

# **Keep the Channel Open**

**May 30, 2017**



*“They have the know-how, but do they have the know-why?”*

There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium. It will be lost, the world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is or how valuable, nor how it compares to other expressions. It is your business to **keep the channel open**. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep aware, open directly to the urges that activate you. **Keep the channel open.** Martha Graham

The last time I did any lengthy reflective writing was during a sabbatical I took in the summer of 2001 at age 50 when I worked as President/CEO of Morrison Child & Family Services. I had begun in that role in 1993 and I titled the seven essays "**Liberty Reflections**". You can find all these essays on my web site at **Bloom Anew.com**. Throughout those essays I shared some of my favorite quotes. I have included some additional ones in this essay.

I have always been partial to double meanings in phrases for instance one of my favorites one was a tag line for a program for an organization I ran in Connecticut from 1981 until coming out to Portland Oregon. It was the Center for Work and Family and the tag line was "**helping the family work**". This program housed our services for employers the largest one being employee assistance programs (EAPs) covering about 30,000 employees from various employers ranging from Pfizer, General Dynamics, Connecticut College to numerous banks and a couple of local newspapers.

Liberty is an obvious synonym for freedom from oppression. Liberty is also a term used in the military for a break or vacation from duty. The first essay was titled "**There is a War Going On**". Like the Korea "police action" not acknowledged at the time as a real war working in human services and social justice was not and is still not recognized very well by the broader public.

**"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."** Franklin Delano Roosevelt

I shared in the essay "**A View from the Front Lines**" my metaphor for what it was like to lead an organization that served over 5000 abused or neglected children a year. I felt like Colonel Potter on the show **MASH** with the kids and families coming to our sites as casualties and we were doing our best given limited resources and the volume of pain our staff and volunteers were experiencing doing this sacred work.

I also shared in that essay some of my personal background and how I came to do this work at that time. I also wrote an essay titled "**New Age of Life**" in which I posited that most boomers would be the first generation that would experience a new stage of life that would be an extension of middle age not of old age with additional healthy years from age 60 previously only had by a few outliers.

I also coined a new word in an essay titled "**Returnment vs Retirement**". It was stimulated by a quote by Albert Einstein. I maintained that this would be a significant moral challenge for the boomer cohort of whether we would work to leave the world better for future generations.

**"Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received."**

My definition for “**returnment**” was **the act of giving back or returning in some small way what the world has given you especially as an alternative to retirement.**

I came back to work from that sabbatical in October right after 9/11. Much has happened in the last 16 years and I have increasingly felt a need to go back and update how my work evolved especially using a **returnment** lens. I also want to share how I have invested more than 10,000 hours ala Malcolm Gladwell in this effort.

**Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.** Soren Kierkegaard

Before going forward from 2001 I want to go back and share some threads from my earlier life that now as I look back contributed to the development of this concept and my current work. My earliest memories were living on a farm in Iowa and experiencing **intergenerational** living, working and worshiping with grandparents, 6 uncles and aunts and 26 cousins. All but one family worked together, went to the same school and the same church.

My maternal grandfather who was born in the late 1800’s retired from farming at age 65 and moved to town. He went on to build 3 houses and other carpenter work. He kept engaged with his church and community right up to his death at 86.

I was frequently drawn to older adult conversations and I have felt for most of my life that I was born an old soul. This manifested for me in many ways not the least was the awareness of mortality and how it could be used as an effective tool to clarify at any given time what was important. I came across a passage later in graduate school in a book titled **A Separate Reality** that said “**Death is always close only sometimes we are more aware of it.**”

**Death twitches my ear;**

**'Live,' he says...**

**'I'm coming.'**

**Virgil**

My family moved to Connecticut in the middle of my junior year in high school in 1968. I was drawn to psychology and read **Erik Erikson’s Youth, Identity and Crisis** when it was published in 1969. It introduced me to possible adult stages after childhood. Since I wanted to study psychology I applied for early decision to one college Clark University. It was the only place that Sigmund Freud lectured in America. Pictures of Alfred Adler, Carl Jung and Freud fathers of

modern psychology were seen on campus. I later learned that the first President of Clark University was G. Stanley Hall who originated the concept and life stage of **adolescence**.

I was not interested in research and the debates between behavioral psychology and cognitive psychology but was very interested in the emergence of humanistic psychology which has evolved today into positive psychology. I continued to read Erikson's books and later discovered Daniel Levinson's book **Seasons of a Man's Life** published in 1978.

In the 80's while working in Connecticut before there was anything like executive coaching I did quite a bit of work one on one with leaders in the community. The individuals were primarily the heads of the organizations that engaged my organization for EAPs and when these individuals wanted service they would reach out to me. For the most part their issues were ones of transition. Do want to keep doing what I am doing? Do I want to relocate? Retire?

In 1989 I attended a month long Executive Management program at Yale University School of Management and I wrote a work plan that referred to this work as Executive Assistance. In 1993 when I was selected as President/CEO of Morrison Child & Family Services Morrison didn't provide EAPs and by that time you starting hearing the term executive coaching so I built into my employment contract the capacity to do work outside of my Morrison position.

