*

Question 3: What was the most valuable skill that you learned?

Question 4: If you could improve one thing, what would you change about this program?

Question 5: Minnesota Historical Society is planning to hold more programs like this one. What advice would you give to the facilitators for next year? *Follow-up: If you could teach this workshop, what would you do differently?*

Project descriptions and site-specific feedback

Elk River Garden Project

Youth of all ages worked with older adults in the community to plant gardens at a park and the Guardian Angels senior housing facility. Youth learned that many families used to grow their own food before the invention of large retail grocery stores.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

Getting to hear stories and know more knowledge from the older generations.

Getting to know the older generation all the more.

I enjoyed planting the garden with the residents.

My favorite part was watering the plants and looking at how much (the plants) had grown.

Planting.

All of it!

Older adult comments

Watching the interaction between youngsters and elders and seeing the increased comfort level and enthusiasm resulting.

I highly value this project for the immediate interaction, the process of growing, and the memories stimulated, however momentary. Please continue!

The opportunity to encourage future gardeners and enrich the soil with compost.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

That communicating with the older generations is very important and that knowing the history is very important too.

The older people get excited to garden because they cannot have a real garden their room.

I learned what mulch is and how it keeps the soil moist and prevents weeds from growing.

That putting in manure helps plants grow faster and better.

I learned to grow things better.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

It is a good thing. It is a good learning experience for the children.

The garden is very useful even though I get vegetables from my family. It gives us good memories of having a garden.

I just love having any garden around. I miss having one at my own home.

I thought it was nice.

It was a good experience. It was a little hard to get to because the terrain was kind of rough. I would add cauliflower next year.

Grand Rapids Civilian Conservation Corps Project

College students from the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) worked with retired Civilian Conservation Corps members on restoration projects and developed historic characters to tell history of the Civilian Conservation Corps to site visitors.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

I enjoyed the opportunity to create my own character, especially incorporating details from my own family history.

Getting to talk with Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees.

Getting to learn history and live it. Also, meeting with the Civilian Conservation Corps men and hearing their stories and developing a character.

What camp life was like and what things the other Civilian Conservation camps did.

Giving tours.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

The legacy and importance of the Civilian Conservation Corps to the nation, the State of Minnesota, and the people it affected.

Work hard and take pride in your work.

Have all of the people giving directions collaborate before giving them. (2)

What the Civilian Conservation Corps program was and how much they did to improve the forests, state parks, and just all the things they did to help America.

What do you think of this project?

Community member feedback

I think [the youth] help the Forest History Center a lot there. They are interested in that type of work; it is good for everyone.

I think it is a good thing for them and for the country. Working outside is a good thing for a person and beneficial to a young mind.

The kids are doing a wonderful job; they'll take care of forestry in Minnesota.

Granite Falls Theater Project

Elementary and middle-school aged American Indian youth worked with community elders to adapt a traditional Dakota fable for the stage. Through the play, youth learned about cultural history and had an opportunity to practice speaking the Dakota language.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

Kickball. (2)

Skipping around with the rain.

Activities.

Crafts.

Dakota language and activities.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

Get to speak my culture and get to be a part of it.

Dakota [language and] how to do a play.

To speak my own language.

Dakota language (3)

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

Very good. I liked [that the youth] got to experience their native tongue.

Cute to see all the kids up there. It was nice.

I was impressed with the kids speaking Dakota so well at such a young age.

It was very nice. I loved that the children spoke in the Dakota language. I hope they have [this project] again next year.

It was nice and really cute!! And all of the children did a great job!!

It was wonderful and all of the kids did a wonderful job.

Very, very cute.

Nina Opacheche, or a very good first.

Little Falls Scrapbook Project

Elementary school students learned about the Great Depression from older adults in the community and created scrapbooks to showcase what they learned.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

The scrapbook.

The snacks.

Older adult comments

Sharing a new way of life that the youngsters were unaware of. I feel that opened up their minds to a different world.

Giving them the information I could of my life.

