

[News and Hot Topics](#) » Don't Call Me a 'Senior'!

## Don't Call Me a 'Senior'!

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

April

2002

Thank you to everyone who posted a response to last month's 25th anniversary Hot Topic, especially to those of you who wrote such lovely congratulatory sentiments. I felt very "recognized," which seems appropriate as we start April with (in the United States) National Volunteer Week coming up.

This month I am ruminating on age. Energize's 25th birthday coincides with my 54th birthday. When RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) and all the other American volunteer programs now under the umbrella of "Senior Corps" began, the age of eligibility was 60. Several years ago, this was **lowered** to age 55. The new literature from the USA Freedom Corps reaffirms the wish to use age 55 in the future. But speaking as someone in her 50s, I'm not retired nor do I consider myself even close to "senior" anything! Ironically, of course, this lower threshold is in direct contradiction to the Social Security eligibility changes that **raise** the age of full retirement benefits to 67! Such mixed messages are echoed in other countries.

The fastest growing age range in developed countries is now ages 90 to 100. If we begin considering people age 55 (Senior Corps) or even 50 (AARP) to be "seniors," we are applying that label to an age cohort spanning 50+ years. One could be considered a "senior" for fully half of one's lifetime! I have said before that I think our vocabulary fails us when it comes to talking about age. We really need new words to discuss the younger senior (perhaps 60-75), the middle senior (75-85?), and the older senior (85+). Each group has important characteristics in terms of health, mobility, family support structures, energy level, discretionary funds, etc. These impact on all aspects of life, including volunteering.

In my opinion, there is nothing remarkable if an organization is successful in recruiting people aged 55 to 65 as volunteers. I can see very few things that need to be done differently for these participants than for younger ones. What concerns me most is the lack of attention being paid to those 85 and older! If we agree that our population has more and more people in their 90s and 100s, what are we doing to help these folks remain actively engaged in their communities?

I am not naïve. Many older seniors are ill or dependent on caregivers. My own mother is 92 and has Alzheimer's disease. Unfortunately, her volunteer days are over. But one of her friends in the senior lifecare center in which she lives is 97 and sharp as a tack. Leah is not very mobile, but she certainly is bright and enthusiastic. She spends most of her days on a chair in her living room, waiting for the dinner hour when she takes her walker to the dining room and spends two hours with her pals. This is the future most of us face, if we're lucky enough to remain healthy. Is there no way we can be of service to others?

This is the challenge we face in the volunteer world: tapping the talents of those truly marginalized in terms of the paid workforce, often lonely, yet increasingly active. Some questions to answer:

- How can we solve the transportation problem for people who have given up cars and driving? If we can work out methods to bring seniors to medical care, why not to volunteer work that keeps minds healthy?
- How can we bring meaningful work to homebound or less mobile elders? How will this problem change as people age with computer skills/access?
- What can someone do who is bedbound? (A intergenerational gardening project in a Boulder nursing home once involved every resident by asking those in bed to "plant sit" seedlings in cups.)
- Since some volunteers reach their 80's by "aging in place" (meaning they started with us at a younger age and just keep going), how do we find attractive and genuinely useful projects to transition them away from what they can no longer do into what they can?

There are indeed answers to these questions, but we won't find them if we take the easy route out and concentrate on people who are in their 50s. A number of years ago I ran a workshop in a school district in Florida trying to start a "Great Grannies" project. When I learned that their target recruitment audience was women around 60, I suggested they change the name to "Hot Mamas" project!

What is your take on this "senior" issue? Can you share creative ways that you are already involving people 85 and over? Let's do what's needed most, not what's expedient. The volunteer world has an obligation to understand how an ever-aging population can have an impact on our programs.