*Bloom Anew*



Experience Making a Difference

Later I named it **Bloom Anew** and for more than 35 years have coached hundreds of individuals. The themes of transition, the desire for more balance and purpose have come up again and again. I discovered William Bridges along with many other authors and Bridges' book **Transitions** and Elizabeth Kubler- Ross's book **On Death and Dying** and both provided me more perspectives on aging and adult development.

As the 90's unfolded I increasingly became concerned about the workforce going forward for the nonprofit sector as private and public funding were not keeping up with the costs of providing the services. We were not doing well by our children and it felt and still does that we are **"eating our seed corn."**

As I was getting ready for my sabbatical for July 2001 **Marc Freedman** President of Civic Ventures (now called **Encore.org**) came to the City Club of Portland in May 2001 on his last stop for his national tour for his book titled **Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America**.

I recall going up to Marc afterwards and asking him whether he had come across any groups and organizations thinking how they might leverage more effectively this age group in nonprofit organizations. He answered no but he thought it presented an opportunity. That July I began my sabbatical and as part of that break wrote the essays I referenced earlier.

Now for some highlights in the last 16 years.

In 2001 Morrison was selected as one of the first investees of a new venture philanthropy group in Portland called **Social Venture Partners Portland**. They were individuals interested in using their time, talents and checkbooks in building and strengthening capacity in selected nonprofits.

I remember sharing at the kickoff at Wieden and Kennedy center court the Will Rogers quote **“Everyone is ignorant only on different subjects.”** Here was a group of accomplished professionals from a different sector who wanted to contribute and give back to the nonprofit sector and I wanted to emphasize that each of us should come to this new relationship with humility and that each party had something to offer and each needed to learn from each other.

It worked out well and it still does and is a clear example of returnment.

As I continued my coaching and reading it became clear that there were more resources in our communities for 18 to 24 years old to help them think about the challenges of what’s next in their lives than for folks 50 and over. Yes there were financial planners and tips on staying healthy for older individuals but next to nothing on why live longer and how do you navigate this new stage of life.

This led in 2002 to some conversations with Jesus "Jess" Carreon then President of Portland Community College (PCC) presidential assistant Neal Naigus, PCC Board member Harold Williams and Jim Harper who headed HR for Morrison at that time and me about creating a resource that would assist 50+ individuals on their next life stage.

I was concerned about facing a shrinking workforce and was thinking about how to recruit and use older adults to help invest in and staff programs. PCC was thinking about continuing education and workforce training for people over 50.

We invited in 2003 AARP, Hands On Greater Portland, Portland State University, NW Natural, Multnomah County Library and Oregon Public Broadcasting to join us. Later we added Express Personnel.

I was nominated to be the first chair of the steering committee which was made up of representatives from the above organizations. The local foundations liked the idea but discouraged us from forming a new nonprofit so we used PCC foundation as a fiscal agent.

At the same time Civic Ventures in San Francisco had received a grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to help pilot local resource models. Initially they were called Life Options Initiatives and we in Portland called ours that at first as well. Later it was discovered that name

was trademarked nationally and Civic Ventures changed their initiative to Next Chapter and indicated that local groups could use that title or create their own and we chose **Life by Design NW**.

In 2003 we received grants from the Oregon Community Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust and Collins Foundation to undertake a pilot project. The project included individual life assessments, retiree forums and focus groups. We researched life planning assessment tools, connected with Human Resource directors, and conducted a pilot of the Life by Design NW model.

Life by Design NW was built around three stages for its participants -- **Discover, Design and Engagement**. In Discovery, a participant explores his or her interests and values, finances and health to set the stage for planning. In Design, they use this information to develop a life plan and path. In Engagement, they identify resources for their plan such as connecting with educational institutions, new careers, and/or community organizations. At every step in the process, Life by Design NW would provide a variety of resources to help participants identify and reach their goals. We built a very robust web site around these principles.

In 2004 I was asked to give a keynote speech at a Cleveland Foundation kickoff of a Successful Aging Initiative to an audience of nonprofit leaders. I titled it "**Will we be ready when they come?**" My main message was that older adults would be coming for engagement with nonprofits in a far different way than before than just "writing checks or stuffing envelopes". Unfortunately the challenge for this sector is still formidable and even more challenging for the thousands of older adults who would like to use their time and expertise for purpose and meaningful engagement.

In 2004 I was able to attend a Harvard Executive Management program titled **Leadership for 21st Century (Chaos, Conflict, and Courage)**. When asked what project I wanted to work on I shared returnment and was encouraged by the instructor Marty Linsky to pursue it.

Also that year I met Paul Arfin from Long Island New York at a national aging conference in Chicago. He had just led a **Commission on Creative Retirement** in Suffolk County. He shared the report and I thought it was great idea and later it stimulated a similar effort that I will share later.

When I came back from my sabbatical in 2001 the Board asked me to sign a new five year employment contract that would go through 2007. In it I requested another sabbatical targeted for the summer of 2006.

**Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.** – Goethe

**The artist is nothing without the gift, but the gift is nothing without the work** -Emile Zola

## What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?

I continued to lead Morrison during this time and found that I was increasingly “playing defense” rather than serving more children. Morrison experienced some major disappointments that caused me significant discouragement. The headlines on some of these are:

1. Meyer Memorial Trust rejected a \$500,000 request on an early childhood best practices program **Incredible Years** pilot that the City of Portland Children’s Levy would match. Trustee’s feedback was that they didn’t think the Children’s Levy would continue!?!
2. Multnomah County stopped investing in Edgefield Children’s Campus. This unique partnership was started under former County Chair Bev Stein and after a change in leadership support was stopped. Later this property would be sold to the Reynold’s school district.
3. Multnomah County stopped investing funds in Morrison for a national recognized (Robert Wood Johnson) children’s assessment program that conducted mental, developmental, and physical health assessments on every child who came into foster care in the county. This had provided important baseline information that previously had not been there for Judges, social workers, therapists, teachers, health care providers let alone the foster families.
4. The State of Oregon Medicaid division did a small sample of records and claimed that Morrison owed over a \$1,000,000 back to the State for lack of documentation. We appealed and six months later we reduced that amount to less than \$65,000. Yet during all that time the staff energy expended to appeal did not help one more child.
5. Multnomah County moved from a capitation system of reimbursement for outpatient care to a fee for service model that especially hurt services for children and ultimately is now seen not as best practice.

I started thinking in the fall of 2005 what I would do with a 3 month break that coming summer and I thought that the Board may ask for another 5 year contract and as I reflected on the recent challenges since 2002 I didn’t think I could make another 5 year commitment and maybe not even commit to 3 more years. Why then was I staying?

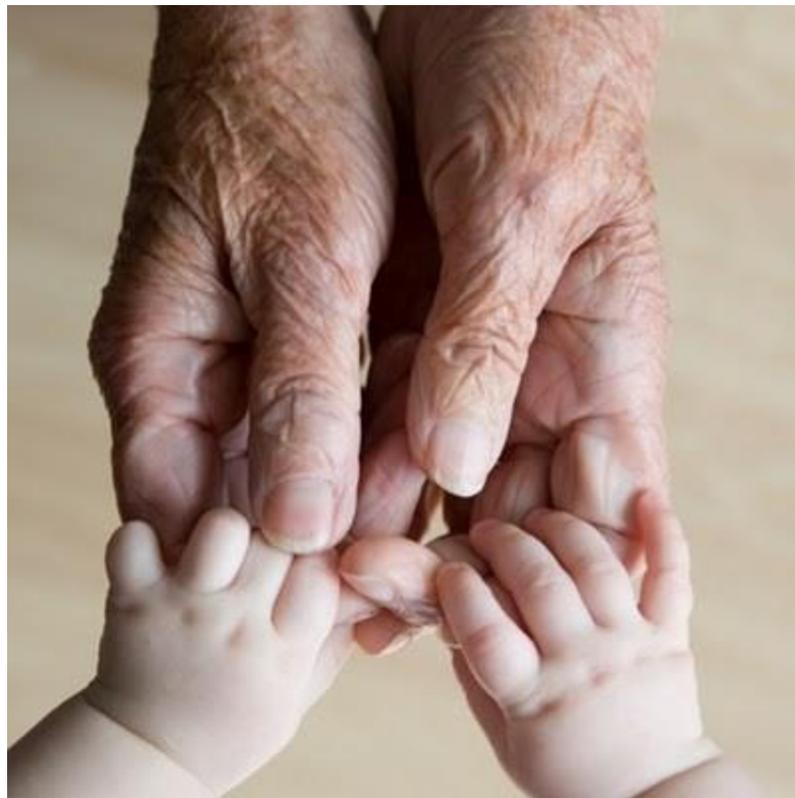
When people asked what I did for a living I had for a number of years said “I work on behalf of the community and Morrison pays my salary”. I became more uncomfortable with that

response and felt that Morrison needed a leader that would just focus on Morrison needs. So I begin to think that it was time to move on.

I was also serving on the **Elders in Action** Board and was beginning to get involved in Hope Meadows now known as **Bridge Meadows**.

Then at a **Children's First** December 2005 Board meeting the Executive Director gave each Board member a plaque with the saying **What would you begin if you could not fail?** This statement hit me hard and my answer was **the promotion of intergenerational interdependence and intergenerational equity**. This plaque is still on my desk today.

**A proper community...is a commonwealth: a place, a resource, an economy. It answers the needs, practical as well as social and spiritual, of its members —among them the need to need one another.** Wendell Berry



I reflected over the holidays and then informed my Board Chair that I didn't think I would take my proposed sabbatical in the summer of 2006 and that I thought it was time to plan for succession. He asked that I sit on it for a couple of more months and if I was in the same place

we would move forward. By the end of March we visited again and felt the same so we did begin the transition that had me leaving Morrison by October 2006.

