

**Community Assembly on Aging  
September 25, 2007**

**“Are You Ready? The Changing Face of Retirement, Work and Service”  
Highlights of Conversations**

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The following are the highlights and major themes of roundtable conversations held at the Community Assembly on Aging on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2007. The assembly was offered by the Leadership Council of *Sarasota: A Community for All Generations* and SCOPE. Keynote speaker was Judy Goggin, senior vice president of Civic Ventures, a national think tank. Her presentation focused on the changing nature of retirement and the impact of “encore careers” on the workforce, both paid and unpaid. The program attracted retirees interested in exploring options for their own “next chapter” as well as employers from all sectors wanting to respond to the emerging trends of longer working lives and retirees wanting meaningful second careers.

Following the presentation participants shared their responses to a series of questions about expectations and possibilities for a changing workforce. Conversation focused on the following questions:

- *As an older adult seeking meaningful employment, what features would attract you to a job?*
- *As an employer, what creative changes could be explored to accommodate a changing workforce?*
- *What is it today that excited you enough so that you are willing to do something about it?*

***As an older adult seeking meaningful employment, what features  
would attract you to a job?***

- Flexible work schedule <40 hours/week.
- Be part of a team vs. working in isolation.
- Assignments/Job descriptions that have meaning and purpose - making a difference. Health benefit would be a bonus but not a requirement.
- Being valued and respected.
- Project oriented.
- Opportunity to meet new people.
- Ability to make a difference.
- Continued learning opportunities (feed me!)
- Pay check.
- The environment - welcoming, respectful, comfortable.
- The employees - work as a team, utilize each other's skills.
- An employer who values your input, is comfortable enough with own strengths and weaknesses not to be threatened by you.
- Finding personal fulfillment and enjoyment.
- Caregiver support

*Continue to be challenged.  
New experiences.*

- Education to older workers on technology/electronic communication
- Supportive transportation.
- Opportunity to grow beyond my current skills/challenged - creative opportunity/meaningful/enjoyable.
- Let me work at least part of the time from home, taking advantage of today's technology.
- Effective leaders, managers, supervisors, aware and responsive to intergenerational needs. Buddy system.
- Opportunity to combine the best aspects of past work experience with trying something different. Ongoing assignment punctuated with short-term projects that are very challenging.
- Workplace should include an active feature in the workplace environment. Older adults need to move to maintain their health. An hourly coordinated fitness oriented circulation generating deep energy levels therefore productive results.

*Don't just look at me as low cost labor! I want to be a part of the team and valued. I may not be as fast but...I' m good.*

***As an employer, what creative changes could be explored to accommodate a changing workforce?***

### **Communication, Connection & Recruitment**

- More interaction between members of each department.
- Getting the word out about what can be done to help people move from one job to another.
- Getting the colleges involved and presenting courses that will promote the changing workforce.
- Better communications on opportunities. Advertise in areas where seniors might respond.
- Include a ""good news"" section in newspaper and local TV to highlight great stories of creative aging and intergenerational interaction.
- Centers where people can gather to "civicsize". Entrees - Websites, "sensitivity training", organization that welcomes "newbies." Training opportunities.
- A centralized way to harness the talents and then match it to employees. Make it easy for people to find the opportunities. Provide training to employees on how to utilize the talent. Perhaps use the On Stage, Chambers, and School districts -- make it easy to access the available opportunities - website that's easy to use. Tap into the libraries.
- Intentional hiring of older adults.
- The ""you"" factor - interviewing the individual/applicant/volunteer to ascertain what they see as their skill/passion.
- Crosstraining - mentoring between generations - When people retire or leave invite to be part of back-up corps.
- Planned integration of multiple generations - what can the older generation offer AND what can they learn. Elders using technology taught by young people.

*An interview process of seeing both sides - how we could mutually benefit one another.*

- Sense of humor - smile, many times people are too serious about their position
- Develop a sense of community in the workplace.
- As a retiree it has been my experience that volunteerism has been sought by those in for profit, nonprofit and for wage nonprofits to take advantage of my experience/expertise for personal gain rather than community gain, advancement or betterment. "What's in it for me?" has been a problem.
- Explore the diverse cultural attitudes that are represented in your workforce e.g. the respect of one's elders of Asian societies. - New thoughts of approaches could emerge that may be ""out of the box"" in terms of your company's current views.

### **Flexible Benefits/Compensation**

- Employers can be proactive in addressing creative ways to provide an opportunity for group health care for part-timers with creative compensation plans for income and quality; flexible work time.
- There are compelling needs for workers to care for children/grandchildren as well as their parents/grandparents. Flexible benefits including time off for family needs are essential to ensure optimal work performance.
- Creative changes would include - opportunities for employees to be involved in community projects that interest them, allowing employees to use their talents for betterment of company (organizational, motivational, teaching or training others).
- Offer free medical care vs. money.
- Collaboration with other organizations for additional benefits and training.
- We could offer flex-time so older (and younger) workers could enjoy life-enriching activities that extend the quality of life. I could also look at adding new positions that employ more part-time workers with flexible schedules (including extended vacations), so all ages can focus on personal growth rather than just the job.
- Supportive transportation for older workers. May need mass transportation to meet the needs of the aging population - late at night, on weekends, on holidays.
- Team building exercises, managing multi-generational workforce, frequent skills building, conflict resolution, sensitivity courses, etc..
- Attention given to volunteers who go "above and beyond" expectation. Make them feel engaged and that they make a difference.

