

PATHWAYS TO **ENCORE** CAREERS

MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures

How **10 community colleges** are preparing boomers for work in education, health care and social services



A man is not old
until regrets take the
place of dreams.

John Barrymore

Pathways to Encore Careers

A MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Publication

Contents

Foreword

Marc Freedman 2

Analysis: Lessons from the Boomer Classroom

Judy Goggin 4

Profiles

Supporting Women in Transition / Baltimore, MD 8

Exploring New Career Directions / Fort Lauderdale, FL 10

Moving from Success to Significance / Charlotte, NC 12

Preparing for Careers in Elder Care / Fountain Valley, CA 14

Turning Out High School Math Teachers / Allen, TX 16

Meeting the Need for More Caregivers / Phoenix, AZ 18

Helping to Solve the Nursing Shortage / Owensboro, KY. 20

Peer Mentoring—By Boomers, for Boomers / Portland, OR 22

Putting Teacher Training on a Fast Track / Richmond, VA 24

Getting the Downsized Ready to Go / Ann Arbor, MI. 26

Acknowledgments 28

Foreword

Marc Freedman



Photo by Liz Lynch

Tens of millions of Americans ages 44 to 70 want encore careers that combine greater meaning, social purpose, and continued income. And thousands of social and public sector employers, facing severe labor shortages, are searching for new talent to help solve the problems only human talent can solve. It seems like an easy and automatic match, the inevitable result of inexorable logic.

But making this match will require more than logic. It will require clear, new pathways that help people get from the end of their midlife careers to the beginning of their encore careers—routes that can transport millions from aspiration to preparation and, finally, to employment.

Community colleges are in the pathway business—for all the right reasons. They're convenient, approachable, connected to the local labor market and local employers, and cost effective. Basically, they specialize in getting people from here to there.

All kinds of people. People at the beginning of their careers, people new to this country, people interested in changing careers. And, it turns out, community colleges are interested in boomers who want to prepare for new careers in education, health care and social services.

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In 2007, when Civic Ventures, with support from MetLife Foundation, asked community colleges if they would like small, seed grants to test innovative ways to engage boomers as students in search of encore careers, the response was overwhelming. More than 10 percent of the nation's community colleges replied.

The 10 community colleges that received grants were eager to get started. They tested a wide variety of programs and services—from mentors for older students to streamlined applications processes, from workshops designed to uncover career passions to networking events for job seekers, from accelerated teacher training programs to programs introducing students to jobs as caregivers. And they learned.

From this laboratory on 10 campuses, we've pulled lessons that we hope will help others engage boomers as community college students—and as students at other institutions of higher learning. There's an immediate, practical need, of course, but there's a wider promise as well.

A generation ago, we invented a new kind of higher education—lifelong learning—out of the insight that learning wasn't the exclusive province of the young. Soon after, older people were filling classrooms through programs like Elderhostel, and eventually the culture changed. People retired to learn.

Today we are on the doorstep of a new stage of life and work, as millions of boomers move beyond their midlife years. They, too, will need a new kind of higher learning, one that goes beyond personal development, as important as that is, to help them launch new careers at a juncture when previous generations headed to the sidelines.

The MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Community College Encore Career Grants program offers a glimpse of that next generation of higher education. I'm eager to see more. ■

Marc Freedman is the founder and CEO of Civic Ventures and author of *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life* (PublicAffairs Books, 2007).

**Winners of MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures
Community College Encore Career Grants**

Baltimore City Community College (Baltimore, MD)
Broward College (Ft. Lauderdale, FL)
Central Piedmont Community College (Charlotte, NC)
Coastline Community College (Fountain Valley, CA)
Collin College (Allen, TX)
GateWay Community College (Phoenix, AZ)
Owensboro Community and Technical College (Owensboro, KY)
Portland Community College (Portland, OR)
Virginia Community College System (Richmond, VA)
Washtenaw Community College (Ann Arbor, MI)

Lessons from the Boomer Classroom

Judy Goggin

When Jan Albert was laid off from her job in real estate in southern California, she became the primary caregiver for her aging parents and tried to find a few minutes to think about what to do next in her professional life. Then it hit her. “I’m really good at caring for my parents’ day-to-day affairs, and I like doing it,” she thought. Albert turned her epiphany into her own non-medical caregiver business. And she did it by retraining through Coastline Community College’s Gerontology Program.

In Dallas, Texas, John Kostibas retired after 34 years in the high-tech industry, then decided it was time to give back to his community. He followed his passion to Collin College’s fast-tracked teacher licensure program for experienced adults. Now he’s teaching the next generation of business and science leaders as a high school math teacher—and loving it.

Millions of boomers are reaching the end of midlife careers and looking for what’s next. They’re searching for a way to combine their passion with social impact and continued income.

Like Albert and Kostibas, millions of boomers are reaching the end of midlife careers and looking for what’s next. They’re searching for a way to combine their passion with social impact and continued income. They’re searching for their encore careers.

After hearing from thousands of boomers—in surveys, focus groups, on the web and in conversations across the country—we at Civic Ventures have learned just how hard it is for most people to make the transition from midlife

career to encore career. We’ve also found that one nearly ubiquitous institution has begun to make it easier—the community college.

With support from the MetLife Foundation, Civic Ventures gave small grants last year to a diverse group of 10 community colleges—Coastline and Collin among them—to seed this movement and help prepare boomers for encore careers in education, health care and social services. The colleges focused on innovation in the areas of career transition courses, curriculum development, partnership development, supportive services, and employment connections. By piloting new ideas with small groups of students, each college was able to glean valuable lessons about recruiting, training, and helping employ boomer students.

What these colleges have learned provides important insight for others looking to tap this new market of potential students, respond to the needs of local employers, and meet social needs in their communities.

As you might expect, all the colleges report that boomers want continuing education on their terms. They want programs that are targeted to them, take into account their differing levels of skills and readiness, avoid waste and any superfluous requirements, include opportunities for networking, and are practical and flexible, while also being challenging and inspiring.

It’s also clear there isn’t a single cookie-cutter approach. But here are 10 quick lessons that we hope will help you develop successful programs to prepare experienced adults for encore careers.