The creativity of the boys and girls in their projects.

Meeting the kids.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

I learned interviewing skills.

It is better to talk than to judge.

The Dust Bowl was a bad storm (3)

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

Whatever can be done to keep the connection between the older generation and the youth is priceless. [Our son] gained lifelong knowledge through this. He really retained and gained a lot from this experience. I really hope you can continue this through the 1940's and hopefully [our son] will be lucky enough to be able to be chosen again. Thank you for doing this.

Stories like the Holocaust, for example, are something that is only found in books and must be constantly communicated. Thank you for doing this.

This was just awesome! I loved having the youth working with the seniors.

Yes!! Please do a similar project with the WWII crowd!

It was great. Well put together. The only thing I would change is to have the treats first.

Pine City Photography Project

Youth worked with older adults in the community to create a photo exhibit that showcases the history of Pine City, which included both new and old photographs.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

I enjoyed almost everything about the program. The lessons were fun. I loved walking around Pine City and learning about the places and the buildings.

Going around town noticing things I have never noticed before.

I enjoyed being able to be myself around Eileen and the other people here. I can laugh and have knowing that we all get along.

Older adult comments

Everyone involved with the project (youth and seniors) all shared a mutual passion for photography. My partner James was a very pleasant young man. I hope we will be friends for a long time.

I loved the lessons, taking pictures, and working with my partner.

I loved this!

Meeting people and learning more about the history of Pine City.

Exploring Pine City behind a camera and making new friendships.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

Well, I would say that the most important thing I learned was that everybody has a very different perspective and that you should try to capture that.

How to take better photos and about the town of Pine City.

It is better to look at things from more than one perspective.

I discovered that I can truly take good pictures, out of what I thought was a “plain” city.

I learned about the Rybak building, which is now Pizza Pub.

Older adult comments

Working with Alex was great. We had many things in common, despite our age differences.

I learned a lot about photography, Pine City and about my partner. I think this is a very good experience for anyone.

The more exploring and picture taking we did, the more we saw to do! My partner was super teenager.

Dee was really a great instructor for teaching us the “ins and outs” of the camera. She helped take away a lot of trepidation I was feeling about the technology.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

I thought all the teams did a great job of capturing life in Pine City through photography. Thank you for a wonderful show.

I enjoyed the effort of the cooperative Pine City folk and the very well done photos they took. I feel the money is well worth the events. Good snacks!

Very impressive! Much variety in the photos and so creative!

I enjoyed the effort of the cooperative Pine City folk and the very well done photos they took. I feel the money is well worth the events. Good snacks!

Good job. It is nice to see familiar places in town captured on film. Emmet is awesome.

Wonderful photos! I loved seeing the interaction with the kids and the adults. Very talented photographers!

It is a great concept! It's really cool to have pulled from two different generations to put together a picture tour of Pine City! I loved it!

All the pictures were great! I could not pick a favorite—all were great. Nice to see the two generations work together. Great idea.

All of the photos were just great! I have favorites of each pair, but I cannot pick a favorite from the whole group. I hope you do this again next year!

Good job on everything. It was nice to see objects that are overlooked most times.

Fabulous exhibit! It was amazed at the talent displayed. If I have to choose a favorite, I could not. Each photo is spectacular!

I thought it was a great exhibit. I would love to have some hanging on my wall at home. There were many talented photographers here judging by the quality of the work. I liked the idea of pairing the two generations. Great show!

I think this was an excellent idea. I like the idea of kids and seniors working together.

It is so cool! I loved it!

Wonderful! It really captured the spirit of the town.

It was fun, and every day was something new and exciting. Definitely something I would recommend to others. I felt comfortable with the people and I learned a lot.

I think the idea behind this exhibit is a fantastic idea. The photos themselves are very artistic and well done. The viewing crowd was quite enthusiastic about viewing the exhibit. Well done!

I really appreciate the intergenerational aspect of the project. There is such a wonderful variety of styles represented.

Excellent. I love the interaction between the [youth] and seniors. They really seemed to thrive in the environment.

