

New RSVP site partner:

Centerpoint Institute for Life & Career Renewal

By Peter Langmaid

Before I finished asking Carol Vecchio, Founder of the 18-year-old Centerpoint Institute, what she knew about RSVP, she straightened up in her chair and exclaimed, "My mother's an RSVP volunteer!" Later, via e-mail, she amplified: "Here's the scoop! My mother, Roseann Vecchio, worked 2,077 volunteer hours last year. She has gotten the RSVP award for most number of volunteer hours in Loudoun County (Virginia) eight out of the last nine years. She's 84. Not too shabby, huh?"

Moving along, Carol spoke

about the values shared by RSVP and Centerpoint: Both organizations exist to help people in transition 'connect.' And the goal of both organizations is personal fulfillment (contentment). However, while RSVP endeavors to match people with volunteer opportunities, Centerpoint's focus is helping people discover themselves and what's important to them so they can recognize the right opportunity when it presents itself.

A core belief at Centerpoint is that life is a complex series



Centerpoint Institute's beautiful setting at the Talaris Conference Center Campus (Photo credit: Dennis Williams Photography www.williamsphoto.com)

of relationships (work, family, community, friendships, etc.) that are engaged in a never-ending series of transitions (e.g. job change, ill parent, marital upheaval, children entering teenage years, retirement, etc.) that reach in and out from all directions. And, as our world changes, so does our sense of self – our very identity. For example, a significant part of who we are, our self-image (not to mention the image family, friends, and the community have of us), is defined by our work. A change in work (new job, retirement) sets that part of our identity adrift, which is disorienting and anguishing. Most of us stumble through such identity crises – which ultimately impact every facet our lives – with only vague ideas about ourselves. Centerpoint transforms those non-specific ideas and feelings into a specific, concrete vision that can be acted upon.

According to Carol, the three main barriers we all face when managing transitions and change are fear of the unknown, urgency (the feeling that we have to have all the answers immediately), and impatience (a reluctance to give ourselves processing time). It's like driving a car without knowing where you're going, and instead of pulling over and looking at a map, you just speed up. The Centerpoint process provides its clients with time to contemplate and permission

to be who and where they are. Too often, Carol says, people undergoing transitions demand answers of themselves before they've taken time to ask the right questions. And, she adds, many of us are stuck on ideas of what we 'should' do rather than what we 'want' to do.

The Centerpoint process is circular and holistic (a kind of YOUiversity), with each step creating a foundation for the next step. And much of the work is done in groups because, Carol emphasizes, there's strength in knowing you're not alone in your struggle to find yourself. Centerpoint is not, however, simply a place where people go to make personal discoveries and feel good about themselves. Once you've created your vision, Centerpoint offers practical help in utilizing what you've learned to get what you want. In the end, Centerpoint connects people undergoing transitions with the inner and outer resources they need for success.

Most people begin their experience with Centerpoint by attending a free orientation. And, because Centerpoint is a nonprofit site, the workshops and other services are affordable. Centerpoint also utilizes volunteers. Not only do volunteers benefit from working with committed people in a stimulating environment, they can also use their volunteer hours as credits toward attending workshops. ●

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Speaking Directly

by Sonya Couch, RSVP Director

Coping with transitions

Virginia Satir, a well-known theorist in the field of Family Therapy, said “the problem is not the problem, coping is the problem”. She was speaking of the ways that we handle life’s little road bumps and curves and the importance of attending to the habits we make out of them. Some of us hold on tight and close our eyes hoping things will just return to the way they

were. Some jump with abandon into the new opportunity. I think most of us fall between these two extremes. We do some clinging to the past but also get excited about the potential for new experiences. And hopefully we learn a lot from each bump and turn.

I know I’m preaching to the choir when I talk about the ways in which we cope with change

because people who volunteer are so much more likely to be good at this. As volunteers you are proactively working on social issues you care about, immersing yourselves in organizations that are always evolving, and helping make change within and beyond those organizations. You already know the statistics on volunteers as happier, healthier individuals. But I also believe that as volunteers you learn to stay nimble and to navigate transitions effectively.

Even so, the getting from here to there is generally not easy. We hear from many RSVP volunteers about the struggle that they have had making

the transition from work to retirement, or from a high-level position to a part time position. As society puts so much value on your professional title it can be an awkward thing to find yourself without a business card, introducing yourself as just yourself.

How we manage these transitions is what this issue of Experience in Action is all about. And we hope that you will glean some good advice or inspiration as you read other’s stories and learn about local resources. As always, we love to hear your stories so if this inspires you to share yours, please let us know! ●

Our RSVP Volunteer Recognition Event is back!

Save the date: October 19, 2010

All RSVP members are invited to a complimentary breakfast and program at Emerald Downs Racetrack in Auburn.

