

Etcetera

This section aims to supplement the articles and other work published in this volume of *Sociology Between the Gaps*. Individuals, groups, and organizations all over the world are working to improve the lives of others in the communities in which they live and elsewhere. In the Etcetera section readers will find examples and brief descriptions of innovative communities, social activism, research findings, and books which will get them to think further about the theme of civil engagement of the future and ways to improve the diverse social, cultural, and ecological environments which humans share.

Arcosanti: An Innovative City Rises in the Desert

Arcosanti is a sustainable, experimental city envisioned by Italian-American architect Paolo Soleri who was trained by Frank Lloyd Wright. This city, located north of Phoenix, AZ, is a fascinating example of a livable community that exists in harmony with its environment while providing an opportunity for its residents to live and work with each other in a sustainable way.

Soleri realized that modern suburbs require both too much land to accommodate individual houses and costly transportation from the suburbs to the cities where people work, shop, etc., making the suburbs unsustainable for the long-term. Suburbs also isolate people by having them live far away from their places of employment and also from each other.

This architect envisioned a different type of living model, “arcology”: “architecture and ecology as one integral process” that would require far less land for dwellings, would be in sync with the environment, and would enable residents to live and work closely together. The Arcosanti community opened in the early 1970s as a prototype of Soleri’s vision of a sustainable city and an alternative to urban sprawl.

Living quarters in Arcosanti are interspersed throughout the community. All residents perform work in the community instead of paying rent. Work includes production of the famous Cosanti ceramic and bronze wind bells, gardening, working in the café, etc. Currently, there are only about 100 residents living in Arcosanti, much fewer than Soleri’s vision of

5,000. Residents must successfully complete a 5-week workshop program before being given the opportunity to live at Arcosanti.

To learn more about Paolo Soleri, arcology, and Arcosanti visit the following websites:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paolo_Soleri

<https://arcosanti.org/Arcology>

<https://arcosanti.org/>

<https://arcosanti.org/workshops>

Pictures: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskCEQJhu>

There is also a video about Arcosanti called, *The City of the Future Is Already Here*, from *The Atlantic* online magazine: <http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/502823/arcosanti-city-of-the-future/>

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This piece was written by Janice G. Schuster, Associate Professor and Commons Librarian for Research, Education, and Collections, at Providence College’s Phillips Memorial Library. Janice and her husband took a fascinating guided tour of Arcosanti in June, 2016.

Book Spotlight: *Poverty as My Teacher*

Poverty is a global, social problem not easily solved. However, in *Poverty as My Teacher: Learning to Create Sustainable Family Communities* (2014) Robert E. Miller, M. S. takes on the challenge of

creating a comprehensive plan to build Sustainable Family Communities (SFCs). His interest in creating Sustainable Family Communities (SFCs) began in Mexico in combination with his desire to find families for children orphaned by poverty and violence.

This book describes the birth of the initiative Leading the Way Out of Global Poverty® with Sustainable Family Communities® (SFC) which are designed with the economic and social/cultural factors necessary to be repeatable, scalable and sustainable.

This initiative can truly eradicate poverty beginning with one community; and with each new community contributing to the development of another community. With each new community contributing to yet another community the initiative continues to “scale.” Each new community is built with the infrastructure that addresses all the typical deficiencies found in poverty-stricken communities – ex. lack of clean water, sanitation, jobs, education, ... Historically, efforts to address poverty have taken on only one, possibly two such deficiencies. Many of these efforts are very often effective in alleviating one or two conditions of poverty - but poverty continues to define the overall living conditions of the community with ongoing deficiencies in education, jobs, housing, food sufficiency, and more.

The first piece of infrastructure built for each new community is an agriculturally based commercial business. This community owned business serves as the economic foundation for each community of residents. The commercial business serves as an economic engine for each community and as such establishes a path out of the extreme poverty of urban slums to a higher quality of life for the workers and residents. This economic engine creates new jobs, wages, training and benefits for over 100 workers within each community, by way of commercial scale production of organic food. For each community 100% of its annual profits are reinvested within the community to enable three critical sustaining practices:

1. Delivery of training opportunities for community residents - adults and children alike.
2. Maintaining and operating the poverty-free community so as to perpetuate living conditions where residents can live with dignity pride and a healthy sense of self-worth.
3. Replicating itself by funding the start-up of another

new community, every year with each new community creating an additional 100 jobs, housing, sanitation, clean water, educational opportunities, continuation of cultural practices and traditions, and so much more.