At a reception at the Multnomah Club in October I titled my remarks, “**I am not retiring**”. (You can find the entirety of these remarks on my website.) One of my statements was

**“I believe in the next decade we need to seriously work on increasing intergenerational equity as well as new awareness and the need for intergenerational interdependence.”**

Looking back I didn’t realize it but I was beginning my own **encore career** at age 55 after serving as a leader of nonprofit organizations for over 30 years.

2006 was an important year for Life by Design NW as it applied for a three year grant from Atlantic Philanthropies. It was approved. I also got the opportunity of having dinner with **Dr. Bill Thomas** and he gave me a signed copy of his book **What are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World**. This book was especially inspiring and touched repeatedly on the themes of older adults as assets and the importance of recognizing the interdependence of the generations.

The World Health Organization (WHO) also invited cities worldwide to explore what an **Age Friendly** design might be. WHO recognized the population worldwide was getting older and that individuals were moving to cities at an accelerated pace.

Portland was the only US city to participate with 32 other international cities. This was facilitated by Portland State University’s Institute on Aging director **Dr. Margaret Neal**. I was asked to be on the initial advisory council where I still serve.

In May of that year **Ted Wheeler** was elected Multnomah Chair. Ted and I had worked together a few years back on the birthing of a nonprofit association that later became the **Nonprofit Association of Oregon (NAO)**.

Ted asked me over the summer what role if any might be a good fit with his new administration. I wasn’t interested in full time work at that time so I revisited Paul Arfin’s Long Island work and proposed to Ted that he create a **Task Force on Vital Aging** that would spend a year identifying and examining the best practices for engaging older adults in work and community engagement.

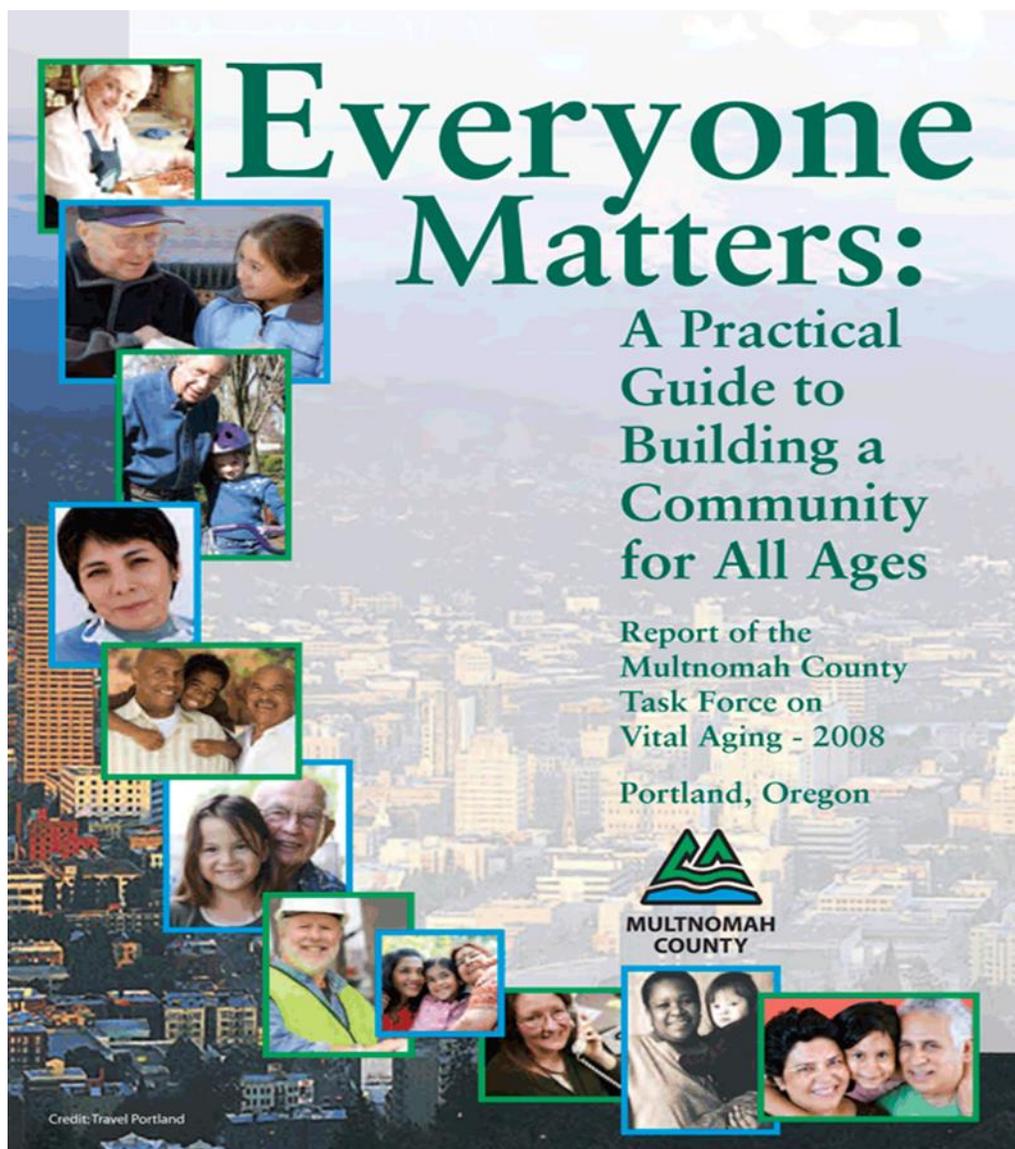
He asked for a specific proposal that I shared in December and after he took office the Commissioners voted in February to initiate this Task Force on Vital Aging co-chaired by County Commissioner **Maria Rojo de Steffey** and County Chair Ted Wheeler.