More information will follow as the time nears, but please plan on joining us.

An unpredicted, but thoughtful, transition

by Anita Warmflash

In 2003, my husband and I made a decision we never expected to make; to leave our beloved New York City to resettle in Seattle. It still amazes me that there was no hesitation in our decision as we considered the pleasures of living near our 2 year old only grandchild and participating in her life. Friends and relatives wondered whether we would be able to adjust to all the changes involved in relocation. Only time would tell, but our confidence was high.

At a recent RSVP meeting I was asked whether our relocation to Seattle had worked out as we had hoped and if so, how we made it happen. One thing led to another and soon I found myself committed to writing about our unpredicted late life adventure. Though we greatly enjoy travel, and have done a lot of that both in the US, as well as to foreign countries, we always felt that the streets of New York are imbued with deep personal memories and its cultural opportunities had immensely enriched our lives.

After making the decision to relocate there was one issue which, looking back, seems almost trivial, yet troubled me greatly. This worry was whether I would have difficulty learning to get around by car over Seattle’s innumerable and steep hills! I had traveled freely on my own on the east coast but whenever we came to Seattle it was customary for my husband to be the designated driver of our rental car. The solution to my nagging worry was to go out on my own, map in hand, and drive around and within two weeks the worry had been put to rest. I knew that I could continue to lead an independent life as I had

always done.

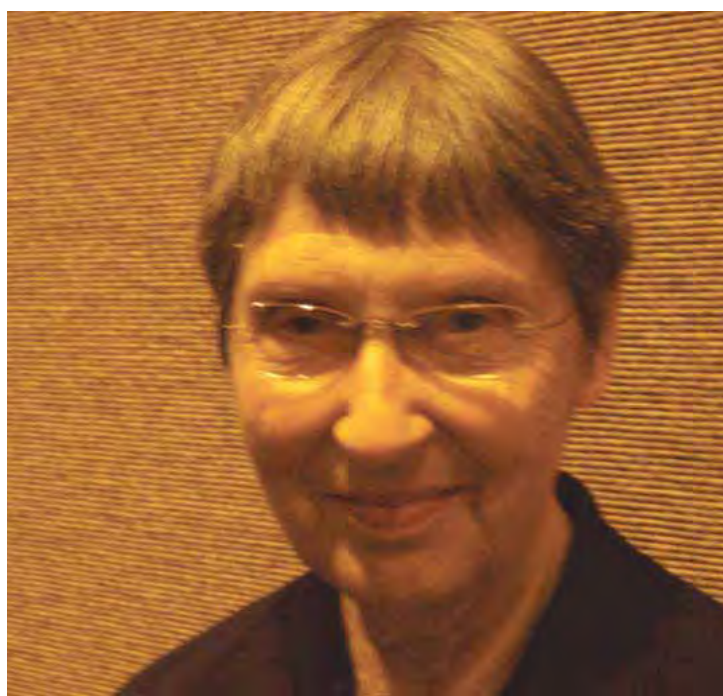
In New York I had a long career in Social Work and, in fact, I didn’t retire until we relocated to Seattle. All the while I was helping other people learn to cope and overcome difficult circumstances, I was also learning from them. Each person had a different life

story and lived experiences which I had to imagine. In this way, I had indirectly stored up a wealth of experience to which I attribute much of the success of our transition.

Our relocation adventure began when we came to Seattle for a visit. On a lovely early spring day we drove through the neighborhoods of Seattle to determine where we’d want to live. Though we wanted to be near our daughter and her family, we expected to continue to live an independent life. We knew we had to be in the city where we could walk to Benaroya hall, SAM, Elliot Bay bookstore, Town Hall and walk streets alive with people and visual stimulus. We found just the right neighborhood on a tree-lined street within walking distance to all of the above. We didn’t know how right it was until several months later when our realtor took

us to see an apartment near the site of the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. Historic Preservation had been the subject of my husband’s second career back east, so the location of our new apartment became an unexpected pleasure and omen of possibilities.

With the neighborhood identified and the apartment rented, we both hit the Internet to locate other resources in Seattle. Some



Recently transitioned Seattle resident Anita Warmflash
(Photo credit: Robin Knudson)



Wit & Wisdom

by author Henry Wiener

Breaking in

Breaking into a group in which it seems everyone is related can be a traumatic experience. Even if we had grown up in an unusually large family, trying to be social with so many strangers can be quite a chore.

We have become habituated to privacy in restaurants and most accommodate this need. Despite the increasing popularity of communal dining in the U.S., I still remember my initial reaction to such dining when we first encountered it on some of our trips.