All of the above are designed to be accomplished without ongoing government subsidies and without ongoing donations from individuals, institutions or foundations.

Leveraging expertise of over 800 individuals, organizations and universities, the nonprofit Our Family Orphan Communities, Inc. (O.F.O.C.) has completed the design and framework for building, implementing and managing each Sustainable Family Community. Beyond the design and development of the Master Plan, the role of O.F.O.C. will be to provide a governance function that focuses on preserving the underlying values and objectives that make up the design of SFC. O.F.O.C. will guide and assist in the implementation, operation and expansion of SFC's and ensure that each community remains poverty free with a sustainable economy, environment and food-supply for generations to come. All benefits of the network of Communities expanding within a country accrue to the people, economy and society of the country.

Successful SFCs can be built in any host country under the conditions Miller identifies. The end goal of SFCs is to replace poverty with prosperity in the long run. On page 15 of the Introduction to his book, Miller states that his objective in writing it is “to share a way to consciously create entire new communities without poverty that endure for generations.” The key words are the last three words—endure for generations.

Miller poses the essential question: “How can people from urban slums be helped to create their own islands of prosperity in spite of what turmoil may be happening in their society?” (p. 49). He learned about what works and what does not from research and from his personal observations of failed projects of varying sizes. He discusses some of these projects and identifies the unanticipated consequences they had. As he points out, none of these projects was successful in eliminating poverty in the long run.

This book offers a detailed blueprint for creating successful Sustainable Family Communities in any host country. His model is comprehensive, specific, and practical. A very important and special benefit to all is a reduction of the number of orphans - as poverty is the

primary cause of children ending up in orphanages.

For additional insights into the Sustainable Family Communities initiative, the reader is encouraged to examine *Poverty as my Teacher: Learning to Create Sustainable Family Communities*, by Robert E. Miller. Available through Amazon in paperback and as a Kindle e-book.

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This piece was submitted by Michael Lanier, Founder & Chief Executive, Business Integration Advisors, LLC, 25587 Conifer Road, Suite 510/415, Conifer, CO 80433, Phone: 303-809-0048. Lanier is a member of the Board of SFC and has been involved with the O. F. O. C. initiative for about five years.

Treehouse Easthampton

Treehouse Easthampton, in western Massachusetts, is an innovative, planned community founded by Judy Cockerton to help solve the problem of children in western Massachusetts aging out of foster care without being adopted. Children who age out of foster care without a family in place are at higher risk for becoming homeless, being incarcerated, living in poverty, and suicide. At the core of the Treehouse community are adoptive families, kids, and senior citizens who provide foster care, or in some other way, support the positive milestones of children from the public foster care system.

Cockerton has gone on to do much more than link former foster kids with loving individuals. For example, she has added a program to help siblings separated in foster care to reconnect (*Sibling Connections*) and another to improve these kids' opportunities for an education (*Birdsong Farm*) and improved future life chances.

To learn more about Judy Cockerton and Treehouse Foundation, see the following:

Shelley Emling. 2013. "Judy Cockerton, Former Toy Store Owner, Reinvisions Foster Care Across America." *The Huffington Post*. (March 8).

Diane Lederman. 2012. "Treehouse Founder Judy Cockerton Receives AARP \$100,000 Purpose Prize." (December 5). http://www.masslive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/06/easthamptons_treehouse_foundat.html

MassHousing. 2015. "Innovative, Multi-Generational Housing for Seniors and Families Adopting Children from Foster Care in Easthampton Completed and Occupied." (March 9). www.masshousing.com

Piano's Courtyard

Architect Renzo Piano's solution for suburban sprawl in a Milan, Italy suburb of 6,000 people is the creation of a new courtyard where people can gather for as variety of communal activities including watching movies, community gardening, and participating in multi-ethnic family-style dinners. The courtyard is a place where people of different backgrounds and ages can get together to share and to learn. For example, immigrant parents and their children can get lessons in speaking Italian from a woman who teaches at 4:00 PM everyday in the courtyard. Piano states: "When you have people coming together, problems of diversity disappear and instead diversity becomes a great opportunity of exchange."