Concurrently with the Task Force work in 2007 I was asked to join the **Bridge Meadows** Board. I was a great fan of their new director Dr. **Derenda Schubert**. She had worked at Morrison as child psychologist and initially the fundraising case for Bridge Meadows was a children’s program benefiting foster children. I suggested that when the doors opened we would find all

3 generations living there would mutually benefit and that we should frame our case as an intergenerational program. This was adopted and they are growing and doing great work.

Also in 2007 I attended the first Positive Aging conference held at Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg Florida and had the pleasure to meet a number of folks who believed that older adults had much to offer the world. I met **Tim Carpenter** from Los Angeles for the first time from **EngAGE** and he is now expanding his work into other states including now Oregon.

In March 2008 the Task Force on Vital Aging produced a report that was titled “**Everyone Matters: Building a Community for All Ages**”. (This full report also can be found on my web site.) When we presented the results of the report we promised that we would come back a year later and assess what progress had occurred.



Shortly after the release of the report while I had been serving on the United Way of Columbia-Willamette board since 2003 and I had 1 more year before I termed out our President/CEO accepted a position in Kansas City and the Board Chair Roger Hinshaw asked whether I would step down from the Board and be the interim President/CEO while a national search occurred. I said yes and 10 months later a new CEO was selected.

In April 2009 we reconvened the Task Force and learned about some of the progress since the report was released. He heard that Portland General Electric had introduced a companywide **“knowledge transfer”** program to capture some of the informal knowledge that employees had before they retired or left the organization.

Oregon Community Foundation had successfully received a national five year grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to explore how older adults could engage in early childhood settings. The project was titled **Boomers and Babies**.

Multnomah County itself had created an internal affinity group titled **Vital Aging Initiative** to explore best practices for a multigenerational workforce.

Keren Brown Wilson had funded an **Aging Matters** initiative through Portland State University to help raise the awareness of the growing number of older adults and their potential value for our communities.

Also shared at that spring meeting was a project on the drawing board for kicking off in the fall of 2009 a community engagement project titled **“What are old people for?”** This was tabled and placed on the back burner when my wife Toni was offered a position with Veteran’s Affairs in **Honolulu Hawaii** and we moved there in late 2009. Ted Wheeler subsequently was appointed State Treasurer in 2010.

In 2010 I reacquainted myself with Hawaii. My first visit there had been in 1995 from an invitation from the Consuelo Alger Foundation to evaluate a community development project at Waianae on Oahu. This exposure to some of the difficult challenges Hawaii faced ruined Hawaii for me as a tourist place. I subsequently conducted accreditation visits there with 2 different human service organizations in 1999 and 2003 and I gathered further information on the many cultures there.

As I networked in Honolulu I shared my deep interests in children and older adults and made numerous relationships that are still present today. I had been a volunteer for AARP Oregon so I did the same for AARP Hawaii.

I met **Dr.Cullen Hayashida** a gerontologist who was working at the time at Kapiolani Community College and heading up the Kupuna Education Center. (Kupuna means elder in Hawaiian) We both believed in the asset vision for older adults and we became close colleagues that continues to this day.

He introduced me to the concept of **Ikigai**. It is a Japanese concept meaning "**a reason for being**". Everyone, according to the Japanese, has an ikigai. Finding it requires a deep and often lengthy search of self. Such a search is regarded as being very important, since it is believed that discovery of one's ikigai brings satisfaction and meaning to life.

We both worked on a paper that summer in 2010 for then gubernatorial candidate **Neil Abercrombie** titled **Building a State for All Ages**. Shortly thereafter using the same title I did a similar paper for Oregon and shared with then Governor **John Kitzhaber**.

Neil was elected and as part of his **New Day in Hawaii** policy platform incorporated much of our report in his section on older adults. That fall I secured a nine month contract with the State of Hawaii Department on Aging that introduced me to the neighbor islands work with older adults.

While in Hawaii in 2010 I got a call from Nancy Peterson from Civic Ventures now called **Encore.org** on the expansion of the **Encore Fellows** program piloted in Silicon Valley with Hewitt Packard. They were going to expand to Portland because Intel was considering adopting this program corporate wide. She asked who she should talk to in Portland who might be interested in championing the program locally. I suggested United Way, Hands On Greater Portland, Nonprofit Association of Oregon and Social Ventures Partners Portland (SVPP). After visiting each of them Nancy and Encore selected SVPP where it is housed today. I have been an advisor with this local effort ever since.