Related Topics: [Older Volunteers](#) | [Recruitment](#) | [Image of Volunteering](#) | [Trends and Issues](#)

***Submitted on 25Nov02 by John Daniels, Director, Leadership Development Institute, University of Detroit Mercy, Michigan***

GREAT website. Thanks for making a difference. Thought: We need to "brand" people our age (I'm 55) who are "given" early retirement. No matter how many benefits soften the kick, it's still a kick. And so many of them are in their prime combination of energy/wisdom/experience.

The word SENIOR is out. How about "Prime-Timers" to refer to those out on early retirement but aching to make a difference, to give back, not just in a day-labor way, but as builders and agents of empowerment?

If you like it, it's yours. PEACE.

***Submitted on 2002May28 by Miriam Leslie, Volunteer Coordinator, Kids Kottage Foundation, Alberta, Canada***

I love seniors. Working in a crisis nursery for children at risk of child abuse and neglect, I long to include seniors as child care and support (cooking/cleaning) volunteers. Canadians are wonderful at giving their time but I am not sure why this generation are missing from the ranks who so generously donate their time. I would love ideas/input on how to effectively recruit lonely grandmas and grandpas!

***Submitted 2002 May 1 by Jayne Cravens, UN Volunteers, Bonn, Germany***

Bonnie Ebnet noted that its a major challenge to recruit 55-65'ers as new senior volunteers. This group has to be reached in different ways than the seniors that came before them, and they are looking for different kinds of opportunities. In my experience, they are every bit as passionate as the seniors that have come before them, but they are more interested in more "activist" type volunteering, in shorter-term assignments with obvious impact on the cause they support, and in group volunteering activities, particularly those they could do with other generations. Traditional recruitment methods don't reach this group -- you have to try new things, and get the message to where they are spending their time. All this is a really hard adjustment to make, but it can be done!

*Posted 2002April23*

***Submitted by Larisa Vanstien, Department of Fisheries, Western Australia***

One of our volunteers is in his 70's, can only breathe with the aid of an oxygen bottle, can rarely leave his house, and has been a source of inspiration to all of our other volunteers. Unable to be outdoors and undertake the usual duties of a Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officer, he instigated our Fishers with Disabilities program. He currently spends his time on the phone and computer raising funds, booking disability groups onto fishing workshops, promoting the program and building specialised equipment for people with disabilities to get outdoors and enjoy fishing !!! Age isn't a barrier.

*Posted 2002April19*

***Submitted by Jason Sanders, DARTS Director of Volunteer Resources, Minnesota***

My organization works with others to pioneer and deliver high-quality services that support the full participation of seniors and all generations in community life. We have approximately 1,000 volunteers at our agency over 60% of those are over the age of 60 and approximately 20% over the age of 75. We do have an advantage in that we also have transpiration department that can offer rides on one of our 35 buses. We have seniors volunteering to work with seniors as well as seniors volunteering to work with youth. No matter the situation a senior volunteer is responsible, caring,

and willing to take that extra step. Over 85 have the time and they have the knowledge -- get them involved you will not be disappointed.

*Posted 2002April17*

***Submitted by Lynda van Rooyen, Volunteer/Foster Mother - Kitten Action, KwaZulu Natal - South Africa***

Here's an example of what older volunteers can do: I am a volunteer with Kitten Action, a no-kill cat rescue organisation who have any number of stray cats and kittens at their sanctuary at any time. They have a need for 'kitten-huggers' and also people to bottle-feed the tiny kittens. This is not work which requires a lot of mobility and would probably be ideal for an older person who cannot have their own animals but would like to have contact with animals.

*Posted 2002April12*

***Submitted by Shirley Kirkpatrick, Program/Volunteer Coordinator, Oregon - USA***

I am with the OASIS Education Center - part of a nationwide program offering challenging classes to 'mature' adults 50+. In the spirit of bringing our community together, we honor seven Role Models each year at our anniversary celebration. This allows the entire community to see what a wealth of skills, knowledge and commitment these incredible people bring to our lives. Often these volunteers are in their 80's and 90's and think nothing of giving 40 hours/week to volunteering. Unlike some centers, ours is run by volunteers who are supported by 2.5 paid staff and we currently have over 8000 members locally (350,000 nationally.) The title is irrelevant, the person is the heart and soul of the program.