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Source: "Renzo Piano Reimagines the Suburbs." June, 2016. *The Future of Everything, A Look Ahead from The Wall Street Journal*: p. 96.

Hollwich on New Aging

The name of German-born architect, Matthias Hollwich, has become associated with the terms "new aging," Geropolis (defined as "the new old city which consists of a dense complex of sleek, angular units designed for multi-generational living"), and BOOM (the concept of liveable communities he has planned for LGBT retirees in various cities and countries).

Through UPenn, Hollwich secured a grant which enabled him to study aging and architecture in an innovative, re-imagined way. For this architect, age 60 is the "new 40." His innovative designs for liveable communities invite both gay and straight people over 40 to "take charge of their lives and live the latter part of their lives" in a beautiful, safe, vibrant fashion." His work has started a movement which challenges stereotypes and current living options for retirees and shows us ways to live smarter and better in a new-age social context. Hollwich's notion of treating aging like

starting a company is very compelling.

See *NEW AGING: Live Smarter Now to Live Better Forever* (Penguin Books Original; March 29, 2016; ISBN: 9780143128106; \$17.00) with Jennifer Krichels and illustrations by Robert Samuel Hanson of Bruce Mau Designs. <http://hwkn.com/projects/new-aging/> and in the following sources:

Lisa Selin Davis. (2016). "Planning the Future of Retirement." *AARP Bulletin* (March): 36-38.

Tim Halbur. (2011). "Designing a Retirement Community for LGBT Seniors." <http://www.planetizen.com/node/52868>

Jenn Kennedy. (2011, 2016). "Matthias Hollwich's BOOM: A Gay Architect's Forthcoming Oasis for LGBT Retirees." *The Huffington Post*. (12/05/11; updated 2/02/16). http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jenn-kennedy/matthias-hollwich-boom-lgbt-retirement_b_1119541.html

<http://seniorplanet.org/meet-the-new-old-age-matthias-hollwichs-contrary-vision/>

Longoria on Affordable Housing

Along with the many other social causes she supports through the Longoria Foundation, Actress Eva Longoria has gotten involved in advocating for affordable housing for blue-collar workers in the Latino community. The actress recently became an investor in a Turner Impact Housing Fund whose objective is "to preserve blue-collar apartment units across the country to ease an affordability crisis that has hit minority communities especially hard." Longoria is well aware that paying high rents make it impossible for blue-collar workers to afford the necessities of daily life like health care, nutritious food and education for themselves and their children.

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Source: Andrew Khouri. 2016. "Dash of Hollywood Gritz for Blue-Collar Crisis." *The Providence Journal* (June 5).

Safe Homes for Older Residents

For people thinking about retiring in the near future and wondering if they can remain in their current

home, Glenn Ruffenach (2016) identifies resources that can help them make those decisions in an informed way. These resources include:

1) a study from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University. "Housing America's Older Adults: Meeting the Needs of an Aging Population." (Go to jchs.harvard.edu and highlight "Research" to find this study's results.)

This study focuses on five important features that make homes accessible and safe for older residents: single-floor living; entries with no steps; hallways and doors that are extra wide; outlets and switches that are able to be reached at any height; and lever-style door and faucet handles. The majority (almost 90%) of homes have at least one of these features already. However, less than six in 10 existing homes have more than one of these features.

2) a reference to an Aging-in Place Remodeling Checklist from the National Association of Home Builders. (Go to nahb.org and search for aging in place.); and

3) a reference to an AARP checklist of more than 100 suggestions to help older homeowners "age in place" in an environment that is both safe and comfortable. The AARP also has a free detailed "Home Fit Guide" which contains diagrams explaining how to create a 'lifelong home' suitable for occupants of any age and physical condition. (Go to aarp.org and search for HomeFit.)

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Source: Glenn Ruffenach. "Ask Encore." 2016. "What Features a Home Needs So That You Can 'Age in Place.'" (June 6), R4. *The Wall Street Journal*.