At first I felt violated, but as my wife and I were warmly welcomed, we soon felt like members of a family. Consequently I looked forward to eating in a venue where we were not sectioned off into little cubicles. We found settings where we could share food and small talk with a variety of interesting strangers around a table, which held an array of food that excited our salivary glands.

I felt like I was young again, dining with friends or relatives on holidays or special occasions and participating in a meal that threatened to overflow the table. In those days every family had a dining table that could be opened to accommodate a large gathering. And when there

was a very special celebration, and we expected a large crowd, we rented long wooden planks which, when placed on top of solid produce boxes, could seat more than twenty individuals at each table.

As my wife and I explored the food of other cultures, we found ourselves increasingly dining communally, especially when eating our favorite Chinese fare, dim sum. Ensnared around large tables, we were held captive by the carts that slowly circled the large room, offering such a variety of unusual fare, we were tempted to try them all.

In retrospect, my most memorable exposure to communal activity was in the service, not only with food, but also with sleeping arrangements, showering and taking care of bodily necessities, often in full view of everyone.

The concern about breaking into groups is present not only in eateries but on all occasions when we are in the presence of large groups of people we never met before. One that I will never forget was milling with hundreds of people on New York's Broadway to see the old year out and the new one in.

There are other large events in which we sometimes find ourselves. It can be a frustrating experience if we have not

learned how to deal with small talk and our concern about how we are coming across to those we have just met.

Fortunately there are a number of gurus shedding light on how to handle these stressful situations. One of these is Philip Nastasee, a clinical psychologist who deals with the "social anxiety" some have developed.

Another is Don Gabor who has written more than a dozen books and gives workshops on communication skills. His main thrust is unraveling the misconceptions of the situational reality that frustrates socializing. Gabor has revised his 1983 book, *How to Start a Conversation and Make Friends*, which has helpful suggestions for those who have a problem gabbing with ease.

Adding to this helpful mix is Judith Belmont, a license professional counselor who also specializes in communication issues. She has found that in social situations people tend to focus on what they are saying and not on their internal "self talk" in which they are comparing themselves with others or worrying about what they are thinking.

Despite the work on "breaking in", and the insights that can be gained from the work done on communication skills, I did not find any signposts for "breaking out" from a social situation to which we "broke in" ...

That's a problem I'm not having. Help! ●

Henry Wiener is author of the book 'Wit and Wisdom.'

Unpredicted transition

Continued from page 2

of our searches were related to practical matters such as locating a neighborhood pharmacy, but others helped us find organizations that would match our interests and offer opportunities to meet people with common interests to provide the intellectual stimulation we need. We identified areas of interest to us as a couple and to us separately. For me, some of these categories were the arts, public policy organizations, professional associations, volunteer opportunities, and adult education. Using e-mail, I contacted several organizations

to learn more about their functions, requirements, meeting times, etc. I had some very encouraging conversations and learned that I would be welcomed as soon as I was ready to plunge into an active life. I also talked to people who had been through relocations in their life to check out how my approach corresponded to their experiences.

Three weeks or so after our arrival in Seattle, with furniture in place and the routines of life installed, I was ready to pick up the lists I had stashed away, and made a series of calls which led me to a class

in oil painting, volunteer work at a museum, the League of Women Voters, a social club, and volunteer work for an upcoming Seattle election. Best of all, was the sense that each day could hold an unexpected experience, and always a walk along Lake Washington, to give us the feeling of being on vacation. While for us New York represents a place made by humankind, Seattle represents nature's handiwork, enriched by the spirit and imagination of people. ●

Anita Warmflash is an RSVP Ambassador and writer for the EIA.

RSVP



The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a nonprofit National Senior Corps program sponsored locally by Solid Ground. RSVP encourages and supports volunteerism in King County for people 55 and older.



Solid Ground is dedicated to achieving a just and caring community free from poverty, prejudice and neglect. Our 30 programs give nearly 33,000 families a year the services, resources and support they need to overcome homelessness, hunger, domestic violence and other poverty-related traumas.

EIA

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Aging with Wisdom

by Carol Scott-Kassner

Ready or not, here I come

Most of us remember the words, “ready or not, here I come,” from our childhood and delightful memories of playing hide and seek. We rarely apply those words to our transition into retirement, however. Yet, for many of us, retirement is hiding behind the bushes and ready to sneak up on us. It won't be a surprise but it may contain many surprises. For most of us, it represents one of the largest and most important transitions of our lives.

By our mid-to-late 60s or early 70s, or perhaps earlier, we have already made numerous transitions: changing jobs and communities, getting married, perhaps getting divorced, raising children and having them leave home. Each of these transitions has taught us about loss and gain, and often about patience, perseverance, and grief. Some we've looked forward to and others we have dreaded. The significance of retiring is huge. It means losing the very identity that we've worked so hard over so many years to obtain and it feels as if we are stepping into the unknown. Who will I be? What will I do to fill my time? How will

I find meaning?