One: It's essential to meet boomers' desire for flexibility. Everyone leads busy lives these days, but 50+ learners with jobs, children, and aging parents have less ability to accommodate class schedules than most other students. Programs that combine an online component with some in-person and networking time—like the Virginia Community Colleges' Career Switcher teacher training program—seem to work well for boomers. And classes and workshops held at night or on the weekends make it possible for students who work full-time to fit retraining into their schedules.

Two: Preparing by learning more about 50+ learners pays off. So does adaptability. Successful programs did a lot of advance work—studying available research, conducting focus groups and surveys, and learning from older students already on campus about their needs. Portland Community College did an extensive survey of older students, for example, to find out why completion rates were low. What they uncovered helped them provide better service to 50+ students, including mentors to help them navigate the system and help with streamlined technology. Once prepared, it's also helpful to be ready to shift plans quickly when the group's needs don't match your anticipations. That's what Ruth Huey from Central Piedmont Community College in North Carolina did when she realized that a group of former managers and lawyers that signed up for her course needed more encouragement and concrete help, like presentation skills, to build confidence.

Three: Streamlining saves time and removes obstacles. Excessive paperwork or cumbersome applications processes, a burden for all ages, can prove to be a show-stopper for 50+ students, who want to start as quickly as possible and don't take kindly to obstacles in the way. Ellis Waller, project coordinator at Coastline Community College, streamlined a long application process into a single-page document so that prospective gerontology students wouldn't be turned off at the introductory sessions. Other colleges found that prerequisites, like general math requirements, presented a barrier to students who have been away from the classroom for a long time. College staff found that students were often more open to hearing more about certificate programs that focus on specific job skills and lead directly to jobs, than degree programs that take longer to complete.

Four: It's not hard to adapt existing programs and resources for 50+ students. At Broward College in Florida, student advising and career counseling services are already in place, so staff kicked it up a notch for older students. They offered a free encore career coaching course designed to help boomers clarify their career and volunteer goals. Because of the tough economy in Florida, most of the people who signed up were interested in paid work. Pamela Shaw, the college's senior advisor, made sure to design the three-hour weekend program around the college's standard career and interest tests and linked results with the adult version of Florida's state career information system, CHOICES. Adding the one-on-one coaching to the pre-existing resources of the college and the state department of education was a recipe for success.

Five: Role models can tell it and sell it. Stories make all the difference. All the community colleges in this pilot agreed on the benefits of showcasing real-life examples of experienced adults who have successfully made the transition to encore careers. This kind of testimonial provides examples of how others did it, inspires confidence that it can be done, and reveals the myriad of job opportunities available in health care, education, gerontology, and the nonprofit sector. At Washtenaw Community College's day-long encore career forum in Michigan, a panel featuring local encore careerists in the nonprofit sector was the most popular event of the day. One particularly effective presenter was a former executive at Ford Motor Company who now runs a local nonprofit.

Six: It pays to involve local employers. Given today's economy and the state of boomer savings, 50+ students are interested in the bottom line—where are the jobs? In many cases, they're right there in the community, and boomers want a direct link to them. When employers are directly involved with the community college, programs can be structured to make sure that boomers are trained to fill existing vacancies. Staff at Owensboro Community and Technical College in Kentucky, for example, partnered with the local hospital to train experienced nurses as adjunct faculty. And at Gateway in Phoenix, Arizona, caregiver employers helped shape the curriculum. As a result, an overwhelming 90-plus percent of students who have completed the program have already been placed in caregiver positions.

Seven: The broader, the better. It's easy to see why it makes sense to involve employers, but it also helps to engage other community partners at the starting gate. Staff at Washtenaw Community College in Michigan formed a steering committee of leading community members to help design, market and implement all-day encore career workshops. That level of involvement meant more people talking the program up—and more word-of-mouth marketing. At Coastline Community College in California, relationships with local advocacy and aging groups played a key role in getting the word out about the boomer-focused careers in the gerontology program.

Eight: College-wide efforts lead to buy-in and marketing success. The broader the circle, community colleges learned, the bigger the success. At Gateway Community College in Arizona, leaders included administrators, faculty, and staff from the marketing, career services, student affairs and the IT departments to help support their caregiver program. In that way, a wide variety of departments became aware of the program, helped to market it, and began to consider other ways to develop encore career pathways across campus. As it turns out, many who start in the caregiver program, decide to continue their education at Gateway—in nursing and other health care programs. A similar marketing snowball is expected in Florida, where staff at Broward College's Career Coaching program expects that those who sign up for career exploration programs will be back soon, registering for existing college programs.

Nine: Support services enrich the encore package. At Portland Community College in Oregon, peer mentors have become a critical part of the gerontology program, offering emotional, academic and employment support. The college has always offered that kind of support from faculty and staff, but trained peer mentors—boomers helping other boomers in the program—lend formality to it and speak from experience. Noting the lack of confidence many 50+ students have with finding work, other colleges included help with resume writing, job search techniques and interviewing skills as a core component of their programs. At Baltimore City Community College, self-esteem and confidence-building activities in a peer-supported environment were extremely helpful to students nervous about reentering a new field of work.

Ten: Strong, well-designed and properly targeted communications matter. A good marketing plan targeted to learners ready to recareer makes all the difference. People 50+ are a big, diverse group, so successful programs made a conscious decision about whether to market their program exclusively to boomers or simply to focus on the aspects of the program that are appealing to this group, such as flexibility, "careers of compassion," and peer support. Once the message was solidified, community colleges got a lot of mileage from engaging employers, community organizations, and local media to enhance their marketing efforts. And success, of course, breeds success. Once programs are completed, good communications efforts included sharing success stories at public presentations and

as feature profiles in local newspapers and other targeted publications. All these efforts contribute to building a brand that will attract more students. Portland Community College, for example, has been acknowledged as the “go to” place for encore careers as a result of their efforts to market and brand their gerontology program to 50+ learners. And, at Collin College, a successful advertising campaign highlighting boomer graduates of the school’s teacher licensure program has generated new attention and interest.



Dr. Eugene Giovannini, president of GateWay Community College, is among a growing number of college presidents who are paying attention to the high levels of interest in encore careers from older students in their communities. “This is a rare opportunity to attract a brand new demographic to community colleges,” he says. “That doesn’t happen often in the community college world.”

To put it succinctly, baby boomers seeking encore careers represent a major opportunity for community colleges.

