

# AGE TO AGE PROGRAM

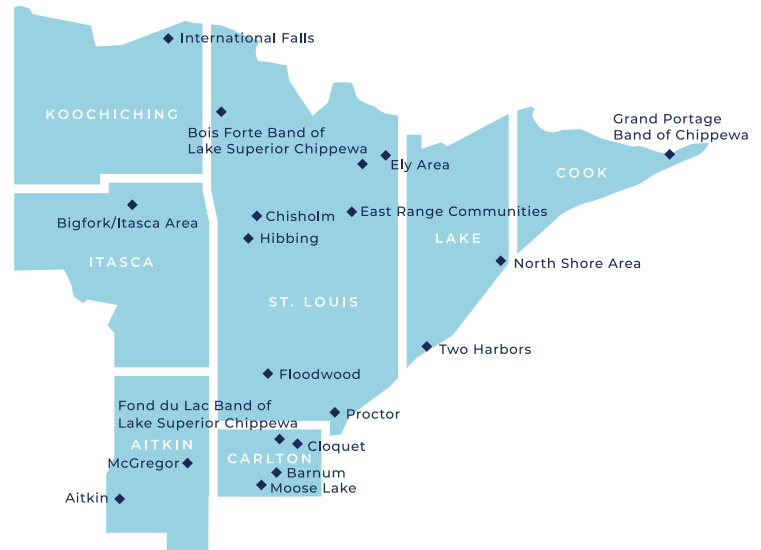
Rural Aging Initiative 2017 - 2019



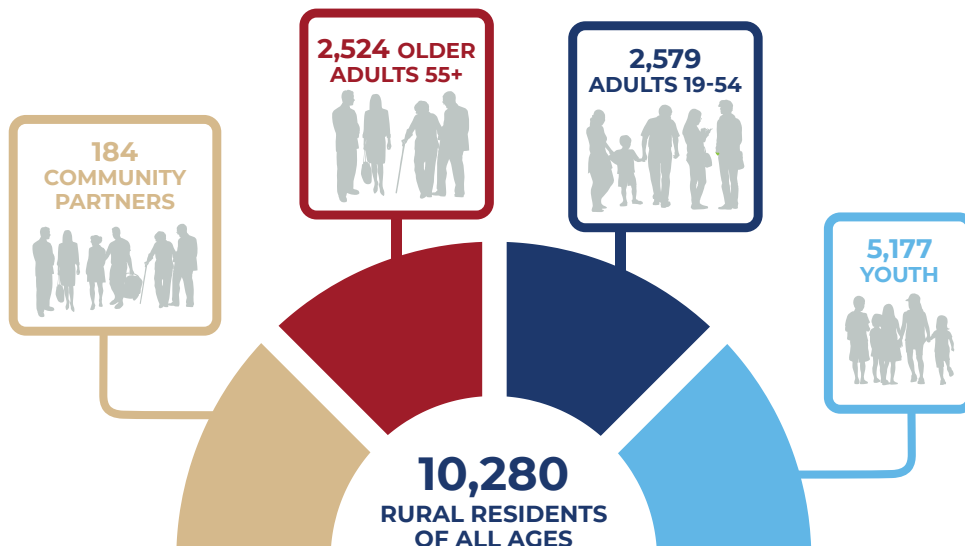
The Northland Foundation's AGE to age: bringing generations together program has helped create "communities of generations" in northeastern Minnesota. To date, 18 sites have developed intergenerational visions and action plans, and implemented hundreds of intergenerational activities involving thousands of people of all ages.

AGE to age has provided a ready avenue to improve the social engagement, health, and well-being of rural older adults by connecting them with young people in their communities. Together, they have led community service projects, beautified parks and walking trails, shared culture and traditions, created community gardens and farmers markets, and much more.

Phase II of the Rural Aging Initiative invested \$634,000 in these social engagement efforts. Thanks to funding resources and technical support, AGE to age was established in three new sites, all 18 communities carried out an amazing array of intergenerational activities and projects, as well as strong participation in AGE to age enhancement programs: Summer College Interns, Reading Pals, and the Aging Mastery Pilot Program.



## SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS: AGE TO AGE 2017 - 2019



**97%** of older adults reported a **renewed sense of purpose**

**94%** of older adults reported **decreased feelings of isolation**

**85%** of older adults reported **improved physical health and well-being**

# AGE TO AGE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

## SUMMER COLLEGE INTERN PROGRAM



In 2012, the Northland Foundation piloted an AGE to age program enhancement to provide a summer work experience for college students in community-based intergenerational work. Through the Rural Aging Initiative, the Summer College Intern Program continued and expanded. During the summers of 2017 through 2019, 58 students served in 10 rural AGE to age communities. Evaluation shows this “spin-off” program has been highly successful in helping college students learn to work with older adults while also bringing fresh energy to AGE to age sites.

In the next three years of the Northland Foundation’s aging work, the intern program is shifting to an Aging Fellows Program, pairing an older adult age 50+ with a college student in each site. The fellowship pairs will work and learn together to expand intergenerational opportunities in their rural communities.

**10,869 service hours** contributed by student interns

**98%** of interns improved their **understanding of how older adults can contribute to community**

**97%** of interns increased their **skills to connect people from different age groups**

**96%** of interns enhanced their **understanding of intergenerational programming**

## READING PALS PROGRAM

In 2012, the Northland Foundation piloted Reading Pals, a program enhancement featuring older adult volunteers to support the social-emotional and reading skills development of young children. Since then, Reading Pals has steadily grown from three sites to eight. The older adult volunteers help students at schools at lunchtime, after school, and during the summer. They also read to children in early childhood care and education programs.

Older adults have reported that volunteering for Reading Pals improved their sense of purpose, enhanced physical health and wellbeing, and reduced feelings of isolation. Teachers have shared that students became more confident readers, increased their reading comprehension, boosted their self-confidence, and felt special and valued. Reading Pals is a win-win for all ages.

*“Being a Reading Pal has opened a new door for me to build positive relationships with young children and help them to learn and grow.”*

– Older Adult Volunteer



**316 older adults** read with **1,561 children** across **8 sites** over **3 years**

**6,741 volunteer hours** by older adults valued at **\$188,710**

**100%** of older adults reported an **improved sense of purpose**