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Senior Advocates
for Generational Equity

What can you do to promote conversation and connection in community?

Thank you for participating in one of our SAGE Citizen Project events. As a next step, SAGE offers several pathways to help you promote conversation and connection in your community.

This guide provides additional resources and is organized in two sections: (1) Ten tips for everyday actions, (2) Five ideas for long-term actions, including working with like-minded groups in Oregon. The last page summarizes advice for civic engagement on specific issues.

Ten Tips for Everyday Actions (These are some examples and in no order of priority)

Connect with people who may disagree with you. Listen better.

1. Go to new places. Be proactive by reading news from different sources. Locate your meetings in venues where you can have dialogue with people of different economic, political, racial, and religious backgrounds.
2. Take the time to develop rapport before jumping into a major discussion. Share a meal or a slice of pie to break the ice.
3. Find courage to have difficult conversations. Listen with intent, converse with “yes and,” rather than “no but.” Let yourself be vulnerable enough to take in something that you do not want to see or believe and be willing to hear someone else’s pain. Remember that changing minds is a two-way street.
4. Focus on connections, not divisions. For example, people follow different faith traditions, but they share similar values such as helping people in need.
5. Where possible, agree on shared language and facts. Language sets the tone for a conversation. Be careful not to inadvertently charge the conversation by the choice of words (e.g., referring to some government programs with a derogatory term and similar programs by another term). On a related point, when you rely on a source to support your views, check the accuracy of your source. Opinion is often portrayed as fact. If we cannot agree on the facts, we will not be able to agree on the solution.

Become more engaged.

6. For those who can vote, vote. We all have a responsibility to influence our government, using our time, money and voice to advocate for the causes we believe in, and to affect change at the local, state and national levels.
7. Action is the antidote to despair. By becoming politically active, you can become less disillusioned with politics. Seeing legislators working hard engenders confidence.

Promote education and participation in government.

8. Promote civics education in our schools. In doing so, we can influence young people to become civically engaged which will, in turn, influence the next generation too.
9. Help more people from underrepresented communities by providing pathways for minorities and young adults to participate in leadership roles.
10. Encourage local political engagement. We have many leadership roles to advance local and state policies, and these policies can result in broad social change.

Five Ideas for Long-term Actions

(These are some examples, each of which could be pursued as a SAGE Legacy Fellow)

1. **Volunteer to support or fund civics education at your local schools.** Coordinate efforts with like-minded initiatives in your local school district.
2. **Volunteer to support or fund civics education and activism for older adults.** Coordinate efforts with like-minded initiatives such as those run by community centers, local service clubs, the leagues, grassroots organizations, and political boot camps. Help people develop skills for civil dialogue and to influence policy (e.g., skills to facilitate difficult conversations on politics, grassroots organizing and coalition building to advance new policy).
3. **Organize an intergenerational conference to address what tend to be difficult political topics such as entitlement programs, population growth, immigration, race relations.** Work together to illuminate perspectives and bring new voices to the conversation. Consider hosting a keynote speaker to attract new audiences.
4. **Develop and publish questions to frame additional conversations with candidates for public office.** Bring to light their views on civil dialogue and the role of elected officials. Questions may focus on where to identify trusted information sources, how to gain agreement on the roles of government (local, state and federal), and how to protect the interests of those who cannot vote (e.g., future generations).

5. **Volunteer, donate and learn more to support the work of groups in Oregon that promote civics education or facilitate discussions across political lines, including:**

- **Braver Angels.** Hosts Red/Blue Workshops that bring together conservative-leaning citizens and liberal-leaning citizens for a day of structured conversations. The organization also hosts workshops on what it takes to have constructive, non-polarizing conversations between people who disagree politically.

Website: BraverAngels.org

Contact: oregonbraverangels@gmail.com

- **Building Bridgers.** Leads presentations and workshops to address the political partisan divide in our country and helps "reverse polarization" through education about psychology, neurobiology, cognitive errors and viewpoint diversity.