First steps, including all those described in this report, will lead to bigger things—on campus and across the nation. As Cindy Fiorella, vice president for economic and workforce development at Owensboro Community and Technical College, notes, “This project gave us the opportunity to test out our ideas, to make adjustments and to show our internal stakeholders what works. It will now be easier for the college to continue its support of a program that shows such promise.”

The American Association of Community Colleges is now moving forward with a pilot program of its own. The Plus 50 Initiative has provided grants to 15 two-year colleges across the country to create or expand campus programs to engage the 50+ population in learning, training and retraining programs, and volunteer, civic and service activities.

“ This is a rare opportunity to attract a brand new demographic to community colleges. That doesn’t happen often in the community college world.”

Let us all learn from each other to produce the tantalizing triple win that community college programs engaging boomers represents—a win for individuals seeking meaningful encore careers, a win for community colleges seeking new students and new partnerships, and a win for communities seeking talented, trained people to fill critical job vacancies in education, health care and social services. ■

Judy Goggin, vice president at Civic Ventures, directs the Community College Encore Career Grants program and the organization’s Next Chapter Initiative. Prior to joining Civic Ventures, she served as vice president for U.S. programs at Elderhostel.

Supporting Women in Transition

Baltimore City Community College / Maryland

Corporate executives seeking a second career often engage comprehensive and expensive placement services to assess their skills, repackage them and market them to prospective employers. Baltimore City Community College set out to do the same thing at a fraction of the cost for local African American women in the second half of life.

They call the encore program Women in Transition.

“I don’t want to say ‘fear,’ but I was apprehensive about getting back into the world,” says Rosetta Crosby, 46, who spent more than 20 years in a local social services agency working with families and young people. With four grown daughters and a master’s degree in social work, she wanted to teach or start her own company but didn’t know how to begin. A friend told her about the Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) Women in Transition program, and she signed up.

“We saw these women coming in not focused, not confident, scared about their futures and technology and younger competition,” says Petuna Selby, director of the Women In Transition program. “Our purpose was to help them find jobs in new service areas, jobs that made good use of their experience.”

“They didn’t think they were good enough at computers or interviewing to go out and work. I realized we had to change that mindset. We couldn’t get them employment if they thought they were going to fail.”

At the opening session, “women stood up one by one and told us what their fears were,” Selby recalls. “They didn’t think they were good enough at computers or interviewing to go out and work. I realized we had to change that mindset. We couldn’t get them employment if they thought they were going to fail.”

Despite her experience and credentials, Crosby echoes the lack of confidence. “At our age, we’re not what most companies are looking for,” Crosby says. “And we have personal lives, with grandchildren and so on, and obligations—not just obligations but the desire to be with our families.”

Meeting five days a week for two weeks, the women listened as an instructor, another woman in the second half of life, worked to motivate them. “She was very professional and that was important to us,” Crosby says. “She demonstrated that life wasn’t over. She used PowerPoint and the computer and showed her skills, and that helped us to say ‘Well, we can do it too.’”

Then the group heard from experts in education, health care and social services on the day-to-day demands and rewards of each field. “A nurse talked about dealing with patients, the late hours, dealing with doctors and sick people and how it takes a toll on you mentally and emotionally,” Selby says. “She told them why turnover is so high—a very honest presentation.”

The course then offered computer literacy lessons, mock interviews, job search techniques and resume writing. “People used to ask are you compatible here, what is your work ethic, can you take dictation and do basic typing,” Selby says. “Now they’ll ask do you know Word 2007, Excel, PowerPoint.”

“So much has changed!” Crosby says. “You can’t just walk in and get an application and an interview now—you have to go online. They walked us through what we need to be relevant in today’s world, what to expect, how to start a business.”

at a glance

Location

Baltimore City Community College,
Baltimore, Maryland

Mission

To use motivation, self-exploration and skill building to help Baltimore women over 50 prepare for second careers in education, health care or social services.

Curriculum

Students met every weekday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. over two weeks for a

total of 40 hours. Mentors and experts from education, health care and social services spoke about their fields. Motivational speakers encouraged the participants to make the most of their abilities to achieve their goals. Trainers helped build computer and job application skills.

Number of students

25 women signed up and 18 completed the course.

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Photo by Michael Ciesielski

Rosetta Crosby (pictured above in her office at a local church) offers advice to new clients seeking help from her new venture, Rosetta's Family Unification Services.

Other colleges considering such courses should assess the drive of prospective students first, she says. "We thought it was just a matter of inviting the mentors and jumping right into the writing and interview skills. I had to stop the program in the middle and have this heart-to-heart with them. Fortunately we were able to shift gears."

So far, the program placed seven of the 18 encore students in jobs and is working with the rest to find employment. Selby has asked the community college's off-campus sites to offer independent motivational sessions and is seeking funding for a second Women in Transition course.

So where did Crosby end up? She has formed Rosetta's Family Unification Services and is doing some part-time teaching while her business grows. "The program encouraged me to do what I really wanted to do," she says. "You can get stuck, but you get out and meet new people and hear their stories, and it motivates you to go on." ■

Exploring New Career Directions

Broward College / Florida

Norma McCarthy was burned out when she retired in 1999 after a long career of teaching Spanish. A Jamaica native, she wanted to “eat, sleep, read and travel” and visit her 11 grandchildren around the world, and that’s what she did. Seven years later, bored and no longer satisfied with “just letting the field lie fallow,” she was ready for... something.

“I saw this two-inch announcement in the *Miami Herald* for a course called ‘Boomers in Transition,’ and I thought, ‘Omgod, that’s me!’” She signed up for Broward College’s free career coaching course. “I wanted a new career doing something to contribute to my adopted country.”

McCarthy’s not alone. Like millions of boomers in Florida, she’s interested in an encore career, combining meaning, social impact, and continued income. But a survey by the Community Foundation of Broward County found most area residents knew little about opportunities for work or service, beyond mentoring, tutoring or ushering at college or community theaters.

“Boomers want to give back, and we’re providing the opportunity for them to do that.”

To Jerry Enloe, director of continuing education at Broward College, boomers were a natural market. “People come down here to retire. They play golf for six months and it’s not enough,” he says. With help from the Community Foundation and Volunteer Broward, another local nonprofit organization, and with funding from Civic Ventures, Broward College set up the free career coaching course to help adults over 50 re-evaluate their priorities, clarify and confirm new career and volunteer interests, and draw up a plan.

“Boomers want to give back, and we’re providing the opportunity for them to do that,” Enloe says.

