

Live ! Connect ! Create ! Learn !

SUMMARY OF CONVERSATIONS: 2008 WINTER FORUM ON AGING

I retired once – my intention now is not to retire, but to move on to another phase of giving back.

~ 2008 Winter Forum on Aging participant

Actively creating a great retirement experience – both as individuals and as a community – was the topic of conversation at the **2008 Winter Forum on Aging**. Nearly 200 people attended the February 22 event to hear from special guest Ronald J. Manheimer, Ph.D, the executive director of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement (NCCCR). Dr. Manheimer shared his experience and offered insights into the unique challenge of engaging a new generation of retirement-aged people. Founded in 1988 as part of the University of North Carolina Asheville, the NCCCR features three components of great retirement: lifelong learning, leadership and community service opportunities.



“Retirement is a complex process, not a single event,” said Ron Manheimer explained. “It is filled with transitions. People retire and go back to work -- maybe multiple times. They use education to open up new interests, meet new people. They’re going off for adventure travel. Volunteering has become a way to give back, to make new friends, and to learn about an aspect of your community.” This, he emphasized, is why having new ways of engaging retirement-aged adults is so important – retirement has changed and with it, it is changing people, organizations and communities as well.

Dr. Manheimer was interviewed by **Nancy Schlossberg, Ed.D.**, an expert on the topic of life transitions and author of several books, the most recent being “*Retire Smart, Retire Happy: Finding Your Own True Path in Life.*” Her work was the centerpiece of a recent PBS special on how to prepare for a meaningful and fulfilling retirement.



Many thanks go to **The Community Foundation of Sarasota County**, whose generous sponsorship made the 2008 Winter Forum possible.



Following the speaker, **roundtable conversations** and an **interactive panel** discussion were also part of the 2008 Winter Forum on Aging. While the conversations were held in a conventional setting of small groups and open-ended questions, the panel used an innovative format where panelists walked throughout the audience, joined the small groups for conversation and then reacted with their thoughts.

The questions asked during this roundtable conversation and panel discussion were:

1. Based on what you heard today, what will you do as you spend (or plan for) your retirement time?
2. What can we do as a community? In what ways should we direct our resources? What are the possibilities?



Below is a summary of the responses and conversations.



QUESTION 1

Based on what you heard today, what will you do as you spend (or plan for) your retirement time?

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Be more active in looking for opportunities within my local community. To learn, to do things, to contribute.

Didn't plan. It simply evolved, tested what was available, kept or moved on to the next opportunity. It helps when you're new to have an experienced person as an "introducer".

My life continues to be a day to day adventure and I have found that even though I have had plans and goals for retirement they have become entirely changed.

Continue to find a productive outlet that gives a sense of worth/value to my family/community. Continue to grow intellectually - not be known by what I did for a living - but rather by what my passions are.

QUESTION 1 (continued)

Based on what you heard today, what will you do as you spend (or plan for) your retirement time?

53% of comments specified the importance of being engaged in the community, with words like “volunteer” “engaged” “active” and “involved.”

I am creatively retired (age 83). I sought my own interests in the community. I am enjoying my retirement years. I feel concern for elderly who are isolated, who lack resources. Thank God for Sr. Center and other concerned agencies.

Keep involved - get more involved - do what is natural and easy!

Now in my 25th year of retirement, I am still looking for ways to be involved in the community, ways to make a difference in the lives of others.

Look for ways to give back to the community. Look for ways to continue my education. Find others who are interested in similar experiences. Look for ways to use my skills in the future to change my career. See what I can do for others to help keep them active and productive in retirement.



39% of comments specified learning – taking classes, learning a new language or attending informational programs like lectures.

Create even more interesting knowledge and skill producing opportunities that also make a difference in my life and the lives of others.

Continue learning new things. More travel.

I would do serious research: organizations, foundations, and institutions dealing with retirement. I would talk to people and ask a number of questions. I would think (deeply) about my passions, and also how my background would be useful for my community.

I am going to continue to be part of a learning community.... Continue to balance my life with opportunities that explore my creativity and passions.

Return to a college environment to keep learning new things and stay in touch with other generations.