In early 2011 as my contract with the State of Hawaii was finishing up I was asked by the United Way of Columbia-Willamette in Portland to come back and serve as interim President/CEO a second time. So for the next 11 months I commuted between Hawaii and Portland.

That summer I was asked by then Portland State University (PSU) President Wim Wiewel to meet with Jonathan Fink who was heading Research and Strategic Partnerships at PSU and brief him on some of my thoughts on aging and opportunities for Portland.

**I always remember the regent's axiom: a leader, he said, is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind.** Nelson Mandela

Later in 2012 Jonathan brought in his colleague Erin Flynn and George Beard. I worked with latter two off and on for the next two years and we produced two papers. One in July 2013 titled **Portland and the New Longevity Rethinking Aging, Engagement and Equity a Prospectus for Public Policy and University Decision Makers** and in August 2014 **Re-Imagining University Place: Realizing the Potential of Intergenerational Living and Lifelong Learning on the Portland State University Campus**. These reports were shared with senior administration but other priorities were pursued. I still think the University Place location is ripe for this focus.

In the summer of 2012 my wife Toni and I moved back to Portland and I continued my work with Age Friendly Portland. Earlier that spring a successful mayoral debate was held with the three candidates for Mayor around their commitment to Age Friendly.

I also got introduced to a new group titled Seniors Advocating for Generational Equity (**SAGE**) when a couple of folks mentioned they were using a quote of mine on their web site. I have been a supporter of their work ever since.

In 2013 the **Action Plan for an Age Friendly Portland** was adopted in October by the Portland City Council. That winter in 2014 I volunteered to head up a community engagement subcommittee of the Age Friendly Advisory Council.

## Toward Age-friendly Communities

*"Many thought leaders now believe that the communities that fare best in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be those that both tackle the challenges and **embrace the positive possibilities** that an aging population creates."*

*- Grantmakers in Aging (2013)*



We decided to dust off the **What are old people for?** Project that was tabled back in 2009. We added the tag line **Building a Community for All Ages** and targeted a community kickoff event in September. The tag line again featured two meanings.

I reached out to Dr. Bill Thomas to see if he would commit to coming to Portland in September to kick off this year long project and he agreed. It also so happened he was planning a national book tour for his book **Second Wind** and Portland would be one of his stops in the spring of 2014. We had over 500 folks attend Dr Thomas's event at the Oregon Convention Center and he announced he would be back in the fall.

Concurrently **Multnomah County** voted to participate in the Age Friendly process and the City of Honolulu voted to become an Age Friendly City. I also worked with Cullen Hayashida to bring Eric Dishman from Intel to Honolulu for a series of events with the business, university and medical communities.

That spring Grantmakers in Aging (GIA) was hosted by PSU in Portland for a two day visit with their national Age Friendly pilot cities. I presented on a panel and interacted with a number of the attendees. I also testified before the Governor's Commission on Senior Services that year and began to work more closely with John Tapogna President of ECONorthwest. John and I had served on the Children First Board together back in 2005 and we had met off and on.

In July PSU's College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) selected a new Dean Stephen Percy. He reached out to me and he was very interested in my aging work and the Institute on Aging. He later asked me to meet periodically with Dr. Judith Ramaley former President of PSU who now was working with Dean Percy.

The kickoff in September of the community engagement **What are Old People For? Building a Community for All Ages** was a great success with Senator Ron Wyden, Mayor Charlie Hales, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler, Charles McGee and Dr Thomas participating along with many others.

The goals of the project were designed to stimulate an intergenerational dialogue, raise public awareness of the interconnectedness of the generations and demonstrate the value of older adults as a catalyst for change. A commitment was made at the event that we would come back a year later and share what had occurred.



In 2015 ECONorthwest and AARP sponsored a lunch with Deb Banda who spoke about the assets of the 50+ worker. Deb also spoke at a Portland Business Alliance breakfast about older adults as entrepreneurs and at a Portland Human Resources Management Association lunch.

Dr Bill Thomas came through Portland again that spring on an **Age of Disruption** tour. During this visit a private lunch was held at PSU with community leaders and hosted by Dean Percy.



In September 2015 AARP and ECONorthwest sponsored a **“Longevity Economy”** breakfast at NW Natural. Speakers included Jody Holtzman from AARP, Dr. George Brown Legacy Health Systems CEO, and Eric Dishman from Intel, Ted Wheeler State Treasurer, John Tapogna CEO ECONorthwest, and Karen Kervin VP for Community Relations for US Bank. Kerry Tymchuk was the MC. It was announced at the end of that event that ECONorthwest and PSU were committed to do a white paper in the next year that would be circulated to attendees and posted.