The college recruited students on its website, in a brochure distributed at local libraries and community centers, and in small advertisements like the one McCarthy saw. A feature article on the program in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* drew an overwhelming response, as did another in the *Miami Herald*.

“So many people live on fixed incomes,” McCarthy observed. “I had two very proper British aunts who lived in what we called ‘genteel poverty’—they had a silver service on the table but only two teabags. That’s the reality around here.”

Pamela Shaw, the college’s senior academic advisor, used a hands-on format in the three-hour courses she offered the boomers on nine different Saturday mornings, starting each with a roundtable discussion on why the students were there. “They’re bored, they need to supplement their income, they need some objective—lots of reasons,” she says.

The 10-12 students in each class used computers to visit websites offering standard tests assessing their interest in various fields, work values, time available and income needs. Shaw then helped them correlate the results with the Florida Choices listing of careers, jobs, salaries and volunteer positions available in the area. “Then we talk about what’s needed for the new career—additional education, a certification, how long it will take, does it fit them,” she says.

Like many other states, Florida needs nurses, physical therapists, teachers, tutors, construction managers, blueprint drafters, financial experts, and directors for the governing boards of local nonprofit groups. “In almost every group we’ve had one person who’s been



Photo by Gina Fontana

Norma McCarthy (right) learns new computer skills from academic advisor Pamela Shaw to help with resume writing and her job search.

at a glance

Location

Broward College,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Mission

The free course helps boomers determine what kind of encore career or volunteer service they'd like to do and helps them set a path to get there.

Curriculum

The three-hour course is offered Saturday mornings to small groups of boomers wishing to explore options for a productive second half of life. Its hands-on format involves online tests and intensive discussions to determine interests, talents and resources needed for possible career choices. All students develop plans to achieve their goals.

Number of students

10-12 in each of nine sessions in 2008, for a total of 70.

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a teacher all their life and doesn't want to do that anymore, and someone else who's been in business and burned out who wants to teach or be an adjunct," Shaw says. "I let those two people talk to each other."

Boomers' needs are different from those of college-age students, she notes. "They haven't looked for a job in 20 years, so they don't know it has to be done a little differently now. They have to learn about computers, and they have to present themselves a little differently because there's prejudice out there against older people."

McCarthy says she is compiling her resume and plans to take a computer literacy course before seeking a Spanish or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) tutoring post that will let her work afternoons instead of early mornings. "I'm taking it step by step," she says.

A second course—on writing resumes, sending out applications and handling job interviews—is in development, and Shaw and Enloe agree that broader marketing efforts would bring in as many students as the program could handle.

"Civic Ventures gave us some grass seed," Enloe says. "We planted it and it's growing, and now we're doing some landscaping." ■

"They have to learn about computers, and they have to present themselves a little differently because there's prejudice out there against older people."

Moving from Success to Significance

Central Piedmont Community College / North Carolina

The Success to Significance program at North Carolina’s Central Piedmont Community College was a revelation for Deborah Aguiar-Vélez, a successful businesswoman in her fifties. “It really helped me find out more about myself and my passion, and let me bounce ideas off a group of people in the same place as I am.”

Aguiar-Vélez moved to North Carolina from New Jersey with her family to “really start thinking about what I wanted to do next.” For 24 years, she’d worked as founder, president and CEO of a company that provided information technology and systems support to government and institutions. Aguiar-Vélez was ready for a new challenge.

It was a chamber of commerce e-newsletter on the Success to Significance program that caught Aguiar-Vélez’s eye. “What do you want to do with the second half of your life?” it said. She wanted to help other Latinos get ahead as she had, but she wasn’t sure how.

The program targeted professionals over 50, with management and leadership experience, interested in exploring new career options in health care, education, and nonprofit work. More than 20 people enrolled, including shift managers, lawyers and other CEOs.

Participants began with two online tests, the Meyers-Briggs and Strong Skills Inventory, to match their personality profiles and interests with types of jobs. Aguiar-Vélez was already leaning toward education, and she discovered she was well suited to be a college professor.

Two core workshops followed. Titled “Know Thyself,” they lasted two to three hours on weeknight evenings and encouraged students to think about the contribution they wanted to make and to discuss their ideas with their peers. “It was like having your own board of directors or advisors to help you think through your idea and offer new ideas and resources,” Aguiar-Vélez says.

at a glance



Deborah Aguiar-Vélez jump-started her passion for empowering Latinos at CPCC’s Success to Significance workshops.

Location

Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, North Carolina

Mission

To help professionals over 50, with management and leadership experience, explore new career options in health care, education, and nonprofit work.

Curriculum

Two skills tests are taken online. Two core workshops offer personal reflection and exploration as well as peer feedback facilitated by campus Career Services, one-on-one coaching, job support and resume writing, and panel discussions with local nonprofit professionals.

Number of students

20, including former and current lawyers, shift managers, CEOs and others.

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Program participant Sue Kornstein (center) meets with her newly formed board to plan for a new nonprofit.

Photos courtesy of Central Piedmont Community College

Students then used one-on-one coaching services through the college and attended a panel discussion of nonprofit professionals, each a baby boomer in an encore career: the executive director of the local YWCA, a representative from the Council on Aging, staff from the Cities in Schools program working to prevent dropouts, and others.

Ruth Huey, director of the college's Success to Significance program, acknowledges that the pilot effort posed unexpected challenges. "We were working with such a diverse group of people, with varying levels of management and leadership skills and a wide range of volunteer and nonprofit experience," she says.

"It really helped me find out more about myself and my passion, and let me bounce ideas off a group of people in the same place as I am."

To bring everyone to a common starting point, she quickly redesigned the program to start with personal reflections and end with career transitions. "There is a fear of failure that I did not expect going into this," she explains. "These people are very successful at what they do and are hesitant to try something new."

Other colleges creating similar programs should focus on intensive workshops and provide personal coaching, Huey advises. "Drive students toward intentional work that encourages them to think about their vision and passion and what they need to do to get there."

The college will use its findings to create a model program that employers can offer to workers taking early retirement or being downsized. "I'm still getting calls from interested boomers, even after the program has ended," Huey says. "We're referring them to our career services center and helping with critical skills like resume writing. Part of the program's success is due to the support from our president and all of the college's key players. They have been advocates for the program and its future."