QUESTION 2

What can we do as a community? In what ways should we direct our resources? What are the possibilities?

THEME: There is an opportunity for agencies and organizations to coordinate better around aging- and retirement-related issues.

As a community we should facilitate, coordinate and promote activities and initiatives. Resources should be directed according to priorities, which should be set.

Create a formal coalition of providers that can serve as a network to engage people, develop new ideas, and serve as a resource for creative aging.

THEME: People in the community – both residents and newcomers – would benefit from a directory of resources.

Share information. I see a lot of good things happening in the community - but no one knows about it.

Community needs to come together to brainstorm how to create a "Map" for newcomers, and/or creative retirement and community engagement opportunities.

Have info available via technology - for those who can/want to access that way.

THEME: Engage seniors in sharing their gifts, talents and skills.

Engage our resources (people) in finding answers.



Find a better way to tap into the skills and knowledge at the retired population.

We can give both older people and younger people an opportunity to share their knowledge and talents with others.

THEME: Sarasota can and should be a model for the nation in issues of aging.

Create the "guidebooks" or "toolkits" for the rest of the nation – the “How To” of becoming a community for multi-generations. Resources – both human and financial – could be directed toward more forums and capturing the many leading initiatives already taking place. Possibilities – to lead the nation.

Being a leader for other communities – big example and providing the opportunities to improve all the lives of our neighbors.

QUESTION 2 (continued)

What can we do as a community? In what ways should we direct our resources? What are the possibilities?



THEME: *The way we talk about this issue is important – we need to be clear on words and more people need to hear about this.*

Create a message that this is good for All; not only frail elders.

Do not use retirement communities to have meetings. The word "retirement" means old.

THEME: *It would be great to have a “place” for to coordinated retirement options.*

We need a "creative center," we have the assets and the pieces; we just need to "get it together".

We should develop a center that helps to direct people to community resource for Creative Retirement. We should have a new site that assists this. SCOPE can continue to develop discussion groups that engage community issues. Public access could develop some programs that discuss community issues and works to get people involved in these issues.

THEME: *Participants wanted and saw opportunities for intergenerational connections.*

Think outside the generational box. Create and support options that address our needs at multiple levels – there is not a cookie cutter approach.

One key area is to bring in (toward center of community) more age groups, including retirees. Get them all more involved together. Programs may be more cost effective than facilities but some additional facilities are needed. Use schools, they already exist.

Intergenerational solutions (e.g. adult and child day care locations). Create more opportunities for youth to interact with the older adult population through existing communities.

We can give both older people and younger people an opportunity to share their knowledge and talents with others. Get these people together to come up with a plan that will enhance the residents' opportunities and benefit the community.

Continue to promote community engagement for all ages. Become known as a community who embraces Communities for a Lifetime.

QUESTION 2 (continued)

What can we do as a community? In what ways should we direct our resources? What are the possibilities?

People discussed specific issues and recommended certain approaches that that they saw as opportunities for positive change.

ISSUE: Lifelong learning

As a community we should invest in lifelong learning and engagement in life.

Create "noncredit" courses - possibly through local colleges.

Create more Lifetime Learning opportunities – alliances with local universities.

ISSUE: Neighbors helping neighbors

Get back to neighbor-to-neighbor helping each other.

Small neighborhood gatherings where you can get to know your neighbors. Bring people together for community discussion. Attract diverse population.

Explore how to inform people like the Beacon Hill model – assist those neighborhoods groups in organizing. Prepare interviewers to meet with people and talk together about their needs related to creative aging (Referral "Squad" to connect people to services).

ISSUE: Transportation

Provide more public transportation as community ages.

Better transportation for elders. School buses could return to community locations and pick-up people to shop, and then return them in time to collect the students, better use of buses.

ISSUE: Housing – affordable for all generations

Make this an affordable place to live for all generations

Create more affordable housing immediately. Many people are being forced out (the worker bees). Currently there are only 2 HUD housing/retirement communities in the Sarasota area and we need 3-4 easily.



For more information about The Winter Forum on Aging, please contact Catherine Clouse at SCOPE (941) 365-8751 or cclouse@scopexcel.org.