

## Gray For A Day

### The Situation

Negative attitudes toward the process of aging and older adults affect how people treat others and how they think about their own aging process. Education and educational experiences can be used as a strategy to challenge common misconceptions about aging, encourage empathy, increase knowledge, give participants realistic expectations, and encourage health-promoting behaviors. While developing knowledge allows for transformative shifts in attitudes, it seems to be only one aspect. Scholars have argued that to truly change perspective, learners must engage in an experiential activity, possibly through simulations of the experience accompanied by discussion. While this is a popular active learning technique, most interventions focused on changing attitudes about aging are done with college-aged participants. Furthermore, many community-based entities are unable to adopt or adapt curricula because of replicability and adaptability concerns, logistics or other disconnects.

### What We Did

*Gray for a Day* was developed by K-State Research and Extension as an evidence-informed curriculum that aims to educate participants on the age-related sensory and functional challenges that some adults might face through engaging content education, simulations that reflect daily routines, simple tasks, and leisure or social activities and discussion to facilitate reflection of the experience. *Gray for a Day* has been implemented across the state of Kansas and has been adopted for use in 13 other states. This program has been utilized with middle school, high school, and college students, 4-H members, staff of long-term care facilities, CNA and LPN students, and even older adults themselves. In total, we have reached thousands of individuals representing a variety of locations, ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, employment status and professions. Throughout Extension system's grassroots presence, we were able to engage Kansans in interactive, purposeful learning that works to reduce ageism, promote age-positive attitudes and behaviors, and improve one's overall health and wellness in an effort to promote optimal aging.

### Outcomes

*Gray for a Day* participants consistently report an increase in awareness of age-related sensory and functional decline and its impact on one's daily life. The program consistently encourages its participants to be thinking about how they can better interact with and support older adults in their communities. In addition, it promotes understanding of the connection between overall health and one's future sensory and functional well-being, knowledge about aging. *Gray for a Day* instills a desire to be more considerate and understanding of older adults, and the need for proper self-care to age well. Finally, 86% of youth participants and 89% of adult participants planned to improve their overall lifestyle in order to improve their sensory and functional well-being in the future.

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