

## **Empowering Seniors Through Community Engagement**

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### **Abstract:**

Social isolation and loneliness are troubling issues that many elderly face today and have profound effects on their well-being. By empowering our seniors through community engagement, we can alleviate these challenges. Studies indicate that up to 50% of persons over 60 years of age are at risk of experiencing social isolation, which puts them at higher risk for elevated blood pressure, heart disease, weakened immune systems, depression, cognitive decline, and many other health concerns. Interacting with the elderly through in-person visits offers valuable support and compassion to those who are approaching their end of life, significantly improving their quality life, physical activity, and social skills. Through community engagement, I was able to observe how important social interaction is for the elderly. During my time volunteering at The Heights Inn, a senior residential home in La Habra Heights, California, I got to observe the needs of the elderly. During weekly group discussions there was an opportunity to experience different perspectives and the collective wisdom shared by the residents; their insight on many topics offered visitors a unique point-of-view. During activities, like bingo nights or cultural dinners, both residents and volunteers were able to form long-lasting social connections while offering emotional support. The reality is that most senior residents experience loneliness and isolation in residential homes. Overall, spending time with the elderly demonstrates the importance of companionship, offering community members an opportunity for mutual learning and enrichment, as well as highlighting the need for compassion, empathy, and respect for all ages.