Boston's NPR News Station Hosts Program on Designing Communities for Aging Americans

On 8/2/16, WBUR (90.9), Boston's NPR News Station, hosted an "On Point" program entitled, **Designing Communities For An Aging America**. The program was hosted by **Sacha Pfeiffer**. Guests included:

Paul Irving, chairman of the Center for the Future of Aging at the Milken Institute. Distinguished scholar in residence at the University of Southern California's Davis School of Gerontology. Author of *The Upside*

of Aging: How Long Life is Changing the World Of Health, Work, Innovation, Policy and Purpose.

Ruth Finkelstein, professor of health policy and management at the Columbia University Aging Center. Former director of the Age-Friendly New York City Initiative; and

Kathryn Lawler, director of the Aging and Health Resources Division and director of the Area Agency on Aging in Atlanta.

A reading list citing several popular sources on the theme is also provided on WBUR's website. Interested readers are directed to: <http://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2016/08/02/senior-living-urban-design>. To stream the full episode (46 mins.) click on the red play button next to the episode title. Click on the download icon to save the file to your local machine.

The Oldest Social Housing Project in the World: Fuggerei, Augsburg, Germany

Germany has always been known as a very progressive country for social welfare. Currently, Germany has over one million migrants and immigrants seeking asylum within its borders from the various war-torn countries in the Middle East. These refugees need to be housed, educated in the German language, provided with jobs and training. Many challenges lay before contemporary Germany regarding how all these objectives will be accomplished in the coming years. A large part of the challenge will be to convince ordinary German citizens to accept these newcomers into their communities and into their lives on a primary-group level. True assimilation is the only way the challenges presented by diversity can succeed. During the process, the perceived costs of change will be experienced on many levels-- financial, social, cultural, and religious.

Long before the modern Bundesrepublik was created, the country already had social welfare housing. For example, in 1520, Augsburg, part of the principality of Bavaria in the Holy Roman Empire, had a unique housing arrangement, called the Fuggerei. The Fuggerei is a separate medieval community within Augsburg with gates, which are still opened and closed every day. This oldest social settlement in the world was created by Jakob Fugger the Rich. Jakob was a very wealthy merchant and owner of mines and weaving concerns

with little wants of his own. He created the Fuggerei for his impoverished servants and fellow Augsburg citizens. The Fuggerei still exists today, despite being heavily damaged by the bombing of Augsburg during the Second World War. The community was rebuilt after the war.

The Fuggerei has 52 houses along with a Catholic church and several town squares. Each house has a separate entrance to small apartments with the ground level apartment serving as a museum. Currently, there are city tours through the settlement for a nominal fee. Each tenant of these apartments pays .88 euro (about \$1.00 U. S. dollar) rent each month and must be of the Catholic faith and say the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and the Nicene Creed every day.

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This entry was submitted by Helmut E. Reinhardt, author of an article on Eutingen, Pforzheim, Germany which appears in this volume. His cousin by marriage, Nadine Kaelber, born in Bavaria Germany, sent him the website, I Like Germany, where the Fuggerei was described. To read more about the medieval community of Fuggerei and see pictures, go to the original source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuggerei>
To learn more about the Fugger family, go to: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugger>.

Serenbe, a Series of Planned "New Urbanist" Communities in Chattahoochee, GA

Serenbe is a "new urbanist" concept, developed and co-founded by retired restaurateur, Steve Nygren, who retired early, downsized from his large urban home to live on a farm on the outskirts of Atlanta. He decided to open a Bed & Breakfast, and was motivated by a closer connection to nature. In the mid- 1990s, Nygren said that this change in lifestyle was a transformative experience for him. When the opportunity to buy a 1,000 acre tract of undeveloped land from multiple owners outside of Atlanta, GA came to his attention, he jumped at the chance to build not one but several planned sustainable, "soulful" communities where residents could "age in place gracefully." His plan was to protect the distinctive character of the surrounding area and to build communities around the village or hamlet concept.

Before he could do that, however, changes in zoning

laws were required to allow Nygren to build a clustered community of houses and commercial buildings on smaller-than-usual sized lots. The zoning changes allowed for roads to be consolidated and 70% of the surrounding land to be preserved as farms, fields, and woods.