*Posted 2002April8*

***Submitted by Beth Singleton, Coordinator, Volunteer Resources, Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre, Ontario, Canada***

When I read this article, I was surprised that some individuals only considered the notion of aging when it begins to affect them personally (how many posts are essentially "I am now XX years old and I don't feel like a senior. I am vibrant."?) Perhaps 15 year ago individuals at your same stage of life now felt the same as you do today? A label likely wasn't any nicer then. I feel respect for abilities should not be attributed an age, but instead should be attributed to the individual. A groups of people aged 55, for instance, may display a wide range of interests and abilities, as would the 25 year old and the 75 year old cohorts. Grouping and describing people abilities simply by age, for me, is restrictive and doesn't respect (and perhaps alienates) those whose interest and abilities fall beyond these parameters.

*Posted 2002April5*

***Submitted by Chris Loga , Volunteer Director - Christian City , Georgia***

I am a volunteer director in a large retirement community, I can safely say that seniors(elders, whatever) are a viable and enthusiastic resource for me and others here. There are significant differences in the types of service that they can provide, however, there are just as many ways to adapt those service opportunities. For instance, I recently had to figure out how to provide for a

volunteer with an oxygen tank! Take it from me, it is worth the effort to recruit and retain those volunteers over 65,75,85 and 95.

*Posted 2002April5*

***Submitted by Charlotte Smith Neyland, Volunteer Connection East, Colorado***

I'm also in my late 50's, on the brink of turning 60. My adopted family is of the Hopi People of Arizona, and among them, with my white hair, I am considered an elder and hold a place of respect and one who has wisdom. I think of myself in that way. I like being an elder, I don't like being a "senior". I'm still working, intend to do so for a number of years to come, and am challenged by your questions. Boulder County has several training and information programs for elders who wish to be employed. Many companies in this area hire elders. Our county has a tax program for elders to pay reduced property taxes. As a volunteer center, we work with many elders referring them to every imaginable volunteer opportunity. We also write for a local publication called Seniors Marketplace News, that publishes information and stories about and for elders.

*Posted 2002April5*

***Submitted by Carol, Canadian Blood Services, Calgary, Alberta, Canada***

Our volunteer program is rich with the "experience" of long-time, dedicated volunteers. Many of these volunteers have devoted their later lives to their volunteer role at our clinic in Calgary. They are our best ambassadors. Volunteer Canada's theme for NVW 2002 is "Experience Matters". This theme focuses on the fundamental exchange of volunteering; the giving and receiving of skills and experience. It speaks to both young people who are looking to further their career options and to older adults who have experience to share. In our experience, matching older volunteers with younger volunteers has been very successful, sometimes resulting in lasting friendships. In addition, our volunteer program provides many volunteers with a sense of community in their later years. Outside of their volunteer role they connect with each other, and support each other in times of need. Throughout the many changes in our organization of the past few years, the older volunteers have provided our blood donors with a sense of familiarity, security and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Carol Canadian Blood Services Calgary

*Posted 2002April5*

***Submitted by Deborah Stroup, Coordinator of Volunteers, Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, MO, USA***

My program has many volunteers in the 60-85 age group. One gentlemen of 84 works in our LBPH library cleaning and packaging playback machines, and does more in the 4 hours he is here than many of the young staff members! My 87-year-old father plants a huge garden every year, and gives most of it away - much of it to the 'old folks' in town. There is a 97-year-old in town who rides an ATV around now that he can't drive a car - he sometimes drives 25-30 miles at a time! However, Dad considers him 'old man \_\_\_\_', and takes care of him. He takes him meals sometimes, and a lot of produce from his garden, and sometimes he cooks for him. He sees that he gets medical care, if he is having a problem. Dad also looks out after many other people, many of them younger than himself. I am convinced that this is what keeps him young and vital. He isn't involved in any formal volunteer

activity, but certainly spends a lot of time volunteering. Therefore, I would concur with Susan that this age group has much to offer, and we should be finding ways to let them do so.

