



5 step guide to
The Way We
Were

CHANGE 

Love your community

THIRD  AGE

VALUING OLDER PEOPLE. EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES. ENRICHING LIVES

Introduction



"Welcome to the ChangeX guide to The Way We Were. We're delighted you're thinking about getting involved in the project in your community. Here you'll find all the information, practical tips and resources you need. I'm here to help you at each stage so don't be afraid to get in touch!"

Mary Nally, Founder of Third Age and The Way We Were Project

What is The Way We Were?

The Way We Were is an initiative of Third Age, an organisation that provides opportunities for older people to contribute to their communities and engage actively in society. The Way We Were is an intergenerational project and a living history initiative that brings recent history to life in a way that textbooks can't. The programme involves older people exhibiting artifacts from earlier times and explaining to primary school pupils how they are used. Artifacts that have been used in the past include a carbide bicycle lamp, fire bellows, fountain pen and ink, medicine bottles, wooden washboard, and an early hot water bottle. The exhibitors dip into their own childhood and show today's children items that recall a very different way of life. In a school setting, the exhibition usually takes place in the main hall/gym and over the period

of the day each class would have the opportunity to discuss and interact with members. The group works in pairs at tables set up with their own artifacts while each class visits the exhibition in turn.

The project can work equally well in a nursing home setting where the exhibition of the artifacts provides a pleasant nostalgic experience to residents. It is extremely useful in involving all residents in a communal social experience and in particular quieter residents or even those suffering with dementia come to life when engaged with the exhibition.

Why it Matters

Helping to foster contact between old and young is particularly important at this time of demographic change. Bringing older and younger people together can help break down barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding between the generations.

The Background

During 2009, Mary Nally was contacted by a local school asking their members to talk to the children about their school days. Mary and her team discussed how to add value to such a visit and came up with the idea of bringing some old objects from childhood to show and discuss with the kids. Over a number of months members began to collect old artifacts from their homes, attics and barns to illustrate the spoken word. Since then the project has gone from strength to strength.

Overview



5 STEPS

1. See project in action
2. Gather people & artifacts
3. Talk to your local school(s) / nursing home
4. Set a date & agree logistics
5. Run your first workshop

WHO

Someone who...

- is passionate about bringing older and younger generations together to share stories and learn from each other.
- Has experience recruiting volunteers and managing a team.
- Enjoys working with young and old

RESOURCE CHECKLIST

- Group of enthusiastic volunteers
- At least 40 artifacts owned by volunteers
- Interest from local primary school with suitable space to exhibit
- Transport for people & artifacts

TIME



A local leader will need approximately 2-3 hours a week to set up and run The Way We Were programme in local schools or nursing homes. The programme can run as a once off or as a series of workshops depending on availability of time and resources.

Step 1:

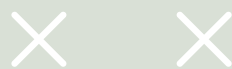
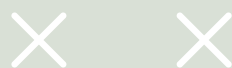
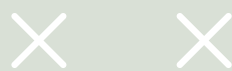
See project in action

Seeing the project in action - the artifacts, the people and the interaction between old and young - will really bring it to life and help you understand exactly how it might work in and benefit your local community.

The project is very active in schools and nursing homes right across the Leinster area. If it's easy and convenient for you to visit the project in Leinster, your mentor or someone from the ChangeX team can help you to arrange a visit.

If you're outside the Leinster area, don't worry. Your mentor can talk you through exactly how it works by describing the experience in detail, sharing some photographs with you and connecting you with volunteers and teachers who have already participated in the programme.

Third Age even have a mobile exhibition which could come visit your area, if they're nearby.



VISIT



If there are a couple of people in your community interested in the programme, you should all go along to see the project in action. Having this experience is a great way to get started.



Step 2:

Gather people & artifacts

Fundamental to The Way We Were are people to share their stories from years gone by and artifacts that form the basis for these stories.

When The Way We Were started in Co. Meath, the first people to get involved were members of Third Age, an organisation that works with older people. A good starting point for you might be groups or organisations in your town or community that work with older people. You should approach these groups, tell them a little bit about the programme and why you think it's a good idea. Ask them to share it with their members and let people volunteer to get involved.

Chances are you might already know a few people who will jump at the chance to share stories from their childhood, so start with them and then ask them to invite friends. You only need a small group to get started, between 5 and 10.

Once people are signed up and willing to get involved, it might be a good idea to arrange a meeting with everyone where you explain exactly what's involved. This will give people the opportunity to ask questions and give you the chance to describe what type of artifacts people will need.

When it comes to the artifacts, anything goes! Once people can tell a story around it and they can recall how it was used in times gone by, it'll make for an interesting exhibit.

TIPS



The main exhibition which originates now has over 200 pieces but don't worry your exhibit will grow over time. If you can get to 40 / 50 you'll be ready to run your first workshop.

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Step 2:

Gather people & artifacts

Items currently in the exhibition include a carbide bicycle lamp, fire bellows, fountain pen and ink, spinning wheel, medicine bottles, wooden wash boards, coins, personal school reports, penny catechism, chamber pots and many more.

