

December 2022

Macs with Mercy Brings the Generations Together



Conversation, laughter, and energy fill a meeting room at Mercy Circle in Mount Greenwood as Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School students who belong to the Black Student Union join Mercy Circle residents for a recent Macs with Mercy gathering.

The new inter-generational program brings students and seniors together on the second Tuesday of every month to complete projects and build new connections. Each month, a different club from Mother McAuley visits Mercy Circle to spend time with the residents and collaborate on a project.

"Our community shines brightest when we work together," said 19th Ward Ald. Matt O'Shea, who helped organize the new program and who attended the inaugural meeting. "Seeing McAuley students and Mercy Circle residents work together is a heartwarming example of that spirit."

In November, members of McAuley's Black Student Union led activities and residents

made Thanksgiving-themed paintings. In October, members of McAuley's Student Government Association and Mercy Circle residents created Halloween luminaire jars that were then donated to families served by Pat's Pantry.

For Sister Nancy Kennelly, IBVM, connections with young people are more important than the projects themselves. Kennelly, a retired teacher and high school administrator at Lourdes High School in Chicago, said, "I relish engaging with the students. I love to hear why they chose Mother McAuley, what challenges they face, and what at their school brings them joy. One of my favorite questions for the students is 'What's making your life wonderful right now?'"

McAuley senior Kiriana Williams agrees with Kennelly. Williams, who attended November's Macs with Mercy, said "I enjoyed speaking with Mercy Circle residents and hearing the interesting stories



involving their careers. It was amazing to learn how the Sisters' careers affected some of our teachers when they were students at Mother McAuley."

"The students find out that we're not just old ladies," Kennelly said. "We have stories!"

According to Generations United, both students and seniors benefit from working together. Their conversations reduce ageism and build understanding. High school students experience increased levels of self-confidence and social connection. They are empowered to make changes in the school and community when they build

meaningful connections with older adults. Older adults share special memories and gain new perspectives when they hear what teens are experiencing today. In addition to fun, these experiences can reduce isolation and improve cognition for seniors.

"Our residents enjoy the energy McAuley students bring to our community," said Katie McKirdie, life enrichment coordinator at Mercy Circle. "Meeting new people and enjoying fresh perspectives gives all of us a lift."

For more information about Mercy Circle, call 773-253-3600 or visit MercyCircle.org.