Aguilar-Vélez said the Success to Significance program helped her recognize her passion and develop a solid plan for her future. She wants to help Latinos in her community learn financial and computer literacy so they can advance in their jobs, help their children with homework, and manage household finances. She is considering getting a doctoral degree, but meanwhile she is meeting with area nonprofits, businesses and associations on ways they can collaborate to reduce the digital divide for minority citizens. "Organizations are lining up to help bring this idea to life," she says. ■

Preparing for Careers in Elder Care

Coastline Community College / California



*Left: Jan Albert, at her home computer, prepares to start her own non-medical caregiver business.
Right: Jan's mother and stepfather—caring for them inspired Jan to return to school and begin a new career.*

Photos by Nicholas Koon

Jan Albert, 54, worked for years as a social worker, then computer instructor and eventually in southern California real estate. When the housing market went south, she was laid off. Unsure what to do next, she applied for unemployment and took on the lion's share of the work of caring for her aging parents. Her mother had Alzheimer's and her stepfather had Parkinson's disease.

"Parts of their life were a mess," Albert says. "But the more I helped to get things in order, the more I liked it. I found I had a knack and the patience for it."

Albert enrolled in the Gerontology Program at Coastline Community College in Fountain Valley, California, doing most of her coursework online. When she heard from Ellis Waller, one of her instructors, about the college's four-day, in-person mastery skills course, she jumped at the chance. "I was so excited about the opportunity to network, see others in the class and meet my teachers," Albert says.

"The workshops helped me wrap my arms around a gerontology career."

Albert was one of more than 50 students who registered for the free and non-credit workshops, which took place at night. The first class was held at a local community center and provided an overview of jobs related to gerontology. The session "gave me my first look into gerontology careers and helped me wrap my arms around a career," Albert says.

"It was very eye-opening for people," says Waller. "Some who signed up for the class told us they didn't even know this was a discipline."

The college developed its mastery skills course through in-depth research and input from experts in the fields of aging, including focus groups, online surveys and telephone follow-up with students over 50, as well as employers. The California Council on Gerontology and Geriatrics, now a program partner, identified gerontology experts, and the college brought them together with advocates for the elderly and people who had already moved successfully into encore careers.

“Boomers want it on their terms to fit their schedules,” says Lorie Eber, an adjunct faculty member at Coastline, summing up the findings. “It makes it more challenging, but it’s what we expected.”

Eber is in an encore career herself, having gone back to school after a successful law career. With a gerontology certificate under her belt, she now teaches at the campus and works at the Council on Aging.

“The success of the workshop can be directly attributed to joint marketing by the many providers in the field,” Waller says. Other factors include holding the sessions sequentially, four nights in a row; using creative instruction, such as a group drumming circle; including inspirational stories from boomers in their encore careers; and scheduling presentations from employers in the field of aging that were responsible for recruiting volunteers and hiring staff.

Albert is now working with her sister to start her own non-medical home health care business. She wants to model it on her parents’ situation, allowing aging clients to stay in their homes with the assistance of hired caregivers. Her business will also include home modification services that eliminate dangers and make homes safer.

That kind of outcome is what the program aimed for with all its students, Waller says. “The goal is to introduce them and quench their thirst so they get excited about the field. There is a growing need.” ■

“The success of the workshop can be directly attributed to joint marketing by the many providers in the field.”

at a glance

Location

Coastline Community College,
Fountain Valley, California

Mission

The Certificate of Achievement in Gerontology is designed for those seeking new careers in the field and for those who wish to add professional education in gerontology to their qualifications.

Curriculum

Four-day mastery skills course providing condensed gerontology course fundamentals, as well as practical career advice and support.

Number of students

50 students

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Jan Albert attends courses in Coastline's Gerontology Program.

Turning Out High School Math Teachers

Collin College / Texas

I was always hearing about how we're falling behind in math and science education, recalls Julie Greene who comes from a family of teachers. "I have a lot of respect for the profession and a passion for learning." So at the age of 48, after years of thinking about a career in the classroom, Greene, a former marketing professional, got her teacher certification at Collin College just outside Dallas, Texas.

Like much of the country, Texas faces a shortage of math and science teachers. But the area around Collin College was a "telecom corridor," and now, like other communities experiencing downsizing, it has a pool of laid-off or retired tech workers. Many have backgrounds in math.

Sabrina Belt, director of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Professional Development at Collin, saw the opportunity. "There was a large clientele to match our needs," she says.

Collin already had a teacher certification program for adults with bachelor degrees, which met evenings and weekends. But Belt created a daytime program specifically targeted at retired or laid-off boomers. It began with five students, all close to age 50, most with engineering backgrounds.



Julie Greene retooled for her new job as a math teacher after a career in marketing and then as a stay-at-home mom.

Photos courtesy Collin College/Nick Young, photographer

at a glance



Collin's fast-tracked license program helped John Kostibas transition from decades in the business world to a new career in the classroom.

Location

Collin College, Allen, Texas

Mission

To help laid-off and retired boomers with math backgrounds retrain as high school math teachers.

Curriculum

Fast-tracked daytime courses are offered three days a week over one semester. One semester of student teaching is mandated to achieve certification and eventually job placement. Course focus is on the skills necessary to teach and lead in a classroom setting.

Number of students

Five students in the pilot program, with more expected in future years.

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The fast-tracked, daytime certification program meets three days a week and uses the same curriculum as the night classes. But day students finish the course in one semester, spend a second semester student-teaching, and may land a job before the year is up. They also take a session on how to teach math. "Knowing math and teaching math are not the same," Greene says. "The content session on how to teach math was really helpful."

Greene liked the hands-on approach. "It wouldn't have been as enriching if the program was mostly taught online," she says. "I needed the touch-and-feel, to see and hear and be in the room with people my age embarking on this new stage."

As a student teacher, Greene learned more by doing. The experience "affirmed my decision that I wanted to be a teacher."

The students enrolled in this pilot program were unusual in their "professionalism, high-level communication skills, and willingness to learn and take feedback," Belt says. But they also "tended to have higher expectations, and didn't want their time wasted."

The lesson for other colleges: "Be very efficient, upfront about your expectations and explain why things are done the way they are, every step of the way."

Collin plans to expand the program, advertising in local magazines and working with local school districts to recruit and place these older graduates. So far, Belt says, administrators have reacted positively to the "professionalism, ability to immediately establish relationships, and communications skills of this group of students."