*Shared projects and responsibilities. Be open to creating teams by building on individual strengths and compensating for individual weaknesses.*

***What is it today that excited you enough so that you are willing to do something about it?***

### **General**

- Share information. Check out websites & life long learning. Encourage friends to be more aware of comm. opportunities.
- Write a letter to the editor about positive aging.
- Attend community meetings to lobby for senior services.

- I want to have a place where new ""encores"" can meet, dialogue, and be welcomed into this forward looking Sarasota Community. The talk could be about "Values", jobs, fun, and whether one wants to make a difference or not!
- It would be worthwhile exploring the variety of opportunities in the community for Encore activities and how they can be better publicized.
- Having recently departed from a corporate job, I wanted to explore creative options available to be fulfilled. To me this means flexible structure, some financial compensation, and an enormous amount of social interaction in the community.
- Explore the idea of Life Coaches for older adults of all socio-economic levels - could this be integrated into neighborhoods, Senior Friendship Centers, dining sites, libraries, etc. - Use trained volunteers to do this.
- Helping to develop programs that help people explore their life options and learn how to find resources to do that.
- Share with others and we can come together to help others. I was much empowered. Find a group who will continue the dialogue.
- What excited me was the numbers and diversity of individuals of the attendees of today's meeting.
- Read, get a plan; start conversation. I am "stuck in martyr"
- Interested in combining my interests and experience and apply to Center for Creative Aging - Questions at our table about Sarasota Bus System and idea about putting funds to hire elders to be drivers.
- I still have plans to work with developers and share ideas which will make our community more interactive versus isolated which is what is happening.
- Community gardening projects.
- My desire is to work with others who are in the Arts and wish to offer opportunities for discovering one's own creativity just for the joy of doing so.
- What excited me today was the fact that I have this 20 more years of life with such great possibilities. Sarasota's vibrancy, especially among its senior citizens is electrifying.

*Hearing so many initiatives and ideas makes it exciting to consider ways to make Sarasota a model for the country.*

*I'd like to consider an 'encore' group for surviving caregivers, in particular spouses, which could provide info about their 'Next Chapter'.*

## **Education**

- Creating workshops/seminars etc. related to: Civic Engagement, Life Planning, and Career Paths. Investigate Civic Ventures' websites.
- Articulate projects available through Venice Interfaith Community Association to community/faith groups.
- Help with education in the community about available resources like Senior Friendship Center.
- I feel well qualified to be an effective senior, life coach and seminar leader. A new activity for my life and extension of my skills.

- Develop wellness programs.

### **Intergenerational**

- Learn more about existing Sarasota/Manatee programs and model initiatives. Lend my expertise in advocacy and communicating to the inter-generational opportunities in the region.
- Make hiring older intentional. Look for research on structured outcome for intergenerational conversations.
- Start "Boomer University"
- I liked the community wide adoption of child - senior mentoring program
- The idea of connecting aging people regardless of race, color, creed, or education. Being able to really talk and listen to others regard their concern and knowledge of the subject."

### **Volunteer**

- I should visit the Senior Friendship Center to find out if there is a place for me to volunteer.
- An opportunity to help those seniors who need assistance in terms of economics, socialization, and use a new life experience. That is why I became an Americorps Vista Person.
- I want to shake up our existing volunteer program - more responsive to volunteers, providing more challenging opportunities, more meaningful experiences. This will only be possible if we step out of the role of ""employers"" and view the possibilities from the perspective of the prospective volunteer, the in-place volunteer.

*Retraining nonprofits to think differently. Re-casting volunteers as unpaid workers.*

### **Workplace**

- Work with employer to re-design HR policies to respond to needs/wants of older adults while tapping into wealth of experience and transfer of knowledge, specifically with nonprofit sector, for both paid and unpaid persons.
- Work closely with Chambers to continue to look at improving mature worker connection.
- Help a nonprofit to explore opportunities for adapting to this change (using talents of mature workers).
- Initiate a workplace discussion about aging in the workplace and what that means. Also having a discussion about talents that may not be recognized on a day by day basis.
- Go back to my organization and share ideas with others that did not attend. Build excitement as a team with employees and volunteers to come up with more fulfilling opportunities.
- The idea of connecting with companies or organizations that need employees via a database or fair.

*Meet with my team to see how we can be more creative and engaging in our program and services. How can we attract more people into project-based initiatives?*