It is really cool! I think the photos are great.

I liked a lot of the photography. It was interesting to see how you paired up people and the results they came up with.

I enjoyed the exhibit very much. While some scenes were familiar, others revealed a part of my community I have not experienced. Pairing different generations added an interesting perspective.

I liked it a lot! My favorite photo is the one of the pizza pub window [with the] reflection.

Fantastic! I would love to purchase the photos. There is always so much fun stuff going on in Pine City!

Saint Paul Theater Project

Saint Paul Conservatory for the Performing Arts senior high students worked with older adults in the community to create a short theatrical piece about seniors' lives.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

Getting to know the seniors.

Meeting people.

The connections and laughs.

Terry!!! How willing everyone was when given direction.

Older adult comments

[I enjoyed] hearing other stories and [participating in] my first experience putting together a play or story.

[It was] amazing how the [project instructor] put the work together. I would have never figured out how to act out a particular story as we did.

The process of [the script's] evolution and [working with] other participants.

It brought back old memories.

The intergenerational and intercultural aspect [was]so much fun

Doing the exercises and sharing our stories.

It was great to know the people. I enjoyed the acting. I would like to do this again.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

How much value and importance stories and memories have.

That I can develop relationships with those [who are] not my age.

Teens and seniors are both the same; you have to accept each other.

Seniors and teens relate so much more than you think.

Teamwork skills.

Organization [skills].

Older adult comments

Just interacting with the cast was important and learning each other's characters.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

It was very well done. The actors integrated with each other [and they] were articulate and loud. Their expressions were beautiful to observe. Pure joy in theatre.

Very good. The concept of an intergenerational project was wonderful. It is important for young people to learn the elders' experiences and fun for the elders to experience the young. Thank you!

Terrific! Each one a moving experience in its own way. When I retire, I will do this kind of thing. I hope still there will be groups to join!

I really enjoyed the presentation of the young and together. There should be more of this, especially the getting involved.

Very interesting. Love the intergenerational idea.

This was a fun and interesting experience.

I enjoyed the concept of this piece.

Delightful!

Saint Paul Website Project

Gordon Parks High School students worked with community residents to create sound slides (photos with embedded sound) documenting residents perspectives on the Central Corridor Light Rail Construction.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

What I enjoyed most was cutting the sound (2)

Getting to know things about St. Paul.

Being able to meet new people and being able to be involved in the whole project.

Just learning something different. Something that is really going to affect our community not just something in a book. We actually got involved.

Talking to people and taking pictures.

I enjoyed learning about the light rail and the audio that I did.

Taking pictures (2)

Taking pictures of the elderly and seeing their homes and businesses; hearing their stories.

Learning things I didn't know before this project.

Older adult comments

Talking to young people.

Relating to the young interviewers. They were refreshing in spite of what we see in the media.

I like how the kids worked together to get the project together. They were dedicated. They did a good professional job. I didn't know them, but felt close to them when we worked together.

Meeting the kids and watching them really work all made the project successful.

Letting the kids know what it was like when we had streetcars and activities compared to what they do now. I did not know there was a ballpark or roller rink in the neighborhood!

That it was student led and the young people had opportunities. Engaging with community people.

This was a great experience for young, multi-ethnic people. My perspective, as African American, is that it is important for our kids to learn about our neighborhood history, and learn important skills. [Minnesota Historical Society] is creating opportunities for learning. We are tapping into young peoples' talents and building self worth. Documenting the Corridor now is an exciting legacy and piece of historical documentation. This will help market our community and create more opportunities for our residents. I think it will help change perceptions of this community.

This is the second project I've done with youth. I enjoyed it. I liked telling students stories; I enjoyed they were surprised about not having video games and pumping water.

It allowed me to go down memory lane and express my thoughts. I really liked having our stories be a part of the Minnesota Historical Society. It's a record for posterity.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

I learned about transportation and about Minnesota.

How to listen and understand where others are coming from and about their history.

The different views everyone has on light rail.

