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New Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles Now Available

The [2016 Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles](#) is available on the League's website. A hard copy of this document will be emailed out to all city managers and city clerks. *For more, see Page 2.*



California City Solutions: Manhattan Beach's Seniors and Teens Pair Up in Free Programs to Boost the Community

*This story is part of an ongoing series featuring Helen Putnam Award entries. The 2015 entries are available on the League's website as a resource for cities in a searchable database called [California City Solutions](#). The city of Manhattan Beach's CCS Partnership Intergovernmental Collaboration Award was submitted in 2015 for the *We're Better Together: An Intergenerational program in Manhattan Beach* award category.*

Manhattan Beach is an affluent community, yet the population includes some long-time residents who fall into a much lower income category. Many of the city's older adults (aged 65+) bought their houses decades ago before high prices became the norm and currently live on fixed incomes. Their children who are unable to buy locally, live elsewhere, leaving many of these residents without a local support network. In December 2013, the city of Manhattan Beach launched We're Better Together, a model intergenerational program created from a partnership between the Manhattan Beach City Senior Advisory Committee (SAC), a group of volunteers affiliated with the city's [Older Adult Program](#) and the Mayor's Youth Council at Mira Costa High School, the only high school in the Manhattan Beach Unified School District. *For more, see Page 2.*

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The *Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles* is intended to be a living reference, updated periodically to reflect changes to League policy made throughout the year. In addition, the League uses it to review new legislation that is introduced to determine how it relates to existing League policy. It was developed with the assistance of organization's the eight standing League policy committees and board of directors to ensure that the content accurately reflects existing League policy.

The 2016 edition reflects policy changes adopted by the League through December 2015 through review of legislation and annual conference resolutions. The *Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles* is intended to be a living reference, updated periodically to reflect changes to League policy made throughout the year. In addition, the League uses it to review new legislation that is introduced to determine how it relates to existing League policy.

Member cities are encouraged to review the document carefully as it can be of assistance in better understanding League policy and positions on state and federal legislation. In addition, the League encourages cities to adopt all or part of the *Summary* so that they may be able to respond in a timely manner to new legislation introduced at the state and federal levels. This will permit cities to become more active in the legislative process and involved in issues impacting cities.

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Recent data reveals that a significant number of seniors in Manhattan Beach live at or below the poverty line. In some other cities, these seniors would qualify for a variety of subsidized programs, but in Manhattan Beach, the Older Adult Program relies heavily on volunteers and privately funded projects to provide programs, build facilities and support recreational activities. The city has insufficient space and no plans to build additional recreational facilities, despite the increase in the senior population. The result is increasing competition to secure facility space for recreational, social, arts and educational programs.

At Mira Costa High School, facility space is not an issue, however curriculum space is. As with other high schools in California, the curriculum has changed significantly over the last decade. Programs that provided practical skills in homemaking, business, building and repair have been eliminated, although the need for those skills is still important. Most students are following a college-preparatory program that doesn't leave much room for electives.

In December 2014, SAC and the Mayor's Youth Council co-sponsored a symposium called, *We're Better Together*, to discuss the mutual benefits of creating an intergenerational program in the city. Approximately 150 residents, both students and older adults, attended. The students expressed a need to fill the curriculum gaps in their demanding academic schedules, in order to learn things like how to cook, balance a checkbook, start a business or create a resume. They also expressed an interest in hearing the living history stories of the older adults in their community. Seniors wanted to learn from the teenagers also, especially in the area of technology. They hoped also to participate in the school's outstanding fine and performing arts programs.

Previously, there has been little engagement between the older adults in the community and the high school students at Mira Costa despite the obvious benefits to both sides. The *We're Better Together* program is changing that.