One of the important spiritual tasks that we can do as we step into retirement is to gain closure. We need to decide what we are going to let go of so that new things can come into our lives. I recently attended a conscious aging retreat in the desert of northern New Mexico. One evening was dedicated to a “letting go” ceremony. We were asked ahead of time to bring something to burn in the fire that symbolized what we needed to let go of at this particular time of our lives. One man burned his newly renewed certificate as a clinical psychologist. Another burned his Ph.D. diploma. He had retired after 37 years as a college professor and he wanted to move on. I wrote the names of people I wanted to forgive and those who needed to forgive me on a beautiful piece of wood and burned that. After the fire we moved into a day of silent retreat, where we could deepen into those things we needed to release. It was very powerful. You could perform a similar ceremony yourself. You might even invite close friends or other loved ones to witness this ritual of letting

go and to welcome you into whatever the next stage of your life is going to be.

Once you gain some closure, you may go into an in-between time of limbo, where you are not quite sure what is coming next for you. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot of Harvard conducted a two-year study of people from 50 to 75 years, examining how they negotiated this huge shift into retirement. She found a number of things. One was that this was a time of what she calls “the dynamic of constancy and change.”¹ Oppositional forces seem to pull us. We grieve the loss of the familiar, yet are drawn into new kinds of freedom. As we relinquish much of our public self, we are invited to deepen into greater self-understanding and creativity.

Sometimes, this shift is difficult. We are not ready to begin anew right away. We need to spend some time reflecting, meditating, wondering, and discerning. We need to listen deeply to parts of ourselves that have never been developed but long to be before we die. Lawrence-Lightfoot tells the story of a successful doctor who began to take voice lessons in retirement to fulfill a life-long dream of becoming a singer. He had always loved opera, but his mother had pressured him to go into medicine rather than pursuing what he really loved. A woman who had retired as a professor

spent almost two years playing computer games until she made the shift into doing something much more meaningful in the world. As we make decisions to commit to something new for ourselves, it is also important that we gain the support of family and/or friends to encourage us on our way. Otherwise, they can subvert this important stage of our journey into later adulthood.

Once we know the direction that we want to go, then watch out world! My business partner and I love saying that “we are not retired, we're re-fired.” Most of us still have a great deal of zest for living and retirement is a time that our curiosity and creativity can be unleashed. Gail Sheehy in her book, *Second Passages*, contends that the most interesting women she met in their 80s and 90s had reinvented themselves in their 50s and 60s. This is a time to learn to do new things, to travel and explore the world, and to contribute to the healing of the world in new ways, claiming our role as sages and wise ones. So many things are possible. Welcome to retirement! ●

¹Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara (2009) *The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, Adventure in the 25 years after 50*.

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Carol Scott-Kassner is co-founder with Pat Lewis of 'Aging with Wisdom.' Pat and Carol are available to do workshops on various aspects of the spiritual journey of aging. They can be contacted at: www.agingwithwisdom.com.

When seniors need to work for pay - part 2

by Anita Warmflash

In our last newsletter, we ran an article about seniors finding themselves in need of employment and how the City of Seattle's Resource Center can provide information and skills training in preparation for paid employment. [See RSVP EIA Vol. 23, No.1, Spring 2010, p.4] At RSVP, we continue to follow this issue as the unemployment figures and a sluggish economy are expected to continue for several years.

We know that the downturn in the economy has affected many retired seniors by way of eroded savings and investments, and underfunded pension plans. The expectation many seniors had of a comfortable cushion for the retirement years has been disappointed, a phenomenon widespread throughout the country, and has affected people at all levels of the economy. In fact, The New York Times ran a long article recently about seniors turning to the health care industry for employment as aides to disabled seniors. In March, the same newspaper ran a section on older workers having to upgrade their skills in order to find job opportunities in fields different from their prior work experience. This confirms for us at RSVP that the problem is not going away any time soon and therefore the need to be alert to other local resources that may help seniors find their way into employment. We found such a program, sponsored by AARP, called “Work Search” through their Senior Community Service

Employment Program.

I visited the “Work Search” office located in South Seattle and met with the Project Director Nora Norminton, and learned that AARP has similar programs in other counties of the State of Washington, though the Seattle site is one of the largest. The program operates nationally through an AARP Foundation, an early sponsor of efforts to assist seniors of 55+ years who need paid employment.