How to work a camera. Not just take a regular posed picture, but a picture that has meaning. (2)

Putting the audio into a different slide.

I learned University hasn't always been the same and has changed throughout the years. (2)

That the involvement of the community matters and affects the transitions of the area.

Information about St. Paul in general.

Older adult comments

I was very impressed with the students' questions, staff escorts, and privacy methods used.

I was truly appreciative of my story regarding my father moving his house from the roots up from one street on Western Avenue to Central Avenue in order to stay in the Rondo neighborhood due to the installation of I-94. No one else had done that. It is history and I am so proud of my dad!

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

I was very impressed with the event. The interaction between teachers, students, and community was obviously a great learning experience. The students were definitely “into” the project.

I think the exhibit concept is excellent. I would have liked to see more sound slides and more people. I am looking forward to seeing them online. I appreciated hearing from students and the project team – more from students would have been good.

I love that students put this together. The sound slides were really great.

I believe it is a subject that needs to be discussed. I’m happy to see Gordon Parks High School students taking the initiative to tackle this event. It was good to see the students with smiles on their faces.

Beautiful and inspiring. This project will change lives on University Avenue.

Wonderful. The stories of real people from the community are very valuable

Very professionally done. Excellent project idea and it fits with the Gordon Parks High School mission.

Spring Valley Book Project

Sixth grade students worked with older adults in the community to learn about important aspects of Spring Valley’s history and record them in a Shutterfly (picture) book.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

The fieldtrip and seeing places. (2)

Learning at the places instead of in the library.

That America history is awesome.

I enjoyed interviewing the elderly. (2)

Going swimming. (2)

Learning.

Everything! (3)

Older adult comments

Refreshing my memory on local and state history and learning more from the other “seniors” in the circle.

Just the interaction w/the kids and the whole group.

Sharing my personal stories with the students and receiving the Shutterfly book.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part was working with the students and noting their interesting and enthusiasm.

Great group of students!

I hope to entice students to work at historical society, especially in the area of photography or computers... A great project! I appreciated being asked to be involved.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

How to interview.

Iron mining.

How people learned in a one room school house.

The school did not have a good [source of] water to drink from.

That we should appreciate everything we have now.

I learned about Etna. I had no idea it even existed and now I am familiar with it.

Older adult comments

Giving the students the opportunity to see that “history” is not available, but can be much fun. We shared great stories as well as field trips to see where these things happened. [It was] probably an eye-opener for all of us.

Just hearing the community stories. I thought it was interesting.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

Very good [project]. If done again, should cover more of the County. There’s a lot more history around Fillmore County.

Very good [project]. I hope it expands to include more schools and students. I'm happy my tax dollars are being used for a [project] like this.

Very worthwhile project. I agree that we all need more of a connection. When one takes the time to learn and investigate our local history, there is a connection in more than one way.

Fabulous project. Valuable history captures and ignites interest by youth!

This was an excellent event for fostering intergenerational education. I think everyone involved was enriched in their knowledge and love for Minnesota history. Knowledge of history creates gratitude for what we have, and respect for people of the past, present, and future. As a newcomer to this community from another part of Minnesota, it was so helpful to share what we have in common, learn what is unique about Fillmore County, and get to know my neighbors—young and old—better. Thank you!

[The project instructors] orchestrated a delightfully blended program that brought today and yesterday; young and old; and teaching and fun together. Friends of Forestville's lunch was wonderful.

The folks who shared their stories as well as the youth who formed the core of the class were expressive. The teacher was gracious and cooperative. As a writer/photographer, I was very impressed and would enjoy working with your society.

It was a great project to involve the kids and seniors. I think [projects] like this are beneficial and should be continued.

I thought everything was good.

As a senior, I would do it again. [The community] needs to get more boys involved somehow.

Wadena Teen Playwright

Community teens and seniors worked together to develop an original theatre piece that explored childhood during the Great Depression, hardships during World War II, and life after World War II. The content of the play was based on oral history interviews.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

[I enjoyed] learning about some of Wadena's history. I am so used to learning about the country's history, so it was nice to hear stories about the town I've lived in my whole life.