Currently, Serenbe (a name coined by Nygren's wife, Marie, to reflect a combination of "serenity" and "being") has two themed hamlets, *Selbourne* and *Grange*. Each village in Serenbe has a walkable community center and the following special features: Village 1: *Selbourne*, a arts-focused community of 265 residents, has a downtown centered by an outdoor Serenbe Playhouse with art galleries and concerts. Village 2: *Grange*, a healthy food focused community, has a 25-acre organic farm, a farmer's market, a "locavore" restaurant, and coffeehouses. The third village, *Mado*, which is in the process of being constructed, is planned around the theme of health and wellness. When Mado is completed, it will have 380 housing units, including townhouses, cottages, larger homes, and around 50 loft-style rental apartments which, Nygren hopes, will appeal to millennials. Unlike Selbourne and Grange, Mado is being planned as a multi-generational community which will have a range of amenities designed for residents of all ages. For example, Mado's planned amenities include a Montessori School for children from ages 3-14 years, a community pool and fitness center, and opportunities for yoga and Pilates classes.

Houses and townhouses in all three villages will have features geared to easy living for older residents, such as wider doors, staircases, and halls; no step entrances into single floor homes; and multiple-height work stations in kitchens. Homes are clustered together along with commercial buildings with no backyards and closer than standard zoning allowances with consolidated roads to prevent sprawl. Thus, preserving land for green space, farms, woods, and parks.

Submitters' Commentary: The concept of sustainable communities is an exciting one and the models which Nygren has conceived so far are compelling beginnings that may be tweaked and enhanced over time through trial and error to fit the needs and finances of community members. These communities may also be replicated in other parts of the U.S. where very large tracts of woods and farmland are available to developers. Bluestein (2016) asks the key question: "Is This Sustainable Village The Future Of Retirement?" The answer is a qualified yes

-- for some people. As Mr. Bluestein states, currently, houses in Serenbe are priced from \$300,000 to over \$1,000,000. This price range means that residences in this "new urbanist" community are affordable only to purchasers who are financially very secure. To attract working - and lower middle-class senior citizens and other-generation residents, houses would have to be affordable as well as attractive to buyers. Perhaps Mr. Nygren and other developers will be encouraged to expand the concept of sustainable communities to include homes starting at \$200,000 which lower-income people can afford to purchase through state and federal (HUD) grants and/or loans. In Mado, there may also be opportunities to build rental units which would appeal to millennials. But the same issue, affordability, applies to rental units also.

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Submitted by Helmut E. Reinhardt and Josephine A. Ruggiero. This submission is based, in part, on the article by Adam Bluestein. 2016. (August 31). "Is This Sustainable Village The Future Of Retirement?" <https://www.fastcoexist.com/3063268/is-this-sustainable-village-the-future-of-retirement>

A Generation Gives Back

The October 2016 *AARP Bulletin* article on volunteerism is particularly personal to me. Throughout my youth and adult life, I have been fortunate to volunteer for many causes. Regardless of where I volunteered -- for churches, hospitals, schools, or elsewhere in the community, I was always motivated by the idea of "paying it forward". As part of the AARP family of volunteers, I am involved in its advocacy program at the Rhode Island State House, its Driver Safety Program, and its Fraud Watch program. In his article "A Generation Gives Back", Paul Taylor (October, 2016 *AARP Bulletin*: 40-43) talks about many of the ways in which older volunteers, today's *Boomers*, can "pay it forward" by volunteering in ways that connect them with America's youth, today's *Millennials*.

Among the notable programs that Taylor (2016) discusses is Marc Freedman's national non-profit group, Encore.org. Encore.org plans to start a new program called "Generation to Generation". This program will place older Americans in youth-serving organizations across the country. These senior volunteers will be either

part-timers or will receive a small stipend. Seniors will be helping and mentoring young people in a variety of ways.

The generation-to-generation concept is not new. In the 1990's, Freedman and the late John W. Gardner, a civil activist, started "AARP Experience Corps", a volunteer program for seniors to tutor at-risk inner city public school students. Today, AARP Experience Corps thrives along with many other "inter-generational" programs. "Jump Start" is another example. This program engages college students who receive a small stipend to work as teacher's aides in preschools in disadvantaged areas. Jump Start is now recruiting older people, notably retired seniors. The oldest of these generation-to-generation programs, "Foster Grandparents", was created 50 years ago by US government's Senior Corps program. "Foster Grandparents" pairs senior citizens with at-risk children in schools, hospitals and juvenile detention centers.