Clients can be accepted in the program even if they have been unemployed for up to 5 years and have limited income as defined by Federal guidelines. They must reside in the County served by the office, in this case King County. The program is tailored to the individual based on a careful assessment of the person's skills, interests, and goals for employment. When appropriate clients are referred to facilities to improve their skills or receive new training. For many, the Community Colleges are the appropriate resource and when there are fees for training, the program will fund it. The program also provides instruction in how to search for employment and in preparing for interviews. It can also subsidize actual work experience through placement at work sites, such as non-profit agencies, and fund the work experience for a defined though limited period of time.

Continued on page 5

Flying high with Kathie Torgison

by Peter Langmaid

Some careers are planned, some are a result of serendipity, and some, like Kathie Torgison's, are a blend of both.

A native Seattleite (born at Providence Hospital), Kathie graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in German (she also speaks French) and a teaching certificate. The year was 1973, the same year as the famous billboard instructing the last person leaving Seattle to please turn off the lights. With the economic downturn, teaching jobs were hard to get. One afternoon, on her way home from interviewing with the Highline School District, Kathie stopped by the Pan Am office at the airport on a whim. They hired her on the spot as an interpreter. That whim turned into a 35 year career—3 years with Pan Am and thirty-two years with United.

Kathie used her language and teaching skills (she's also a fast learner) to become a Senior Instructor of Airport Operations and Training. Asked what that title meant, Kathie said she trained everyone who "didn't touch a plane." The curriculum included airline policies, government rules and regulations, and ticketing and reservations.

Teaching in German, French, and English, Kathie travelled the world spending 4-7 weeks in each city, enough time, she says, "to settle in and get to know the neighborhood and the culture." She loved her job, and as she enumerated all the places she's been in the world, I realized that a much shorter list would have been the places she hasn't visited!

Kathie's career also spanned the transformation of the airline industry from manual systems to computerized ticketing and reservations (talk about transitions!). United, with their Apollo ticketing and reservations software and hardware, was at the leading edge of that transformation, and Kathie taught the world how to use it.

It was through her work with Apollo that Kathie met Gary Torgison, who did installations and repairs for the system. Kathie characterizes the circumstances of their courtship as, "the coffee neither of us drank." Kathie, a non-coffee drinker, would get to work early and make coffee for the rest of the work group. Gary, another non-coffee drinker, would also arrive early, just to be around

Kathie. A year-and-a-half later they were married. That was 29 years ago.

Kathie cites her father and Camp Fire Girls as the two foundational influences on her urge to volunteer. Her father was a charter member of the West Seattle Lion's Club and served as a role model for finding time in a busy schedule

to give back. And, as a Camp Fire Girl from 2nd through 12th grades, Kathie participated in countless volunteer activities, fulfilling the organization's mission to "give service."

Kathie's association with RSVP began when gas hit \$4/gallon in 2009 and threatened her ability to get from SeaTac to the Woodland Park Zoo, where she had been a docent for 15 years. A friend told her about the RSVP bus subsidy benefit, which she quickly took advantage of. Since then Kathie has become an RSVP Ambassador, utilizing her decades of teaching and communicating skills to represent RSVP at various community events and extol the benefits of volunteering. She is also on the planning committee for the upcoming appreciation breakfast. Her involvement, she says, came in part because, "RSVP helped me, and I wanted to give back to RSVP."

Kathie retired from United in 2007, but went back to work part time in 2009 for some "going out to dinner money" and to prove to herself she was still viable in the workplace. She has since re-retired (this time for good)

because work was "eating into my volunteer time."

In addition to her work with RSVP and the Woodland Park Zoo, Kathie volunteers through her church and at the United Airlines retiree travel desk. "Volunteering," she says, "enriches my life and makes our marriage richer, too. What I see and hear while volunteering opens up areas of conversation Gary and I wouldn't otherwise have." Plus, she says a bit shyly, Gary's very proud of her volunteering.

Despite her busy schedule, Kathie is an avid reader. In fact, she recently read the entire "Twilight" series in preparation for an extended visit from her 13-year-old step-granddaughter. ●



Kathie Torgison with zoo friend -?
(Photo credit: Kathie Torgison)

Work for pay

Continued from p. 4

In addition to the "Work Search" program the AARP Foundation can also assist those who are 50+ in accessing Public Benefit programs by doing the initial screening for programs like Food Stamps, Home Energy Assistance, Medicare Prescription coverage, and programs that benefit and support children in low income families.

All in all, it is heartening to learn that Seattle residents have more than one resource to turn to in time of need. We promise to bring you any more information going forward which may be of help to Seattle seniors. ●

Volunteer May Shimbo honored by United Way

by Robin Knudson

May Shimbo has been volunteering for the United Way of King County Volunteer Reader Program every week for three years. On May 26th she was honored at her reading site, Grammi's House, an in-home childcare facility in West Seattle. For an hour each week May reads to one child at a time in a special place of Grammi's House. The love that May brings to her work shows in the way the children respond to her. At the celebration, United Way provided books that May was able to give to each child to keep.