In late October the follow up event for **What are old people for? Building a Community for All Ages** was held at Warner Pacific College. Examples of intergenerational projects were shared by Hollywood Senior Center, SAGE, Oregon Gerontology Association and others. Dr. Janet Taylor was our keynote speaker was introduced by then State Treasurer Ted Wheeler and City Commission Nick Fish was the MC. She spoke about aging as an equity issue and challenge.



In early 2016 a Mayoral debate on Age Friendly Portland between Ted Wheeler and Jules Bailey was sponsored by AARP Oregon.

In July ECONorthwest and PSU CUPA completed a concept paper titled **Building a State for All Ages: Tapping the Potential of Older Oregonians** and held a lunch with community leaders where the paper was shared.

In September Mayor elect Ted Wheeler asked me to pull together up to fifteen individuals to dialogue with him about Age Friendly efforts. This meeting was deemed a success by all attendees and by Ted and a couple of his staff.

In early October I met **Dr. David Bangsberg** the new Dean of the combined OSHU/PSU School of Public Health. I shared with him that I thought there was opportunity for his new school to study this question among others. **Which individual and societal factors, policies and programs can we influence and invest in to facilitate optimal aging?** He appreciated our conversation and we have met a number of times since then.

In October ECONorthwest, AARP Oregon, Governor's Commission on Senior Services and PSU CUPA held a breakfast event at NW Natural with keynote speaker **Ashton Applewhite**. Also shared with the attendees was a companion paper to the earlier concept paper. It was titled **Building a State for All Ages: Six Steps to Get Started**.

Encore.org came to Portland in November and announced their national initiative **Generation to Generation**. Local coordinators are **Bridge Meadows** and **Metropolitan Family Services**.



As 2017 began I thought my work might slow down and my motto was **“Let things come to you.”** However after the holidays and two trips to Connecticut my engagement accelerated in February. It started with AARP Oregon inviting me to serve on their statewide Executive

Council. Then Mayor Ted Wheeler's State of the City remarks in which he shared a number of key points related to Age Friendly. They are as follows:

**"When I think of what we are building as a community I reflect on my dedication to building a community for all ages. Older adults are assets, and we must engage people of all ages socially, civically and economically.**

**Portland is already committed to becoming more Age Friendly. We are already making progress with partners like Portland State University, AARP, Elders in Action and others.**

**As mayor, I have a significant role to play, along with my colleagues on the City Council:**

**I am proposing that we commit the city to being a best practices employer model for a multigenerational workforce by exploring flexible workplace practices such as phased retirement, job sharing, knowledge transfer initiatives, and project-based or episodic work. It is worth noting that these flexible practices are popular both with our most experienced citizens and the millennial generation.**

**I believe we should use the "age-friendly" lens as an equity filter in developing and reviewing all city policies and practices. We need to think proactively about intergenerational issues as a deliberate part of everything we do.**

**We should work with Multnomah County, All Hands Raised and the City of Portland's Children's Levy recipient organizations to engage older adults in their work with children and families.**

**And we should strengthen business ties to the longevity economy by working with PDC, Portland Business Alliance, Greater Portland Inc., ECONorthwest, and others in developing concrete action steps to engage older adults in our economy as consumers, entrepreneurs and as an emerging workforce.**

**Finally, we must acknowledge that different groups of people experience aging differently with different challenges. We need to be aware that people of color, women, people with disabilities and people with lower incomes face different challenges in their golden years. We need to be deliberate in our age-friendly strategies to address that reality.**

**Mayor Eric Garcetti has declared that LA will be the most Age Friendly city in America. I give him credit – he's on to something very important. But I'll take that challenge. Portland has, and will continue to lead the nation as an Age Friendly City."**

His remarks and commitment were significant to say the least and time will tell how he and the City Council manifest this work.

Tim Carpenter asked me to serve on their new **EngAGE Oregon** Board. He also asked me to introduce him to a number of folks in Portland. Tim also shared his proposed EngAGE's project with Zidell Yards.

In April Tim Carpenter initiated a conversation with Dr. Bill Thomas, Marc Freedman, and Anne Basting, a recent MacArthur award recipient, from University of Wisconsin and Keren Brown Wilson about the potential of using Portland as a beta site for bringing their work together.

David Bangsberg volunteered me for an April planning meeting around whether **OHSU** leaders should pursue a **Healthy Aging Initiative** that might be located down at Zidell Yards.

Dr. Bill Thomas came to Portland again with his national Changing Aging tour on May 1<sup>st</sup> and ECONorthwest, AARP Oregon, PSU and EngAGE hosted a lunch that day with Dr Thomas that included a number of leaders from OHSU, Charlene Zidell, Multnomah County Commissioner Sharon Meieran and many others. Dr Thomas emphasized he considered Portland as a leader in the Age Friendly efforts and with intentionality could become a global leader.

Mayor Ted Wheeler closed the lunch by sharing that as part of his commitment to building an Age Friendly City in his first budget were funds for a two year project for an intergenerational program **Experience Corps** run by Metropolitan Family Services in four SUN schools (Schools United Neighborhoods). This initiative would focus on reaching out to culturally specific and culturally responsive older adults to be mentors for high risk 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to help them to better learn to read.