Volunteer programs are also helping children overseas. For example, Floyd and Kathy Hammer of Union, Iowa came out of retirement in 2003, to start up an outreach mission in Tanzania (East Africa). Their objective was to help children dying of malnutrition. Kathy bartered for 12,000 baskets and sold them for money to build a school. And Kathy and Floyd **did** build that school. The Iowan couple went on to found "The Outreach Program", which for the past 12 years has established pediatric medical missions and children's centers in Tanzania. This program has also distributed 350 million free meals to children in more than 15 countries. In October, 2016, the AARP Foundation held a "meal-packaging" event on the National Mall in Washington, DC using the ingredients provided by the "Outreach Program". 1.5 Million meals were prepared at that event alone.

"Inter-generational" programs have been started around food, mentoring and other initiatives. Regarding the latter, the Rev. Belle Mickelson founded a traveling music program for children in remote Alaskan villages. Jamal Joseph, a former Black Panther, created a theater program for youth in Harlem in New York. He founded the IMPACT Repertory Theater which teaches youth leadership skills and the creative arts.

Unfortunately, volunteerism is on the decline in the U.S., due both to the scaling back of public investment in the younger generations and to the decline of affiliation with religious and service organizations. However, a large segment of the public is optimistic about

intergenerational relations. In a nationwide survey conducted for Encore.org, two thirds of Americans say "that as long as Americans remember that we all have obligations to each other and to future generations, the growing diversity of the population will be a source of national strength" (Taylor 2016: 43). Activists hope that this source of national strength can turn into a national movement and a "antidote to the divisiveness of modern politics". As Doris Williams, 68, a teacher's aide in the Jumpstart program in Los Angeles, said, "You are giving them something for a lifetime...planting a seed that can go on forever. And they are giving you a reason to get up and go in the morning" (Taylor 2016: 43).

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This synopsis of Paul Taylor's article, "A Generation Gives Back", (*AARP Bulletin*, October 2016: 40-43), was written by Helmut E. Reinhardt, who is a veteran of five decades as a volunteer.

AARP and a Life Reimagined

Over the past two decades, AARP's mission has expanded to serve Americans 50 years of age and older. No longer an association of retired people, the organization is positioned to help create a better path to aging. It's no longer about "helping old people" as it is empowering people to make the most of their lives as they age and to discover, as AARP says, life's "real possibilities." Doing that requires some re-thinking about how we perceive age.

How old is "old?" What constitutes being "middle-aged?" AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins (2016) points out that a generation ago someone who was in his or her early 40s was considered by most people to be middle-aged, but you won't find many who think that now. Surveys conducted over the last couple of years shows a majority of people now believe middle age starts around 55.

Jenkins (2016) has launched a conversation intended to transcend the old cliché that "You're As Young As You Feel." True as it may sound, the adage fails to address the changes we're experiencing. She recently challenged folks in their 50s and 60s to think about it. "How do you compare to your parents when they were your age, or your grandparents? While some similarities are a given, for lots of us the contrasts are fairly stark."

And yet, Jenkins (2016) writes, “It’s odd that so many negative attitudes about people over a certain age, whether directed from the outside or, worse, self-inflicted, are alive and well.” Ageism has not gone away. But attitudes will change partly as a result of sheer numbers. U.S. Census Bureau Statistics show 10,000 people in the U.S. turn 65 every day and that will continue to happen — every day — for the next 14 years.

Jenkins (2016) says society has some catching up to do. “We need to dispel negative beliefs around and about aging even quicker than might normally happen — not because our world needs more political correctness, but because there’s a growing body of evidence that ageism has quantifiable negative health effects on aging people, in addition to distracting them from more vital considerations. In the abstract, a long life is a fine thing, but this demographic shift brings with it new questions to ponder (and act on). If you’ve got another 35-40 years, how can you make them all you want them to be and what do you need to do to make it a reality?”