These items were found in attics, sheds and old houses, often gathering dust. Ask your group of volunteers to search everywhere they can think of to find these items. You could even arrange a trip to a local museum to get inspiration and trigger some memories of the types of objects you could use.

It may take some time to gather all the artifacts so give people a few weeks to search and to ask family and friends for any items they might have that could be added to the collection. From the outset, agree a date where you can all meet up again to pool your findings and ensure you have a good collection of items.

This can be a lot of fun for everyone involved and it's always a great surprise to see what people come up with!

TIPS



You'll have seen or else heard a lot about the original exhibition at this stage so that will provide lots of inspiration for your search. Make sure to share all you learned with the group of volunteers.

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Step 3:

Talk to your local school or nursing home

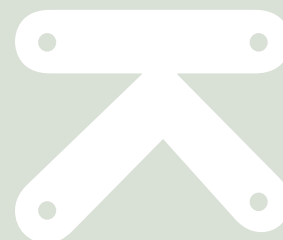
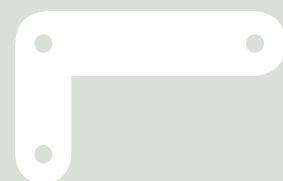
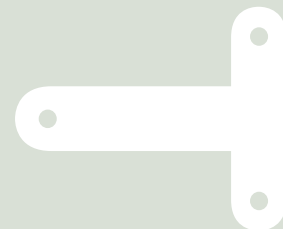
Now that you're ready to go, you should talk to your local primary school or nursing home. To get started, it might be best to choose one and start there. Over time you can add more of one or mix it up and do both depending on your availability and that of your volunteers.

When approaching your local school, remember that this is a great opportunity for both the teachers and students to learn from local people in a unique way. This exhibition can bring history to life in a way that textbooks simply can't!

The experience of Third Age has been that schools are really keen to get involved with the programme and have volunteers visit the school so the likelihood is that the first school you approach will jump at the chance!

In a nursing home setting, the programme is a form of 'reminiscence therapy' and has been extremely useful in involving all residents in a communal social experience, in particular quieter residents or even those suffering with dementia come to life when engaged with the exhibition.

We can put you in touch with both teachers and nursing home directors who have experienced the programme first-hand so you'll be an expert when talking to your first school / nursing home.



Step 4:

Set a date and agree logistics

Once you have your artifacts, your volunteers are committed and a school or nursing home is committed, you should set a date for your first workshop.

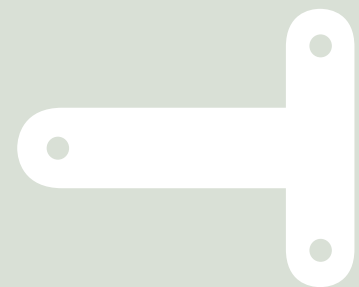
Generally in a school setting, it works like this:

- The exhibition usually takes place in the main hall/gym over the period of one school day.
- Each class has the opportunity to discuss and interact with members at a set time.
- The group works in pairs at tables set up with their own artifacts while each class visits the exhibition in turn.
- The school provides refreshments on arrival and a sandwich lunch.

You should agree the whole day with the school beforehand to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Transport of both the volunteers and their artifacts is another thing you need to think of. People may need to avail of lifts or you may even need to arrange a bus - it'll all depend on numbers and how far the school is from where people live.

It'll work similarly in a nursing home setting (just a bit more casual) but you can agree all this with the nursing home beforehand.

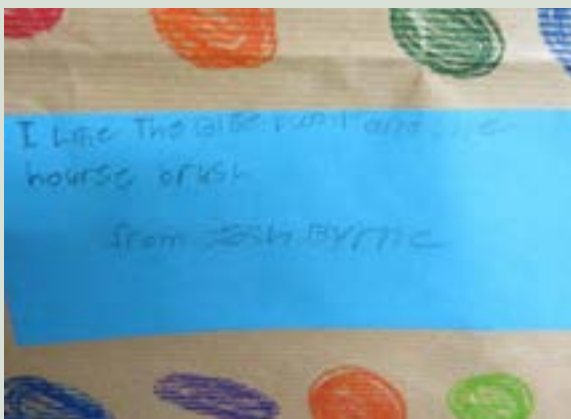


Step 5: Run your first workshop

You're all set for the big day. You will have agreed everything with the school / nursing home in advance so everything should run very smoothly.

The interactions will be very natural as the kids will have lots of questions and while they may be a little nervous at the outset, your volunteers will thrive on the opportunity to share their story.

Someone from Third Age who has helped run the programme before will be available to give you and your volunteers a quick overview of what the day entails once you've signed up and ChangeX and you've been assigned your mentor.



RUN

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What's Next?

Now that you know what's involved in setting up the programme you're probably wondering what's next?

We'll provide all you need to get started including assigning you your very own mentor and providing the ongoing support you need to make sure the programme is a success in your community.

[Sign up here to get started](#)

