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“New Newtonian Discovers What’s Next” by Bruce Davis

Discovering What’s Next or DWN, a Newton non-profit organization, is on the cutting edge of what has recently begun and is continuing to be a significant focus for individuals in transition and this focus, for example, has translated in many instances to the creation of new businesses. This phenomenon corresponds to a great extent to "baby boomers" born in the mid-1940s approaching and turning 60. Although this phenomenon is certainly prompted in part by economics, there are other reasons as well for its emergence, and the media, academia, the real estate and related industries, among others, have latched on to the issue with great vigor -- a boon to people of all ages since, sooner or later, everyone will be dealing with the same or similar issues in their lives.

For me personally, the volunteers, organizations and activities under the umbrella of the DWN have been a critical part of what I would characterize as our (my wife and I)

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success in making what a lot of people have told us is a huge and rather unique transition. By that I am referring to the transitions that we embarked on just a year ago in terms of changes in place (our move from NJ to MA), in work (the end of our 60-hour work weeks in corporate America and concomitant long commutes), in our relationships with our children (including a first marriage a few months ago of one of our daughters) and other family members, friends, former colleagues, acquaintances and others. Naturally, there's also the transition in age and how we perceive ourselves in relation to others of our own age as well as individuals between which we're "sandwiched". Very clearly, all of the changes brought about by these transitions have impacted our sense of who we are (i.e., our identity of self) and, for that matter, who we've been and who we want to be.

Pragmatically speaking, the first DWN-sponsored activity I participated in a little more than a year ago was attendance at several Transition Talks™ ("TTs") -- conducted as a drop-in forum, with excellent facilitation by professionals in various fields -- for people to meet monthly and share their experiences involving transitions of all kinds (e.g., geographical, losses of loved ones, job losses, other dramatic career changes as well as becoming fully or semi-retired) and to make important connections with others.

Through the TTs, I met some wonderful and supportive and caring individuals who were experiencing their own personal transitions, some of which involved major upheavals in their lives. I learned a great deal from these individuals at those Talks and am grateful for that.

Following the TTs and as a result of them, I gravitated to participation in volunteer activities including becoming a Transition Navigator™ in DWN at the HUB (following in-depth training and practical application of various principles) and teaching English as a second language to a man who also was a relatively recent transplant (in his case, from half way around the world). Separately, I became a Trustee on the Board of my condominium and have assisted my wife in one of her volunteer activities -- the Newton Symphony Orchestra -- where we have met a great deal of very creative, talented and interesting people.

For the first time for both of us, we feel that we have made connections to the community and the enjoyment, stimulation, feeling of purpose, and the sense of being engaged fostered by these connections have been extremely gratifying to us.

DWN, to a very great extent, was the genesis of what for us has become a very active, challenging, stimulating, social, purposeful and adventurous time in our lives, which I am certain will continue to evolve as time passes. [To learn more about DWN, click here **www.discoveringwhatsnext.org**]

Launched in 2002, Discovering What's Next is a nonprofit organization designed to help midlife and older adults through the transition into retirement. It provides a network of volunteer and peers and encourages community involvement. The DWN HUB is located on the third floor of the Newton Free Library.

Bruce Davis is a newcomer to Newton, a retiree, and will be submitting occasional columns for the Newton Community Report.