I met with Charlene and Jay Zidell in early May and proposed that they consider having Zidell Yards be the first **Age Friendly Innovation District** with potential of having other City of Portland developments such as Gateway and the old Post Office properties as other possible Age Friendly Innovation Districts. They may or may want to pursue this unique opportunity but I am confident they are considering it. Time will tell.

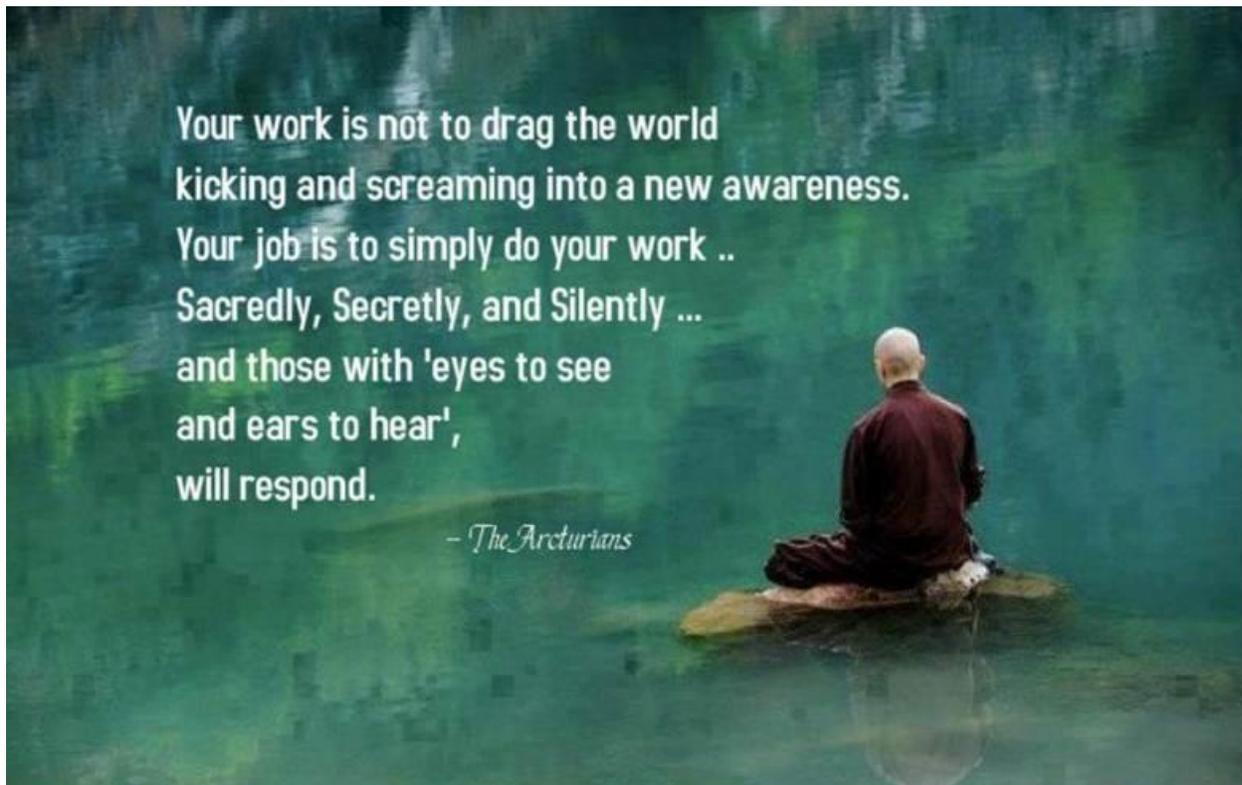
Clearly much has happened in the last 16 years. The above are just of the highlights of my **returnment** work. I didn't mention meaningful work with the Children's Trust Fund, Villages NW, Center for Innovative School Facilities, Wisdom of the Elders, Oregon Gerontology Association, and numerous individual conversations. Along the way I wrote a number of editorials both in Oregon and Hawaii and presented at various conferences and forums.

My late mother who died at age 90 used to occasionally ask me when I called her what I did all day. I would say I participate in a lot of meetings mother. She would then ask me do they pay you for any of those meetings. I would say some do and some don't!

I have been given much and so I expect much from myself. Now as a 65 year old grandfather of 5 and the blessings of a 45 year marriage I still try and do my best to **keep the channel open.**

**"The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his occupation and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether is working or playing. To him he's always doing both."** Zen Buddhist Text





**Work means application, explication, and expectation. There is almost no life human beings can construct for themselves where they are not wrestling with something difficult, something that takes a modicum of work. The only possibility seems to be the ability of human beings to choose good work. At its simplest, good work is work that makes sense, and that grants sense and meaning to the one who is doing it and to those affected by it.**

David Whyte

**No ray of sunlight is ever lost, but the grain which it awakes into existence needs time to grow; and it is not always granted to the sower to see the harvest. All work that is worth anything is done in faith.**

Albert Schweitzer