Jenkins (2016) is leading the charge around a movement she says will lead to changes that will benefit everyone. She calls it “Disrupt Aging,” and it is the title of her new book. “Disrupt Aging is about engaging on the big questions — around health, wealth and self — and, overall, living the best future you can. As with so many things in life, either you choose a path for yourself, or circumstances conspire to choose one for you.”

Disrupt Aging begins, she says, with “owning” one’s age. Why, she asks, do we spout platitudes such as “age is only a number” or “you’re as young as you feel” only when talking about people in their late 50s, 60s, 70s or older? Isn’t life also often what you make of it in your 20s, 30s and 40s?

So, Disrupt Aging is not about denying aging, or defying aging, it’s about owning your age — and embracing the opportunities to live your best life at every age. Some adaptations we choose. Some are thrust upon us, often painfully. What’s new is that many life changes come at people who, in the new world order, realize they have a lot of living left to do. And they need to take control -- whether it is the loss of a job, the death of a spouse or reaching that point when it feels right to pursue a life-long dream. Age need no longer restrict choices or otherwise determine one’s fate.

With this new attitude in mind, AARP created Life Reimagined. This interactive program/workshop,

offered by trained AARP “guides,” provides participants with an opportunity to assess where they are in their lives, and provides a framework that stimulates their thinking about what could be next. In about 90 minutes, this workshop helps millions of Americans explore, dream and plan for what’s next in life. The Life Reimagined workshop provides a place where people can go to discover what is meaningful to them, navigate life’s crossroads and find new possibilities in life.

The Life Reimagined workshop provides a personalized approach to help people facing a multitude of issues create actionable and meaningful game plans for navigating through. Life Reimagined was created by its own Thought Leadership Institute and a coalition of experts – including Richard Leider and other prominent visionaries across a range of relevant fields ranging from personal development, to aging, finances and relationships. Life Reimagined is able to connect to users via multiple touch points, including an interactive portal (www.lifereimagined.org) with step-by-step online resources for different situations. At the local level, small-group sessions (8-20 participants) called Life Reimagined Check Ups, keep people constantly inspired along their path.

In a 2014 *Huffington Post* Blog, career consultant John Tarnoff assessed what AARP calls Life Reimagined’s “online/offline” dynamic. “The website provides ideas and tools from a wide range of sources, hence the wide variety of thought leaders working with the Life Reimagined Institute,” he wrote. “Each side of the project feeds the other, with the power of digital and social media helping to feed user experiences and opinions back to the thought leaders - and vice versa. But what goes on with the website...will only work if the learning and its application can be translated into action and relationships built in the real world (offline) community. That is the area where (AARP) feels the project will be most influential and provide the most value - and where the organization is reaching out by creating local events to bring people together to engage with these ideas.

“AARP has always been focused on the concept of transition — traditionally in the transition from work to retirement,” Tarnoff added (2014). “Life Reimagined is extending this core competency to the new transition that many Boomers are experiencing in mid-life.”

Online, work and career guidance ranges from *Get an*

Edge in Your Job Search, Improve Your Networking Skills to Prep for a Career Change and Becoming a Freelancer.

The Web site also provides paths to better health & wellbeing under sections such as, *Find Balance, Change Your Eating Habits, Eat Well to Live Well and Improve Your Memory. Relationship guidance includes Set Goals with Your Young Adults and Reawaken Desire.*

The free (and confidential) Check-ups, facilitated by certified volunteers, offer those taking part a fresh, personalized, authentic and thought provoking approach that helps them navigate the next phase of their lives and allows them to share that experience with others who may be dealing with similar issues and experiences.

A workbook creates a means to identify where individuals find themselves on their “life cycle” and to specify goals. A graphic roadmap highlights milestones and checkpoints designed to keep people moving forward, rather than remain stuck in one mode. Group discussions are open, with the caveat that “What happens in a Check Up stays in a Check Up.” The take-home workbooks provide space to record progress and write down next steps. “In this process, we have found that attendees are inspired by one another, as together they reimagine their lives in extraordinary ways,” said AARP-RI State President Alan Neville. “We have been delighted by the positive comments we have received from Life Reimagined participants.”

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Interested readers can learn more about Life Reimagined in Rhode Island at <http://www.aarp.org/RILife>.

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