

## **LIFE AFTER RETIREMENT**

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Ending a career can often mark the start of a new life. Most members of today's workforce are not ready for retirement when the time comes to say goodbye to a job they have held for the greater part of their professional careers.

This was made very clear to me a few years ago when a dear friend chose to enter law school. Her father is an attorney who practiced well into his 90s. Following in his footsteps had long been a closely held dream. After retiring from a career marked by success in many high-profile management roles, this 60-something woman became the oldest student in her class. Three years later, I happily (and proudly) attended her graduation from the University of Dayton's School of Law. I also celebrated with her the next milestone...passing the bar exam on her first try. My friend's dream has become a reality. She is an attorney, and I have no doubt that she will choose to practice law in the same way she has always chosen to use her professional and personal strengths...to enrich the lives of others.

My friend is in good company. She is among the growing number of Americans who are eagerly anticipating the start of a new college year...not for their children or grandchildren but for themselves. This eager 50-plus crowd can hardly contain their excitement to grab a book bag and head off to school. They want to eradicate disease, end poverty, raise literacy rates and bring peace to the world. There is no end to their aspirations. They have drive, energy and an abundance of knowledge and experience. No longer viewing themselves as only bread winners, they are now ready to live their dreams.

Universities are beginning to notice and many have designed programs focused on non-traditional learning. There are no stuffy classrooms and know-it-all professors. Instead, there are spacious areas where these second-life students can gather to share experiences, learn from each other and pursue graduate and undergraduate degrees. I believe that someday every major college will design their campuses to cater to the needs of these accomplished professionals who are transitioning from their income-earning years to this next phase of their lives, ones concentrated on pursuing careers they dreamt about in their 20s. More than going back to school, they are using school as a catalyst to move forward.

A recent issue of AARP magazine, a baby-boomer must-read, reported that a majority of Americans between the ages of 50 and 70 want to benefit their communities by helping the poor, the elderly and children, or by improving the quality of life through the arts or entertainment. And doing this through traditional volunteering is not the goal. They want to be leaders who have a major impact on their communities. Two of the major reasons given were to have a *connection* and sense of *purpose*. Returning to college can be the beginning of assuming these leadership roles. And it can dramatically change the perception of a graying generation. From one that is seen not as a burden but as a new and vital force that is ready to make life a lot better for all of us.