Julie Greene says she can't wait to start her full-time teaching job. "Math often gets a bad rap. It's so rewarding when a student who thinks he can't do it, gets it for the first time." Working with teenagers has benefits too, she says. "It gives me a glimpse of what my daughter will be like soon." ■

"They also tended to have higher expectations and didn't want their time wasted."

Meeting the Need for More Caregivers

GateWay Community College / Arizona

Barry Blevins was semi-retired with two careers already under his belt—first as an expert in workplace health and safety practices and more recently as a clinical counselor. Looking for something new, Blevins came across a leaflet at an AARP job fair describing GateWay Community College’s Careers of Compassion program for boomers like himself, and signed up. Just plain bored with her cashier’s job and part-time work as a hospital tour guide, Shirley Walker signed up, too.

Walker and Blevins are among the Phoenix area’s 900,000 boomers who are, oddly enough, both raising the need for caregivers in Maricopa County and providing the human capital to fill it. Both launched new careers after attending GateWay Community College’s program.

GateWay’s Caregiver Career Development and Placement Program, along with the Workforce Transit Center and local health care employers, gave Walker, Blevins and 42 others the basic training that is a steppingstone to numerous health care jobs in need of people to do them—from nurses to respiratory therapists, radiation technicians to caregivers.

Each student received a career-prospects assessment, developed a career plan and attended an orientation session before the 40-hour training course. Meeting eight hours a day for five days on the GateWay campus and at a local hospital, the sessions covered such topics as ethical and legal issues, grief and end-of-life care, time management, observing and documenting infection control, fire safety and emergencies, serving people with developmental disabilities, responding to dementia-related behavior, and socialization and support for families of patients with Alzheimer’s disease.



Photos by Bruce Peterson

Caregiver program instructor Susan Kilby (in flowered blouse) shows students Maggie Fernandez (white sweater) and Shirley Walker how to safely work with elderly patients, as part of their course requirements.

at a glance

Location

GateWay Community College,
Phoenix, Arizona

Mission

To prepare boomers for health care careers with self-knowledge, knowledge of the field, and networking opportunities with employers.

Curriculum

Each boomer enrolled assesses his/her interests, develops a career plan and attends a 40-hour

training, which covers caregiving fundamentals, aging and physical disabilities, development disabilities and dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Upon completion, students attend workshops and lunch-and-learn sessions with potential employers to network and find jobs.

Number of students

44 boomers completed caregiver classes and 42 were placed in paid health care positions, most in caregiving.

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"I took the caregiver course and noticed a need that sent me on an unexpected course," says Blevins. As a former employee of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Blevins understands that caregivers need training in safety procedures to protect them from injury and protect their employers from high turnover and vacancy rates. For Blevins, his new career offers a chance to combine years of expertise in safety and patient care.

"I had expertise in safety issues like ergonomics and safe patient lifting," he explains. "I saw too many trained caregivers and RNs being driven to administrative jobs because of injury." As a result of the GateWay program, Blevins became certified in OSHA training and now teaches seven GateWay classes on workplace safety for caregivers. "By helping employees and employers do things the right way," he says, "it helps the consumer."

Nearly 40 employers are active on the program's advisory board and as many posted caregiver positions with GateWay's Center for Workforce Transition.

"Involve the employer community immediately," advises Jan Davie, GateWay's director of Career and Employment Services. "Allow employers to participate in all aspects of the career pathway—curriculum development, instruction, internships, and sustainability."

Davie says another key to launching a new program for boomers is to involve many college departments in supporting and developing the program. "Successfully targeting a new market niche needs everyone's shoulder to the wheel."

Thanks to the tight relationships with local employers and the tremendous shortage of health workers, the GateWay program matched 42 of its first 44 graduates with employer partners, who provide opportunities for further skills development in paid health care positions, most in caregiving.

Walker doubled her salary with a new job at the Foundation for Senior Living and is taking classes in GateWay's Respiratory Therapist program.

Blevins says he feels that he is making a real contribution to his community. "I want to make sure I have the best possible care when it's my turn," Blevins says. "I want to be part of training those providing a high standard of care." ■

“Allow employers to participate in all aspects of the career pathway: curriculum development, instruction, internships, and sustainability.”

Helping to Solve the Nursing Shortage

Owensboro Community and Technical College / Kentucky

In the next five years, the northwestern Kentucky town of Owensboro will need 600 more nurses—and that’s just for the new hospital now under construction. Where will these nurses come from? There’s a lot of interest in nursing—approximately 500 are pending enrollment at Owensboro Community and Technical College—but the school doesn’t have enough space and instructors to accommodate them all.

To meet the need, the college has partnered with the Owensboro Medical Health System to train experienced nurses, retired or still working, as adjunct instructors in the college’s nursing department. The ABC (Adjunct Boot Camp) Training Series is designed to help nurses over 50 move into encore careers as nurse educators.

Regina Coomes, 60, is one of them. She has been in nursing for 30 years and now works on the “med-surg” floor, caring for patients before and after surgery. Her daughter is an RN as well, and for both of them, she says, “it’s a calling.” When a fellow nurse who had enjoyed being an instructor showed Coomes a flier for the boot camp, she signed up.

“It’s much easier for an experienced nurse to teach a new nurse. Experience and expertise in certain areas of the hospital are key.”

It’s not Coomes’s first time as a teacher. She’s been mentoring and training the next generation of nurses for years—as a charge nurse coordinating other nurses and patient care, as a mentor responsible for showing newer nurses the ropes, and now at the college.

“It’s much easier for an experienced nurse to teach a new nurse. Experience and expertise in certain areas of the hospital

are key,” says Coomes. “It makes them a better nurse and it makes my job easier when nurses know what to expect on the patient floor.”

The two-day, 16-hour, intensive ABC workshops let nurses like Coomes, with decades of experience, learn how to offer nursing students a unique “on-the-job” perspective, pass on their tested values and skills, and ease the transition from classrooms into the reality of direct patient care.

“Many of these nurses haven’t been to school in a while and need an overview of what’s new in nursing,” says Tonya Mann-Howard, director of Internal Strategic Initiatives for the college’s Center for Community and Economic Development. “In the first session, the changes in their professional practice, like documenting and charting, generated a lot of discussion.”

Nurses were recruited for the boot camp through the hospital and by direct mail to area RNs over 50 years old, as identified by the State Board of Nursing Registry. More than a dozen attended the first session, with more expected for the second and third. The workshops also qualify attendees for continuing education credits and provide a \$200 stipend.