May first came to RSVP when she met Coordinator Jennifer Gahagan at a the Garfield Volunteer Fair. She told Jen that she was volunteering at 3 different places – all of which, it turned out, were RSVP partner sites. May's other volunteer sites are the Union Gospel Mission and the King County Library System where she repairs books.

Congratulations to another wonderful volunteer! ●



May Shimbo at Grammi's Place
(Photo credit: Jen Gahagan)



The Garden Lady

by Linda Urbaniak

Is purple your color of choice?

For many people, color is the basis of their gardens. Some go for only one or two colors; others have a kaleidoscope with colors blazing against one another. Color defines their gardens.

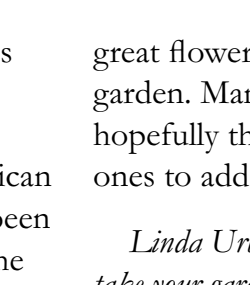
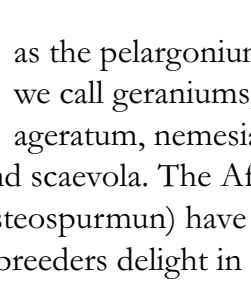
Purple is the favorite color of most gardeners as revealed by a recent poll taken by Proven Winners. It is represented by everything from pale lilac to deep indigo and there are flowers that bloom in that color

range from early spring to late fall. Spring hyacinth 'Amethyst' or 'Splendid Cornelia' might start the season with any of the many purple crocus.

Next come purple tulips. The early 'Purple Prince' might overlap with the hyacinths, followed perhaps with 'Nigrita' or the white with purple edged 'Shirley' and the even darker, almost black, 'Queen of the Night'.

Primroses can be much more interesting than the plants found at the grocery store and the species auricula, beesiana, denticulata or juliae hybrids all can add purple to your garden. Although not as easy to find, talk

to your local nursery. They are great plants for a moister part of the garden. Other great perennials include phlox, especially 'Nicki' coneflowers like 'After Midnight' or 'Prairie Splendor', penstemon, salvias such as 'May Night' (Mainacht) or 'Lubeca', asters or hyssop (Agastache). You will get the best results if these plants are grown in full sun. Clematis can even carry purple up a trellis



shrub.

Annuals can fill your garden with purple! Try Schizanthus for something a little different. Called poor man's orchids, their vivid colors and ferny leaves make wonderful fillers for the garden. For vivid purples, use petunias, Superbells®, heliotrope or verbena. They can be used either as groundcovers or in pots. For the border, cleome, wallflowers, nemesia, ageratum or Lantana 'Luscious Grape' can add lavenders and light purples. Dahlias come in every color of purple from vivid to pastel, plus they bloom later in the summer, adding color when

it has departed from other plants. Other annuals that add this warm hue include the true geraniums as well

as the pelargoniums we call geraniums, ageratum, nemesia, pansies and scaevola. The African daisies (osteospermum) have been the plant breeders delight in the past few years and have many

forms and colors of purple as well as others for the border or for containers.

When talking about knock-out shrubs with purple flowers nothing beats lilacs from the darkest purple to the lightest shade of lilac. Their blossoming seems to herald in the flowering season. There are others waiting in the wings, however: Hibiscus 'Blue Chiffon'™ is a Rose of Sharon shrub that will be covered with amazingly large, ruffled flowers in pale lilac-blue. The similar 'Azurri Satin'® has flowers that are single with a bold center of dark purple with shots of purple through the large petals. They bloom throughout the middle summer. For low growing shrubs there are several varieties of lavender that bloom in early summer. Caryopteris 'Sunshine

Blue'® (bluebeard) blooms with dark amethyst-blue flowers late in the summer. There is even a bush that displays amazing purple berries, which hold into winter: beautyberry. Try either 'Profusion' or 'Early Amethyst'.

So if purple is your color, these are some

great flowers to add to your garden. Many you may know, but hopefully there are a few new ones to add to your display. ●

Linda Urbaniak will gladly take your gardening questions at lindagardenlady@speakeasy.net.

Volunteering at The Nature Shop

by Jen Mullen, Seattle Audubon Volunteer Coordinator

Seattle Audubon's Nature Shop, located in Seattle's Wedgwood neighborhood, is the center of many Audubon activities – field trips, classes and Nature Camp registration; birding and bird-related inquiries; and general organizational support. Volunteers provide excellent customer service to thousands of customers who come into The Nature Shop annually for bird- and nature-related gifts, bird feeders and seed. The shop also carries Seattle Audubon-blend shade-grown coffee, hundreds of titles of books for all ages and the region's best selection of

binoculars and scopes. All profits from the Nature Shop support local environmental education and conservation programs. The Nature Shop volunteers are a loyal group, many of whom have been volunteering for many years.