*Posted 2002April 5*

***Submitted by Bonnie Ebnet, Director, Arrowhead RSVP/Northland Volunteer Center, Minnesota, USA***

I manage an RSVP project and a volunteer center in Northeastern Minnesota and find it extraordinary that one would consider recruitment of the 55-65'ers the easy way out. It is a major challenge. Perhaps Minnesota is unique, but this age group is not coming forward to serve. They are too busy traveling and taking care of grandchildren and other family members. Of our 997 active RSVP volunteers last year, 37% were age 80 and better with 155 of those 85+! Less than 100 of our active volunteers are age 55-65. And we are not having to find sedentary volunteer service for our 80+ RSV's. They are the movers and shakers in our communities.

*Posted 2002April 5*

***Submitted by Wanda Steburg, Director ELdercare, Greene Co. Medical Ctr., Iowa***

The older 70,80,90 adults have so much more to give spiritually and experience wise! Our volunteer hospice-respite program in Iowa have folks who have been volunteering since 1989 in homes and doing volunteer hospice sitting/care and in our adult day care. Usually I draw, as volunteer co-ordinator, from people who have gone through the experience themselves. The younger "retired" or newly retired are great for doing transportation to radiation or chemo treatments in rural Iowa. Roads and weather are an issue here, and younger 50 to 60 year olds deal with problems of transportation very well and are so willing to help. We need to find their strong points and interests and tap into them. Usually the younger seniors have a 2nd career that limits their time available for volunteering, I just keep calling!

*Posted 2002April 5*

***Submitted by Megan Paull, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia***

Hello fellow "hot-topic"ers, Volunteering by "seniors" is an area in which I am currently doing some research for a PhD here in Western Australia. Managers and co-ordinators who participated in some earlier research of mine expressed concern about the volunteer whose performance is declining due to age or illness. Early in my research I encountered the idea of several cohorts of seniors - and the idea seemed to strike a chord with many. However, as I have delved further, there seems to be some reluctance to attach an age to the events which might lead to inability to participate, as there are also "younger" seniors for whom this is an issue as well. Perhaps instead of looking for groups about whom to generalise we might be better to look at the individual and offer the same sort of support and nurturing we offer all of our volunteers in times of need..??Certainly sharing ideas about the assistance offered to others to help them to volunteer is a valuable way of increasing the capacity of others to support their volunteers.. My research is in its infancy and I will be interested to see what others think on this "hot topic".

*Posted 2002April 4*

***Submitted by Rusty Groselle, Partner; SPM Assoc; Greeter; Lowe's, Ohio***

50? 60? even 70? as seniors? Heaven forbid...There is a delightful story in the April 2nd 2002 edition of the Columbus Dispatch about a young 101 year old lady who is tutoring a 9-yr old boy in a Columbus alternative school. According to the student, if his tutor says "it's important" - then it must be VERY important and he learns it! Reading today is his favorite pastime! Yes, she has transportation to her volunteer activity, but there's no moss growing anywhere near her! The key is providing accessible opportunities, with genuine interaction. We need the real - 80's? - seniors as volunteers. Those of us in our 60's+ are still working!

*Posted 2002April4*

***Submitted by Sallie Davies, Executive Director, Volunteering Western Australia, Western Australia, Australia***

Inclusiveness

Australian statistics tell us that there are more people of baby boomer age (born between 1946 and 1964) than any other generation. Their life styles, attitudes and available resources are impacting on community expectations. This is what separates them from the mainstream. This does not mean, however, that as individuals they are different to other groups of potential volunteers. People of all ages, from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and experiences, have their dreams, their visions and the will to serve the community. Recognition, guidance and support for corporate and employee volunteer programs, family and other group volunteering opportunities (long and short term), innovative initiatives for young and old and the in-betweens are made possible by providing a focus on the widest possible choices for the individual. The changing nature of volunteering deserves an inclusive approach which will provide the broadest possible understanding! and choices for all potential volunteers.

