



June 14, 2009

## Baby boomers: Resources provide guidelines to face new challenges

By *BETH MILLER*  
*The News Journal*

Baby boomers -- now 45 to 63 years old -- have a lot to work with as they plot their futures.

As usual, opinions are abundant, free and often distributed with little more than a knee-jerk, but the careful, discerning scavenger can find useful tools, helpful guides and lots of suggestions in a variety of venues -- from the Internet to government agencies to nonprofits and local groups.

Among local resources is Creative Transitions, a workshop-style program offered by the nonprofit Connecting Generations and explored on its just-launched Web site -- [www.connecting-generations.org](http://www.connecting-generations.org).

Retired Delaware lawmaker Jane P. Maroney is among the facilitators, bringing decades of Delaware-specific insight to participants as they examine their goals and find either a new career or another way to invest their lives.

"Those of us who lived through the Depression and saw real lifestyle changes -- we came out of that and lived long and fruitful lives," said Maroney, 84 and still serving on multiple advisory boards in New Castle County. "That kind of hard experience makes a lot of us feel we want to be useful all through our lives."

Successful transitions require significant thought, Maroney said.

"We look at our past lives and do what we call 'winnowing' -- throwing the wheat up, the chaff falls out and gets swept away, and the best of the wheat is saved," Maroney said. "What kind of legacy has been accomplished? What skills have been accumulated?"

That kind of reflection in a group setting can be exhilarating, she said.

"You get bolstered that others are coming to the realization that they could be doing something different or better -- and you could, too," she said.

The discussions also help people reconsider any notion that their personal value is summed up by their paycheck. Success has many measures.

Ellen Freudenheim, a New York-based author and speaker, said baby boomers' experience and skills are valuable. But those who want to re-enter the job market or change careers should get up to speed with technology.

"If one thing makes people more or less marketable, it's technology," she said. "If you say, 'I don't get Facebook, social networking or Twitter,' -- well, it's important to figure it out. Using it is the best way to get it. You have to play with it."

Other suggestions for blazing a new or second trail:

- Do your research. Read up on the labor market, see where the needs are.
- Make lifestyle changes needed to improve your health. Lose weight if you're overweight; quit smoking; get regular exercise; eat healthier meals.
- Take advantage of retraining opportunities.
- Consider volunteer work, which -- while providing a real benefit to the community -- also can help you develop new skills, meet new people and maybe even find a great new job.
- Be humble about expectations and demands.
- Stay alert for simple pleasures and joys.

"What's going to happen next? It's definitely a new era -- not just an economic downturn and people losing their money," Freudenheim said. "That has happened and it's devastating, but all this other foment is going on, too. For people who can get on board that train, we could find ourselves looking back when we're a little older, saying 'Wow. This is a privilege to have lived through this transition."

"We lived through the end of the Vietnam War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, we're about to see the fall of Cuba. The baby boomers have lived through a lot of things we never thought we'd see. Maybe we'll see nuclear disarmament, a green economy, food sustainability.

"It's an open, challenging time."

---