Seattle Audubon's mission is to cultivate and lead a community that values and protects birds and the natural environment. Volunteers staff the Nature Shop Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Come volunteer at Seattle Audubon to connect with others who care about birds and to make a lasting positive difference for the environment! ●

WHAT IS AN RSVP AMBASSADOR?

An RSVP Ambassador is an RSVP Volunteer who is willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering. Because of our small staff, we have assembled a wonderful group of volunteers who help us share the mission of RSVP with other seniors. If you would be willing to represent RSVP at events around King County, we would like to talk to you.

We do not ask for a specific time commitment, only that you occasionally share your enthusiasm for volunteering and help us encourage others by relating your own experiences and telling about RSVP. We provide a fun, interactive training and give you the opportunity to meet another group of active, enthusiastic people.

To sign up or ask more questions: Contact Robin Knudson, 206-957-4779 x116 or robink@solid-ground.org.

The benefits of physical & mental exercise are real!

by Jim Evans, Senior Health & Fitness

DEAR JIM: I have read your columns for many years and always find them very educational and entertaining. However, I sometimes have difficulty believing that exercise can really help people that much. I see my friends and relatives growing older every day and suffering from declining health, and exercise is the last thing on their minds. I know that you really believe in the whole exercise thing, but surely it can't be as good as you say it is for you. *DOUBTING DEBBIE FROM DUBUQUE*

DEAR DOUBTING DEBBIE: Yes, I really do believe in the whole "exercise thing," and yes, it CAN be as good as I say it is for you. If you have read my columns for as long as you say you have, you will know that I have frequently emphasized that exercise is not a cure-all for everything that besets us, but it can help to prevent certain conditions from developing and greatly improve our quality of life. But why take my word for it?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity can improve health and reduce the risk of premature death in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and the risk of dying from CHD.
- Reduces the risk of stroke.
- Lowers both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL or the "good" cholesterol).
- Lowers the risk of developing high blood pressure.
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have it.
- Lowers the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent (Type 2) diabetes mellitus.
- Reduces the risk of developing colon cancer.
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Reduces feelings of depression.
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued.

Even as we grow older the important thing is to "keep moving." Age and disabilities may limit the amount and scope of our physical activity, but there are very few of us who can't do "something" physical to make our lives better.

DEAR JIM: I'm 77 and what bothers me most is that some of my remaining friends seem to be losing their marbles. I don't mean this in a derogatory way, but they seem to be in a constant state of confusion and have trouble remembering things. Maybe it's happening to me too and I don't even know it, but it scares me. Is there anything I can do to keep my mind sharp or at least slow things down? *MINDFUL OF HER MARBLES IN MISSOULA*

DEAR MINDFUL: It IS scary, isn't it?! My mother is 85 and has experienced many of the same things. But, rather than sit around and feel sorry for herself – which would have been easy to do – she has remained physically active by walking 2-3 times a day around the neighborhood and participating in Tai Chi classes twice a week at the local YMCA.

In a recent study by the Stockholm Gerontology Research Center, a group of 776 subjects – all 77 years or older – were followed over a period of 9 years, and the results of that study indicated that those with the highest level of physical, mental, and social engagement experienced a lower risk of dementia.

Don't overlook the importance of keeping your mind engaged in challenging activities too. My mother-in-law plays games regularly and, at almost 89 years of age, is still as sharp as a tack. But, she doesn't just go through the motions of playing. She plays to win – and still does most of the time, much to my chagrin.

We can't stop growing older, but we can do a lot to prevent growing old. There's a difference. The fact that you are aware of the changes going on around you gives you the power to make the necessary adjustments in your lifestyle to reduce your risk of dementia and keep all your marbles. ●



Senior on the Street

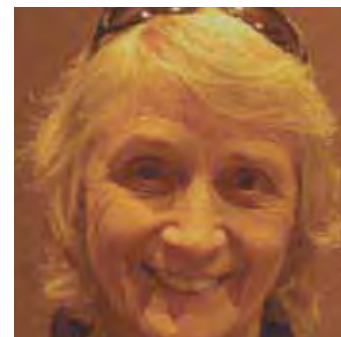
by Peter Langmaid

What has been a major transition in your life?



"Moving to an island – Vashon."

–Karen Rogers



"Becoming a grandmother."

–Marilyn Steiger



"Trying to work in the real estate business in a bad economy."

–Al Almeleh



"Our daughters leaving home."

–John Knudson



"After becoming an 'empty nester' not to retire, but to refire!"

–Pammyla Hubbard



"Moving to Seattle."

–Rachel Lodge



"Becoming a grandparent."

–Ethan Crawford, Jr.