SAC and the Mayor's Youth Council set up an advisory/planning board for *We're Better Together*. Below are the objectives of the program and how the objectives have been met:

- Foster mutually beneficial programs between generations. Ensure that these programs are low or no cost to the city or to the participants.
 - Programs include an intergenerational art show; an evening at the Improvisational Theater featuring student and older adult performers; poetry

- events featuring student and older adult poets; and Be My Guest, invitations for older adults to attend Mira Costa High School performing arts shows. All of these programs are free to participants, the city and the school district.
- Inform city and school district governing boards about intergenerational programming.
 - Members of the board report to the Manhattan Beach City Council regularly on intergenerational programs. The programs are also reported to representatives from the Manhattan Beach Unified School District.
 - Where possible, share facilities and programs, especially where there is duplication in city and district offerings.
 - The improvisational theater groups from the city and the high school are participating in a joint show in the high school theater; the intergenerational art show will feature art classes from the city and high school and will be held in the high school art gallery; and the high school video production class produced a video of the older adult program.
 - Set up a Speakers' Bureau in the schools to supplement the curriculum and take advantage of the experience and expertise in the older adult community.
 - Develop a program for high school students to teach technology applications to older adults Seniors Helping Seniors. High school students help older adults with a variety of technology applications. The program is held alternately at city and school facilities.
 - Form a group of one-on-one mentors who could assist students with specific needs like resume writing, cooking, sewing, building, and other areas where expertise is needed.
 - Sponsor a semi-annual intergenerational symposium with the location alternating between the city and Mira Costa High School.
 - Expand the partnership with California State University, Dominguez Hills to include an entrepreneurship class open to both older adults and high school students.
 - Create intergenerational sports activities using both city and high school fields, the high school gym, tennis courts and pool.
 - Use the city's Dial-A-Ride transportation service to take older adults to Mira Costa High School performances and events.
 - For the 2014-15 school year there were 23 free performances and events as part of the Be Our Guest program.
 - Expand the partnership with the Manhattan Beach Rotary to increase student participation in the Rotary Cares.
 - The club's Interact Program at Mira Costa High School has over 25 members and they assist with Rotary Cares.

We're Better Together has increased participation in the Older Adult Program activities. The bi-monthly computer program alone serves 18-27 seniors each meeting. Follow-up surveys indicate that attitudes of both age groups have changed considerably. Because of space sharing, the city is able to offer more services to the older adult population, including computer training, art exhibitions, drama performances in a theater setting (there is no city theater) and increased sports programs. Many of the older adults reported that they had either never been on the high school campus or had not seen it since their children attended. This gives them the opportunity to see first-hand how their taxes are being used.

SAC has established a high enough profile that the city council is now always represented at its monthly meetings. Older adults, now close to 30 percent of the population of the city, have a strong voice in policy decisions.

The Mayor's Youth Council was formed in 2011 to help students understand how city governance works. Through We're Better Together, they are able to see that policies for older adults cover all aspects of government, and understand how these policies are developed and implemented.

The high school produced an informational video about the older adult program which is on the city's website. The new activities generated by We're Better Together have all been at no cost to the district or city. The number of participants who want to serve on SAC and in other volunteer positions has increased, reducing the burdens on the city parks and recreation staff. While the city is fiscally stable, it faces increasing challenges of offering expanded programming without any expansion of facilities or staff. Sharing space and using a growing number of volunteers allows the city to offer more services without impacting the budget.

Students are training older adults in a variety of technologies, including social media. This helps to spur the city to increase its use of technology, reaching out to this population. The use of the high school computer lab has greatly aided this effort to train seniors. This knowledge has led to increased communication with distant and often younger family members.

The program has also built on existing partnerships (Beach Cities Health District, Manhattan Beach Rotary) as well as new ones (Cal State Dominguez Hills) to expand and enhance the program. Intergenerational programs can save money and expand services in light of shrinking municipal resources, but they also serve another very important function: they bring people together as communities in a time of geographically separated families, and an aging and longer-lived population. Ironically, the technological revolution has created enormous opportunities for communication but may also have increased the isolation of some of our most vulnerable older adults. Teenagers, who are certainly connected, will benefit, as young people always have, from the wisdom of those who have gone before. A healthy community engages all of its citizens.