Regina Coomes, RN, is studying to become an adjunct nursing instructor to address the shortage of new nurses in Kentucky.

at a glance



Regina Coomes shares her knowledge with newer nurse Christy Bratcher, who is practicing her nursing skills.

Photos by Bernie Hale

Location

Owensboro Community and Technical College, Owensboro Kentucky

Mission

To reduce the shortage of nurses by helping RNs over the age of 50 move into encore careers as nurse educators.

Curriculum

Two-day, 16-hour, intensive sessions include presentations and Q&A formats on current nursing trends and law, curriculum vs. on-the-job training, methods of instruction, and orientation to new teaching tools, role-playing of common class scenarios, and more.

Number of Students

30-40 nurses

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“Older nurses feel they can give back by instilling the values they learned,” Mann-Howard continues. “They know these students are the ones who will be taking care of them. It’s a different kind of pride and ownership,” one that builds teamwork across generations.

“The development of partnerships between nursing schools and health care institutions is critical for the survival and growth of both,” Mann-Howard says. From program design to recruitment to placement, “it’s a tight partnership.”

Coomes has decided she’d like to be an adjunct instructor once a week (she’s still a full-time nurse), and plans to take on more classes when she retires in 2010. This year, a nurse Coomes had mentored nominated her for Nurse of the Year at her hospital, cementing her decision to teach. “I knew I had made an impression when she said she wanted to be the kind of nurse I am,” Coomes says. ■

“The development of partnerships between nursing schools and health care institutions is critical for the survival and growth of both.”

Peer Mentoring—By Boomers, for Boomers

Portland Community College / Oregon

The prospect of going back to college can be daunting for baby boomers. To ease the transition, the gerontology program at Portland Community College (PCC) in Oregon has launched a new peer mentoring program. It hires former and current gerontology students like Mark Noonan to provide coaching, tutoring, and mentoring to other older students like themselves.

“Mentors help take away the fear,” says Noonan. “We help open students’ eyes so they have a better sense of what they’re going to do and how they’re going to accomplish it.”

Noonan, a successful high-tech company manager, was 52 when his wife died, leading him to reconsider his future. He thought a second career in helping older people might be a possible road to personal fulfillment, so he obtained an associate degree in gerontology from Portland Community College. His courses included a required “intentional internship” at a local nonprofit group, Elders in Action, and after graduation he turned that into a full-time job.

The college then recruited him and seven other current and former gerontology students to help others follow his path.

Nearly 40 percent of the college’s gerontology students are over 50, and they have more concerns than other students about financial obligations, health care and work schedules, says Gerontology Program Director Jan Abushakrah, “Because they often think there aren’t available resources, we spend a lot of time helping them with scholarship eligibility, free counseling on campus, and affordable housing.”



Mark Noonan mentors students enrolled in the gerontology program at Portland Community College.

at a glance

Location

Portland Community College,
Portland, Oregon

Mission

To help boomers succeed in the gerontology program by employing peer mentors to provide support and guidance.

Curriculum

Eight peer mentors provide coaching, tutoring, and other supports for students balancing life stresses and

college demands, learning in an online and blended college environment, and managing career preparation. The courses are offered at three campuses, five centers, and online.

Number of students

Nearly 40 percent of the gerontology program’s 180 students are age 50 and over. Close to one-third received intensive one-on-one coaching and tutoring from a peer mentor.

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As a result of the mentoring, more students complete the program and more experienced adults make successful transitions into encore careers in gerontology.

The college used word-of-mouth, the program listserv and information tables at events to find mentoring recruits, then trained them. Now the mentors provide students with one-on-one counseling, coaching and referral services as needed.

Peer mentoring is a natural evolution of the help and services teachers and administrators were already offering students on an ad-hoc basis, Abushakrah says. “We built on what the faculty were already doing, but were hard-pressed to find enough time to do. Now we’re able to support students who might otherwise have drifted away.”

It’s catching on. Students from other departments on campus are eager for similar peer mentor models to be developed in areas like nursing and in professional certificate programs. As Abushakrah puts it, “There’s a magic that happens when students realize, ‘I own my education. I’m doing this so I can achieve my goals. And I have someone who cares, coaching and helping me.’” ■

“There’s a magic that happens when students realize ‘I own my education. I’m doing this so I can achieve my goals. And I have someone who cares, coaching and helping me.’”

Program director Jan Abushakrah (left) and gerontology instructor Linda Weiner with peer mentor Mark Noonan.



Photos by Sara Galbraith

Putting Teacher Training on a Fast Track

Virginia Community College System / Virginia

Wylie Schwieder had many successes under his belt as a high-level corporate manager, including a role in starting up CarMax, a highly profitable used car super-store concept. But at age 49, Schwieder was looking for something more. “I want to be a teacher,” he says. “I want to help kids learn to love math as much as I do.”

Virginia Community College System’s Career Switcher program helped Schwieder transition into the classroom. “It’s easy and it makes sense,” he says. “It’s like dominoes falling into place.”

Like much of the country, Virginia suffers from a constant shortage of math, science, and foreign language teachers. The Career Switcher program operates statewide to funnel those who already hold baccalaureate degrees into jobs as teachers in these and other critical subjects. It helps them network with peers and learn critical classroom skills in a rigorous academic program while at the same time supporting them in finding employment.

Schwieder entered the Career Switcher program in January 2008, doing his coursework mostly online from his home and attending a few classes in person. In the meantime, he’s been hired at Henrico High School in Richmond, Virginia to teach Algebra II and Pre-Calculus to high school students.



After success as a high-level corporate manager, Wylie Schwieder wanted to give back. Now he’s sharing his love for solving problems as a high school math teacher in urban Richmond.

Photo by Jay Paul

at a glance

Location

Virginia Community College System, offered at 24 campuses statewide

Mission

To offer a statewide, fast-track alternative licensure program — EducateVA — that addresses critical shortages in the teaching profession.

Curriculum

Accelerated 16-week hybrid program. The 182 hours of level-

one course work are delivered through a combination of online services and periodic class sessions using compressed video at community college campuses across the state. Students then move to provisional teaching positions in the classroom while completing courses available through Saturday and online sessions.

Number of students

35 students over 50 years old have completed the fast-track

licensure program and were issued a one-year provisional license.