Volunteer & Community Opportunities through RSVP

The following are just a few of the volunteer and community opportunities RSVP has to offer. To talk to a real person about opportunities that are just right for you, call Jennifer Gahagan at 206-957-4779 x122 – or visit our website at www.solid-ground.org/GetInvolved/Volunteer/RSVP for regional volunteer opportunity listings.

Volunteering

Centerpoint Institute for Life & Career Renewal: New Partner Site! Is not-for-profit organization dedicated to changing the way we live and work. Centerpoint offers workshops, coaching, resources, and support to guide participants through any stage of the career process. Volunteers are needed to answer phones, compile workshop materials, assist with marketing, fundraising and grant-writing, and help with graphic design for website and print materials.

Renton History Museum: New Partner Site! Offers a variety of volunteer positions including museum greeters, docents, office helpers and special event volunteers. During the school year, docents are trained to provide education to 4th graders. Benefits include free admission to the museum and museum programs, 20% discount in gift shop and a subscription to museum and volunteer newsletters.

Seattle Southside Visitors Center: New Partner Site! Located in Tukwila, the visitors center needs volunteers to provide information via phone, e-mail and in person to visitors about travelling to King County and the Northwest.

American Red Cross: seeks docents for the humanitarian photographic exhibit "Our World at War", which will be displayed at the Seattle Center House from June 25th- August 12th. This traveling exhibition seeks to promote understanding of the world's major conflicts in the context of valuing human life in times of war. Docents will provide guidance and answers to public, help to ensure the safety of our patrons and of the exhibit contents. We're asking for a minimum of 16 hours (4 shifts of 4 hours). Additional shifts are encouraged and training is provided.

Chris Elliot Fund: exists to END BRAIN CANCER through education, awareness, advocacy and research. They are currently seeking event volunteers, a volunteer coordinator and a part-time executive assistant.

Greenwood Senior Center: Trip Coordinator - Do you like to travel? Are you organized? Join us on monthly trips as the day-of organizer for a group of seniors..

St. Vincent de Paul: Needs several volunteers in our Kenmore Thrift Store interested in working in Linens, Electronics, or sorting Miscellaneous donations. For each position we are looking for someone who can commit to working 15-20 hours per week—the store is open Monday-Friday from 9 AM – 7 PM, Saturday from 10 AM – 6 PM and Sunday from 11 AM – 6 PM. You can work a schedule that works for you anytime during those hours.

Literacy Source: a non-profit agency that offers free learning opportunities for adults in the areas of reading, writing, math, computer literacy and citizenship. Our mission is to build a literate community and promote self-sufficiency by providing learner-centered instruction. We have a variety of volunteer opportunities including one-to-one tutoring, classroom instruction, and resource and organizational aid.

Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society: needs on-call special event/outreach volunteers. We are looking for folks who enjoy talking to the public, working with kids and would enjoy a fast-paced environment

In Our Community

The Departments of Rehabilitation Medicine and Computer Science at the University of Washington are seeking people who are 18 years or older to participate in a research study to investigate control of hand movements:

To qualify you have to

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Have not been diagnosed with any of the diseases of the nervous system like stroke, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, neuropathy etc.
- Come in for a 2 hour testing session. Participation will require filling out questionnaires, tests of sensation and movement in the arms and hands, and a test of hand and finger movement (twisting movements, as if removing a cap or a jar).

Parking arrangements will be made at no cost to you and you will be compensated for your time and travel.

If you are interested in learning more about our study, please call/ email Sujata Pradhan at 206-616-0383 or sujatap@u.washington.edu.

Neighborhood Walking Ambassador Training:

Saturday, June 12, 2010

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Camp Long (5200 35th Ave. SW, Seattle)

Learn tools to promote and advocate for better walking conditions.

Contact info@feetfirst.info

206-652-2310, or visit www.feetfirst.info

Lifetime Learning Center Summer Program July 6-28:

Spend some time this summer learning something new! Classes include Meditation, Spanish, Summer Shakespeare and Beethoven. Students pay a flat registration fee of \$50 and can take any or all classes.

Lifetime Learning Center

520 Northeast Ravenna Blvd., Seattle, 98115

206-524-3778 or www.lifetimelearningseattle.org

Lunch on MS Rotterdam with the Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society:

Saturday, July 10th PSMHS is offering this special lunch on the standard-bearer of the Holland America line and features a 2 million dollar art and antique collection. This event is a fundraiser for the Society. For details, contact PSMHS at 206-324-1685 ext.41 or admin@pugetmaritime.org.

PO Box 9731

Seattle, WA 98109

Please call to help me find a volunteer opportunity suited just for me.

Please send information about RSVP.

Please note my new address.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Please mail this form to: RSVP, 464 12th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98112