Interviewing the seniors and learning about their past.

I enjoyed interviewing people and learning about their past and the things they had to overcome.

Meeting new people.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

Even in tough times, you still survive.

I learned that people had to go through a lot harder times than my generation has.

That listening to your elders teaches you a lot you never knew about your community.

Remember everything that was important in your life because some day you might want to share with people about an important event that happened.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

It was good. I think this is a good thing and it should be told to a bigger audience.

I enjoyed this. I think it was a wonderful way for the kids to learn and I am sure the older people enjoyed telling their stories.

Very nice project. I liked it very much. A good opportunity for the performers and a good project for the community. [It was] sad to see it so poorly attended. [I] hope you can continue to do this.

I thought they did a great job. It had to have been fun for them. Job was well done.

I absolutely loved it! What a wonderful tribute to the history of this area. The students portrayed the people very well and the integrity was upheld. Love it!

It was wonderful! I am so happy to see a collaborative effort between theatre artists, historians, kids, and seniors. This is such a rich venture. Thank you and keep it up! I'm really looking forward to the next phase.

I feel it was very good. It brings old stories the kids have heard to life when they hear it [directly] from the lips of those who experienced it.

Let's do it again!

They did a wonderful job. I really enjoyed the program.

I think this was a very valuable project. Making history come alive, telling the stories of local people, and combining history and theater—great project.

Absolutely wonderful experience for the young and old. I only wish more people could have attended.

It was awesome.

Very Good

Wonderful job!

Warroad Ladies of the Lake Quilt

Pre-teen girls in the community met with senior women from the Warroad Senior Living Center to socialize, gather stories, and design four wall-hangings inspired by life in the 1930s and 1940s.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

Visiting with friends and the ladies, and also sewing.

Interviewing the elderly women.

The teamwork.

I enjoyed all of the tasty snacks.

Older adult comments

The attentiveness of all the girls. [They were] eager to ask questions to learn and appreciated their present way of life when compared to our lifetime. The [project] leaders were well prepared.

Meeting and interacting with the young girls. They were interested about the early years of Warroad and brought back many pleasant memories.

It seems to me it that this project was well-planned and accomplished its goal. We presented the quilts so the [community] could view what girls could do when given the opportunity.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

How much they used horses.

That we should not waste anything.

Older adult comments

They asked questions that were sensible and I was surprised when they asked questions such as, "What did you do with your money?" I explained a big ice cream cone was five cents, etc. Many deep thinking questions were asked.

This type of program offers much information to the youth of the community. Without this kind of program, much history of the area would be lost. We definitely need to interact with the young of the community.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

My daughter participated in the project. We felt it was a wonderful chance for her to learn more of our community's history and get to know some of the elderly women as well as some young friends. She had a great time and always looked forward to their meetings.

This program today was wonderful. The music was a big part...The young ladies did a very good job. It's nice to see this group of girls adding and learning. I am new to Minnesota. The life and history of this area is wonderful.

Our daughter enjoyed this project immensely. She also benefited educationally in a very fun atmosphere. Rosie was great! Thank you.

Willmar Documentary Project

Senior high school girls of diverse backgrounds worked with older adult women in the community to create a short documentary film that explored coming of age and weddings in the 1940s and 1950s.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

Talking to adults and getting to know them.

Getting to speak with people I never would have spoken to otherwise.

I enjoyed talk to a variety of people who I never would have talked to otherwise and hearing their different perspectives.

I really liked connecting with the women and having conversations about marriages and relationships, then and now. We certainly had a lot to tell each other about! We could have talked for hours.

Older adult comments

I really enjoyed the other ladies and the girls too. I thought the tea was great.

It was fantastic, it was enlightening. I did not realize how younger people are growing up with different expectations about marriage.

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

How marriage was back then and the differences between their generation and our generation.

Never to stop learning.