Contact: marla@BuildingBridgers.com

- **Citizens4Community (C4C).** A non-partisan organization that promotes objective dialogue as well as inclusion and genuine grassroots engagement in Sisters, Oregon. Our nonprofit works with community members, current leaders and leaders-in-the-making, promoting healthy civic discourse and helping to build collaborative skills and local networks. We host and support programs and projects that enhance teamwork and foster a more prosperous, empowered Sisters Country—one increasingly ready to address opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Website: <http://citizens4community.com>

Contact: citizens4community@gmail.com

- **Community Conversations of Bend.** Offers a community conversation supper event in Central Oregon for community members of all backgrounds to share stories and discuss issues that matter. There's an open feeling of trust and a bubbling up of ideas that break down the silos that are dividing our communities across the country.

Website: <https://www.communityconversationsbend.org>

Contact: www.communityconversationsbend.org/contact.html

- **Crossing Party Lines.** Fosters open conversations between Americans with dissimilar ideologies to increase tolerance, build community, and encourage civic engagement. They teach the underlying skills required to sustain civil, respectful dialogue across the political spectrum and offer regular opportunities to practice through weekly, moderated conversations about the issues of the day. Meetings and trainings are free, and all views welcome, appreciated and heard.

Website: <https://www.crossingpartylines.com>

Contact: <https://crossingpartylines.com/get-in-touch/>

- **Healthy Democracy.** Designs deliberative democracy programs and brings experience in dialogue in different venues, including high school classrooms and a cross-state exchange program bridging urban-rural divides.

Website: <https://healthydemocracy.org>

Contact: info@healthydemocracy.org

- **Oregon Humanities Bridging Oregon.** Convenes groups of individuals in multiple regions to talk together about the fractures and connections we experience in our communities.

Website: <https://oregonhumanities.org/programs/collaborative-projects>

Contact: o.hm@oregonhumanities.org

- **Oregon's Kitchen Table.** Creates spaces for all Oregonians to share their ideas, opinions, beliefs and resources in improving Oregon and our communities.

Website: www.oregonskitchentable.org

Contact: sagiles@oregonskitchentable.org

- **Others?** Yes! In addition to the above contacts, you can get started by checking with your local library, schools, colleges, associations, and faith communities.

Need help with any of these connections?

Contact SAGE at 971-717-6570 or email hello@WeAreSage.org

SAGE's Three Strategies for Civic Engagement

1. Learn about the issues that motivate you and find out who else is involved.

- **Your issue** – Affirm the issue you care most about (education, environment, economy).
- **Your views** – Develop your voice by studying the issue and the organizations involved. Discuss your views with friends, family and others. Consider how those with different traditions and interests may view the same issue, and where people may find common ground. Take note of how challenges and solutions to various issues are interconnected.
- **Your focus** – Clarify what practice or policy you want to influence and at what level (local, state, or national), and which organizations or governments can act on the issue.

2. Identify a plan based on your skills and the needs you have identified. Become a:

- **Researcher** – Build knowledge about the issue to share with others.
- **Advisor** – Influence decisions by advising/guiding others in the policy process.
- **Advocate for civic engagement** – Strengthen public participation and knowledge through initiatives that promote open government, free speech and voter registration.
- **Advocate for a specific cause** – Pursue one or more strategies to create change.

You can influence the public's point of view when you:

- Speak with friends, and at town hall meetings and parades
- Canvass door-to-door, collect signatures or sign petitions
- Write letters to the editor or publish your own e-newsletter

You can influence political leaders' points of view when you:

- Do all the above
- Write or speak with elected and appointed officials
- Join a commission or advisory board
- Testify in your city, county, Salem, or Washington D.C.

3. Take action and demonstrate the change you want to see.

- **Budget time** – Make a firm commitment to advocate for a cause.
- **Assess effectiveness and outcomes** – Confirm you are making a difference along the lines you aim for and, if not, how you can adapt your strategy.
- **Challenge your friends** – Inspire others to get involved.

Contact SAGE for help regarding any of these strategies.

Call 971-717-6570 or email hello@WeAreSage.org.