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Although the program specifically targets adults like Schwieder who are over 50 with valuable life experience, it is open to people of all ages with a bachelor’s degree and at least five years of work history. The program is flexible, allowing students to maintain full-time jobs while earning their credentials, but the 16-week intensive course takes 15 to 20 hours of time per week and requires significant personal commitment, says Rebecca Waters, Career Switcher program manager.

The key to success, she says, is being clear with students before orientation about meeting the prerequisites and getting the paperwork done.

“It’s about setting hard and fast deadlines for all assignments and creating a cohort model, rather than a self-paced program,” she says. “For the faculty, we are constantly prioritizing what is most important so that we don’t overload students. There is no time for extras.”

To make the program available statewide, the community college system delivers its 182 hours of coursework through a combination of online services and interactive compressed video sessions shown at community college campuses located throughout the state. Graduates receive a one-year provisional license so they can find jobs teaching while taking continued coursework on Saturdays and online. Students who complete all requirements are recommended for a five-year renewable teaching license.

“The key is building a program that doesn’t cut corners, eliminates the fluff, isn’t theoretically-based, and is a program for practitioners who have the passion and desire to give back,” Waters says.

“Working with learners over 50 is gratifying because of their enthusiasm, diverse work experience and genuine desire to teach,” Waters says. A former teacher herself, Waters describes her work in training the next set of educators as her encore career.

“I truly believe that second-career teachers are the ones who are going to change the face of public education,” says Waters, who has six grandchildren in the school system. “These are people that have valuable experience and really want to come back and make a difference.” ■

“The key is building a program that doesn’t cut corners, eliminates the fluff, isn’t theoretically-based, and is a program for practitioners who have the passion and desire to give back.”

Getting the Downsized Ready to Go

Washtenaw Community College / Michigan

In southeastern Michigan, around the Ann Arbor area, layoffs and downsizing are changing the economic landscape for many experienced workers—and not just for auto workers and parts suppliers. More than 2,000 jobs were lost when Pfizer closed a local research development facility. Manufacturing jobs are vanishing overseas, and the housing slump has put realtors and mortgage brokers out of work.

To Washtenaw Community College and the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center, layoffs offer local employers, particularly those in the public and nonprofit sectors, a rich pool of talent. So, they partnered to set up Encore Career Forums. The goal: to get boomers thinking about new career directions, especially in health, education and other nonprofit areas of public service.

“The human stories really helped me see that everyone has struggles at certain points and they get through them. It’s a real commonality.”

“The starting point for us was opening people’s eyes to the opportunities,” says Charlie Penner, regional director for the small business center. “What we found is that people wanted to hear stories and talk with people. They were most interested in the wide possibilities.”

After being laid off by the city of Ann Arbor, Kent Baumkel heard about the Encore Career Forum and was one of 50 people at the first all-day session held at the college.

“It offered access to good information presented in a way I could digest,” she says. “It gave me a chance to network and hear from people who had made career changes.”

Most attendees gravitated to panel discussions featuring mid-career industry switchers, such as a high-level female executive from Ford Motor Company who had moved into an encore career leadership role for a nonprofit organization. Penner says people were really intrigued to hear about such “radical shifts after being established in a long-time career.”

“The day-long forum was just right for me,” says Baumkel. “The human stories really helped me see that everyone has struggles at certain points and they get through them. It’s a real commonality.”

at a glance

Location

Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Mission

To help laid-off boomers see the opportunities for new career directions in the public and nonprofit sectors.

Curriculum

All-day forum, held at the community college campus, provides panel discussions, resources, networking opportunities, connections with potential employers, and links to retraining opportunities.

Number of students

50 students

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Photo by Ovation Photographics

Baumkel meets with Cathie Dries, Dean of Continuing Education and Community Services at Washtenaw Community College.

The forum was designed by a steering committee that drew on the community to gather speakers and market the event. Washtenaw Community College, other local institutions of higher learning, Michigan Works!, Jewish Family Services, AARP, and other governmental, nonprofit support and social service agencies all took part.

Jonell Jackson, who led a presentation at the event, is a retired banker who now works part-time for the small business center. She is one of several committee members who are in encore careers themselves and serve as powerful role models. Jackson uses her expertise, knowledge and connections to help others tap their entrepreneurial skills.

The forum helped Baumkel make a decision to pursue a career direction she had been considering for a while: management consultant. "I wanted to give back in my community by using my skills in a way that I could also make money," she says.

Her thinking began to jell when the Mayor of Ypsilanti asked her to serve on a city task force charged with long-term visioning for that historic city. Since then, Baumkel has also served on two county-wide task forces addressing economic development and cultural planning and has been working as a consultant to small businesses in her community, using her grant application, project management and other business skills.

Baumkel recently helped the local co-op obtain grant funding to install solar panels on the co-op and city hall and has worked with a museum and an art gallery, local business owners, and non-profit organizations to streamline processes and secure funding for their work. After graduating from the University of Michigan-Dearborn in August, she's been focused on finding a job, putting together a business plan for her own part-time consulting business, and selecting a future community project to which she will volunteer her time and expertise. "I'm a multi-tasker, I like helping people and making communities better places to live," she says.

Building on the success of the first Encore Career Forum, Washtenaw Community College will now offer them twice a year. Penner expects enrollment to rise as the program becomes established and puts more effort into advertising and marketing with community allies.

The hardest part, he says, is getting started. "But now we've established relationships, the format, and the interest areas, and we are ready to go forward." ■

Acknowledgments

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Across America, community colleges are the workhorses of higher education, educating millions at an affordable price and meeting local workforce needs.

Margaret Spellings, U.S. Secretary of Education

A project of Civic Ventures, funded by MetLife Foundation.

Available online at civicventures.org and Encore.org.

MetLife Foundation



MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation's goals are to strengthen communities, promote good health and improve education. In aging, MetLife Foundation funds programs that support healthy aging and address caregiving issues, intergenerational activities, mental fitness and volunteerism. More information is available at metlife.org.

Civic Ventures, a think tank on boomers and work, is leading the call to engage millions of baby boomers as a vital workforce for social change. Through an inventive program portfolio, original research, strategic alliances, and the power of people's own life stories, Civic Ventures demonstrates the value of experience in solving serious social problems— from education to the environment and health care to homelessness. Learn more at civicventures.org and Encore.org.

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