*Posted 2002April4*

***Submitted by Rachael Park, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau, Washington***

We have about 80 volunteers who are 80+ years old and we find their knowledge to be a great resource. As travel counselors at our visitor centers, we want people who know the area well and can relay that information to visitors. We find that this is an enjoyable job for many and doesn't require too much mobility, if that is a problem for some. I also think that the schools are a great place for intergenerational learning and companionship to take place. We, as a society, need to take advantage of the knowledge and experience that the "senior" population can give us (and the humor!) New words for the differing age population seem very appropriate; Some call themselves "seasoned". Some of my "senior" volunteers (55+) are more active than I have ever been! Thank you for bringing an important subject to everyone's attention. It has always driven me crazy too!

*Posted 2002April4*

***Submitted by Wendy Guest, Manager of Volunteers SC Health District, Saskatchewan, Canada***

We have a eighty-nine year old, still living at home, that wanted to learn how to surf the net so we sent in a Junior volunteer. Now that lady is emailing back and forth with our clients in the Long Term Care Facilities. They are able to help keep each other company. Never under estimate what these 80-90 year olds can do to help!

*Posted 2002April4*

**Submitted by Joan S. Hansen, Director, Retired & Senior Volunteer Program, Orange County, FL**

At the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program of Orange County, FL, we have an activities director who works with the frail elderly and those who no longer have transportation. Work from nonprofit organizations is taken to retirement communities, senior hi-rises, nursing homes and senior centers where the frail individuals work in small groups each week for several hours doing any type of work that can be taken out of an office, such as bulk-mailings, assembling, etc. By working in the small groups the volunteers provide emotional support to each other and they receive the rewards and gratification that come from being needed, wanted, productive members of their community.

*Posted 2002April4*

**Submitted by Carole D. Mandino, Ed.D., Director, Northern Arizona Regional Gerontology Institute, Flagstaff, AZ**

This topic brings up two questions. The first question has to be why did the Senior Corps lower the age for volunteering with the RSVP Program? The second question is how we can reach out to the mid- and older-old and help keep them active in the community? In answer to the first question, I believe CNS lowered the age for RSVP because the number of volunteers reported to Congress is still important, and to show these numbers as higher, the age was lowered. The second question will take more space than allowed, but other commentators have given very good ideas as to how to get these mid and older volunteers meaningful volunteer work.

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Susie Sparks, Manager, Leadership Calgary, Calgary, Alberta Canada**

YES!! Finally, a rational discussion about the So-Called-3rd-Age! If we lose this enormous cohort of people who are entering retirement -- young, healthy, wealthy, wise, skilled and energetic -- to the golf course, we as a society will be in dire straights. We NEED them! Let's engage them by their imaginations - and the excitement of building civil society for their grandchildren...

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Dee Martin, Director of Volunteer Services, New Hampshire**

Regarding seniors over 85 - If they don't drive, I bring work to them. Work that I don't need right away. Stamping, stuffing, folding, etc. If they don't drive, I contact another senior to pick them up to attend health fairs around the state. 99% of my health fair volunteers are seniors of all ages. They attend training and are available during the day which is when most health fairs are scheduled. I ask home bound seniors that crochet, knit, etc. to make something as a raffle prize for our next special event. At one time we had puppets, and home bound seniors were the ones that cleaned and restrung them each year. Seniors of all ages make great committee members. They can be mentors, teachers and facilitators.