The most important thing I learned was how times have changed. Also, this process helped me learn more about leading a team.

It is hard to say what the most important thing was, because all of it was pretty fascinating. Overall, I would say that I really learned a lot about the conditions and expectations of women who married in the 1940's through the 1960's.

Older adult comments

The girls and their idea of marriage. The Somali women did not seem to have much of a choice. That was a learning experience for me.

I was surprised because sometimes teenage girls are not very interested.

It was extremely interesting to learn about Pakistani and Somali weddings.

What did you think of this event?

Community member feedback

Interesting and enlightening.

Well done. Good information. Thanks. Some of our tax money well spent! (2)

Very good. Cross-cultures interesting. Put the documentary on PBS? Maybe it should be seen by more people locally.

It's very well done. I would have appreciated if a Latino married couple could have shared their story. I know a couple that could have been interviewed.

Excellent. Makes me proud of our community. Wonderful to see the different generations and ethnicities. When will you come again?

Good idea. Work on the sound. Nice job by all involved.

This was very well done. You should be happy with the results.

It was great! So interesting and informative, especially hearing other culture's perspectives—the young know how they view marriage. (2)

Very, very good. I enjoyed it all. We have been married for 57 and a half years and it was just like everything that was said.

Great presentation. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to see this (4)

Very well done. I enjoyed how you wove together the pieces.

I thought it was very good. The girls and women had very interesting things to say. I did think that there were too many women talking during the interviews so it was hard to hear.

It was great to see the older and younger generations interacting with one another. I could watch and listen to the older women talk all day.

I liked the honest conversation between the women.

I love the intergenerational nature of the film. So good to learn the cultural traditions. Some setting had background noise and that made it hard to hear. (2)

I thoroughly enjoyed the film. Having been married for 43 years, many of the older women had experiences that were parallel to ours.

I liked seeing people and places I know and having people of different ages and cultures talking.

Wonderful! This film brought tears to my eyes. The teens did a super job, as did the older women. Thank you- great job.

It is always good to hear difference and similarities across generations and cultures.

Interesting and true for many older women. Your interviewees were all well-spoken. Hope you can share this with other communities.

I liked it and would like to see more of these events in the future. I am interested in the good ole days and wish I had been born then, because it is not the same today.

It was helpful to see a broader spectrum of marriage than we are acquainted with. Very helpful and enjoyable to us "aged" folk. Hopefully it can be shared with younger people.

This film was an excellent portrayal of past and present cultural experiences. There was significant ethnic diversity and it was especially refreshing for an out state project. Great use of taxpayers' funds. This project should not expire anytime soon.

It was interesting. Sound in background should have been deleted (on documentary). I enjoyed the different dresses and cultural differences.

Interesting. Nice to hear from long-term married people and see some different cultural marriages also. At the end, there were people in the background speaking while the people being filmed were speaking and that bothered me. It was hard to hear.

It would have been interesting to hear a few male perspectives as well.

This was interesting, but too repetitive and superficial.

Why weren't all of the girls in this that did the work? [One youth participant] was very disappointed and so were her folks and grandparents.

Virginia Cookbook

Chris Holmes' fifth grade class worked with food historian Dan Ritter and older adults in the community to explore the history of food in Virginia, Minnesota.

What did you enjoy most about this project?

Youth comments

I enjoyed the fun active activities more than reading a [history] book. I liked canning pickles the most.

The canning part was my favorite (2)

Eating the food we made and making it.

That we learned about foods and how to make them. It was really fun learning about all of the different kinds of food.

Older adult comments

Working with the different groups of children. I was surprised about the questions they asked and how interested they were.

I enjoyed the questions the children asked me about my childhood regarding our lifestyle as far as entertainment, food, and the way we lived.

The [youth] and their interests.

Watching the kids (2)

What was the most important/interesting thing that you learned?

Youth comments

The most important thing I learned was how people survived during the Great Depression.

The most important thing I learned was how hard it was to get food during the war.

I learned a lot about cooking (2)

How people cooked a long time ago.