



LIFESTYLE

Active Adults

Mid-Life Becomes an Age of Discovery

Boomers are redefining work, leisure, and community

A few years ago, Carol Greenfield found that she was getting to an age when other people were starting to see her as a "senior." "It didn't feel quite right," says Greenfield, 58, the founder and president of Newton-based Discovering What's Next? (DWN) (www.discoveringwhatsnext.com), a group for people in mid-life looking for connection, community, and a road map for the next stage of their lives.

"People who still feel emotionally and physically young and want to stay engaged don't really like the word 'retirement,'" says Greenfield, whose professional background is in public health and services for the elderly. As life expectancy increases, with better health lasting into old age for many Americans, Greenfield sees the years between 50 and 70 as "a new life stage." But with new possibilities come new challenges, so she set

out to develop a resource center for people navigating mid-life transitions, starting in her hometown of Newton.

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Since Greenfield launched DWN in fall 2002, the all-volunteer organization has attracted more than 2,000 members to its programs and established a permanent base at the Newton Free

Library. "What people want," Greenfield says, "is to feel part of a community," and what DWN gives people who are moving out of the full-time workforce, or whose children have left home, is "a new community that values who they are and can provide a rich environment for what they want to explore."

Steve Colchamiro, 62, is a dentist who has worked for more than 30 years in a community health center practice. A serious illness two and a half years ago was

a wake-up call to pay attention to planning the next phase of his life. With the help of a monthly men's group at DWN, he has been reviewing his options. "I'd never done anything like it before," says Colchamiro, but he finds the group of 14 men, of whom five or six are still working, a source of inspiration and ideas. Several group members volunteer in after-school programs, and one helped with rebuilding in New Orleans. "Some say they're busier than before they retired," he says. Colchamiro still enjoys work, and although he is thinking of gradually cutting back his working hours over the next few years, he says, "I'd have to keep semi-busy. I wouldn't be happy playing golf every day."

Six years ago, Rose Praderio was very reluctant to trade the family house in Quincy, where she and her husband had raised their three children, for a unit in a new active adult community at Twin Brooks in Easton.

Now just turned 70, Praderio is an enthusiastic member of a community of 53 households, with neighbors who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. "We all get along beautifully," she says. During a recent illness, she was overwhelmed by the practical help and good wishes offered by her neighbors. With a clubhouse and library and monthly expeditions to museums,

she says she's enjoying "a whole new life."

Praderio has found her own version of Greenfield's vision of a supportive, enriching community life. And how does that feel? "I'm tickled pink," she says. ■



The Inspired Years

Carol Greenfield drew inspiration for her Discovering What's Next organization from the ideas of Marc Freedman. His book, *Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America* (2002), proposes that dramatic increases in healthy longevity among the baby boom generation now reaching its 50s and 60s represent a unique opportunity for society. Freedman is also founder and CEO of Civic Ventures, a think tank that helps society reap the greatest return on experience, specifically, the life and work experience of what Freedman has called "the largest, healthiest, best educated generation in history." Civic Ventures was named by the magazine *Fast Company* as a winner of one of its 43 Social Capitalist Awards for 2007. Check out its website, www.CivicVentures.org, for ideas on how your senior years can make a difference.