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Lisa Salley, KFL&A Health Unit, Kingston, Ontario: Canada**

I think those individuals over the age of 70 have a great deal to offer. In my last job with VON Canada



I worked with a woman in a senior apartment complex. She was a leader in that complex. She originally helped us out with foot clinics but her eyesight declined to such an extent that she was no longer able to do that. One day her and I were discussing the issue of shredding and that there wasn't enough hours to do it in and no one wants to do it. She piped right up and said "I bet I could get people in here to do it if you brought the shredder." Well, I dropped off the shredder and enough shredding to keep someone busy for a week. Three days later she called me back and asked if I had more. She had organized rotating work crews to do the shredding. A group of three people at a time would get together to do it. This became a great social opportunity for them and a wonderful asset for us. By the time I left my position they were doing all my envelope stuffing and shredding. I would thank them each and every time. Their response; "It's wonderful to feel useful again and contribute to the community." A definite win-win situation.

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Gayle Holmes, Volunteer Coordinator, LTCOP, DE, USA**

I will be turning 50 next month and have already received my AARP card! While turning 50 isn't a bad thing -- it's kind of strange to be labeled a 'senior citizen' when I still have children in high school! I work with the 'real senior' population! My volunteers used to be in the 60-80 age range but I am seeing a trend of 50 year olds taking early retirement and volunteering.

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Nan Hart, Director - RSVP/Volunteer Center, Vermont**

RSVP works with mature adults age 55 and over and some of the 90 year olds are in better shape than the younger ones. I have learned to look beyond age and into the hearts and minds of volunteers. That is how we approach our clients. The types of service they are interested in is as varied as their ages. I agree that transportation is a huge issue in rural Vermont and if we could address that issue than many more adults would be out there serving and most importantly remaining actively engaged in living!

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Marilyn S. Hughes, Carter BloodCare, Bedford, Texas**

I have 25 young seniors who work for our organization one day per week. Their average day of 8 hours. Most of these folks have worked with us for at least five years. My oldest volunteer will celebrate his 81 birthday on April 26, the same day that I will celebrate my 66. We cannot have a birthday lunch together that day because he will be on a cruise. People ask me when I am going to retire and I tell them I will think about it when I am 70 if I can get a meaningful part time job. I just hope my young seniors stay with me for a long long time.

*Posted 2002April3*

**Submitted by Lynn Carroll, Volunteer Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy of PA, PA, USA**

My post is a bit of a wet blanket, sorry. For an agency whose mission includes outreach or assistance to older populations, then it makes sense to invest in targeting older volunteers, even if it means additional costs (transportation, staff time, etc.). For an agency with an unrelated mission (I'm with an

environmental nonprofit), it becomes an uncomfortable cost/benefit analysis. Should we spend time and money making an extra effort to involve older volunteers (or youth, minorities, or the physically challenged) if it means less funding available for our mission?

I know there are ancillary benefits that indirectly further the mission--donations from volunteers, press coverage that increases public awareness, that kind of thing. I also know that some strategies cost little or no time/money, and we do utilize those. But in some cases, we've had to make tough choices. This issue applies to many populations. We will probably discontinue our summer minority education program because the costs outweigh the benefits when examined in light of our mission. I'm disappointed, but with finite resources, these choices are unavoidable. I would be interested in hearing if any others struggle with these issues.

*Posted 2002April2*

***Submitted by Sonya Turner Thielmann, Volunteer Coordinator, Senior Services of Northern Kentucky, Kentucky***

One of our long-time volunteers just passed away at the age of 91. Six years ago he had been recently widowed, was depressed and isolated. We found a place for him riding with our transportation drivers as they take older adults to medical appointments. He knew the area very well and could help new drivers find their way. He also had a great sense of humor and helped cheer up the ill people on their way to the doctor or hospital. He was named the Kentucky Transit Authority volunteer of the year last year and his family chose to have him buried with his volunteer badge. At the funeral, they said that volunteering had kept their dad alive. Many of our volunteers are in their 70s and 80s, delivering meals in senior apartment complexes (no driving or steps) or helping answer phones or calling homebound elderly. We do need new terminology - these volunteers say they want to help "the old people"!

*Posted 2002April2*

***Submitted by Barbara K Brownlie, OASIS/Assistant Director, Tucson, AZ***

Aging/Senior/Older/Elder what does that mean? Our organization recognizes the abilities and skills of folks 50+ in the volunteer ranks. OASIS, Enriching the Lives of Mature Adults offers volunteer opportunities to folks ranging in age from 50-85+ by meaningful volunteer jobs. Each day at our Education Center volunteers use their skills or learn new skills to enrich our organization. We provide opportunities to build on old skills or training/education to learn new skills. We see our volunteers as part of a team that builds skills and self esteem and a community. Why not offer volunteer tasks to 50+ mature adults? In the job market they are obsolete-but in our OASIS organization, that was built on volunteers, we encourage them to take a risk and learn. Why not provide opportunities for seniors? They are our best resource-dependable and accountable.

*Posted 2002April2*

***Submitted by Lori Hoyer-Logan, Volunteer Coordinator Greater Lakes Mental healthcare, Lakewood, Washington, USA***

I believe that true seniors are and can be viable volunteers. Why not have homebound or bedbound

volunteers create a phone tree to help other seniors become less isolated. There is nothing better than to have someone call just to say "how are you today?" Many older folks have some difficulty in remembering when to take medications, having someone to phone in a reminder can be a life saver and a companion builder. Older adults can often correct papers for teachers at home and use e-mail to report the grades. What a great way to build intergenerational relationships. How about setting up one on one visits with younger person who want to learn to knit or crochet or even to tat. The possibilities are endless and the volunteers are growing.

*Posted 2002April2*

**Submitted by *Therese Caldwell, Volunteer Services Liaison, North Kitsap School District, WA, USA***

One of the nice things about schools is that there is a way for almost everyone to be involved! One of our schools has a fun programs that has attracted elders in their 80's and even 90's. During lunch, these wonderful folks come in and knit with our students. Together, they create blankets for charities. It's very good for both seniors and students, working together to help others. We have a number of people of all ages who come into the schools to read with children. This kind of program is very attractive to lots of potential volunteers - time commitment can be tailored to their schedules and it is such rewarding work. Volunteers can really see the difference they make in these childrens' lives! We haven't done things specifically to attract volunteers of any specific age group. At least one of our schools does have a loosely organized transportation plan to help get those who don't drive to the school to volunteer. We are also starting to work with a local nursing home. Recently, we took envelopes and materials there and they helped prepare a mailing for us. It went very well and we will be doing that again.

## Comments from Readers

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*Submitted on September 1st, 2017*

*Kathy Clevenger, Circulation/Volunteer Coordinator, Culpeper County Library, Culpeper, VA, USA*

We have a woman, Celine, that is 87 years old managing our used book store in our library. She started working as a cashier in the bookstore with her husband. After he passed, she wanted to become more involved. That is when she became manager, at the age of 82. Many changes were taking place, including the introduction of a new system to check book value with Amazon, called Neat-O-Scan. Celine took the system on herself and tested it for the company. Once we were using it, she went to the Public Library Association annual meeting along with our Director. There she demonstrated the usage of the system to conference goers. To this day, she puts in an average of about 60 hours or more per month, more than some of our part-timers. She has been known to say, "I can't believe it took me this long to find a career." She is always coming up with new ideas for the bookstore including special sales such as Christmas in July. When we renovated the library, she asked for a more permanent location for the bookstore, which at the time was working out of our small receiving room. Celine ordered many of the "parts" needed for the new location and set the bookstore up to

her vision of best usage of the space. We always say we don't know what we would do without her.

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*Submitted on September 1st, 2017*

*Susan J Ellis, Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, United States*

Wonderful example, Kathy! Thanks for sharing. And kudos to Celine. :-)

- Susan

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