

Lester and his Violin

Isn't it wonderful that we now have about four generations working together in the current national workforce? About 6.4% of Americans 75 or older, slightly more than 1 million were working last year, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Also, almost 3.4% of Americans 80 or older, are still in the workforce whether paid or on volunteer status. What keeps these folks working with the 'young on the inside' view point?

Many communities centers report work with folks like this and reveal:

- Getting past 75 took a considerable amount of stress management. When these folks found they were not coping well with life's situations, they were proactive in seeking professional help.
- They have a sense of curiosity, about many things. They use libraries, available community services, national support units, volunteer organizations; and now, Internet groups to keep them informed of all technological and medical advancements.
- When illness occurs, they recruited competent help. They have demonstrated that they will learn how to self administrator medications and injections so that they maintain their independence. Many had a true awareness of how to maintain their health and physical vigor.
- They maintain a social network that spans more than their birth generation; and outside of direct family members. This keeps them involved in current human issues, social needs, and what could be future requirements such as, global warming. Many have said they use strengths from the past to help solve neighborhood dilemmas, much less their own problems.
- Most importantly, they are not afraid of outside scrutiny. They are unafraid to take the lead on a public project just because they have some arthritis. The older worker may have a different style of working, but brings a wealth of experience and reasoning to any effort.



The photo here is of Lester playing music for the Picking Society in West Virginia. Lester was a telephone lineman all of his working career. After retiring, he was still in good physical condition and restless for creative activity. It's claimed that he said, "I still had a sense of adventure. I felt I could contribute to a community; and, wanted to be of service again." Lester had dappled at playing the violin but now had the time to really develop his talent. He enrolled in classes with a music tutor, volunteered at night as a sit-in for the local bluegrass group at the community center; and is now, a featured performer at the Saturday night performances. Here is what Lester will tell you now, "I

feel more like I'm 30. I only understand my age when I look in the mirror, see a bit greyer hair and some more wrinkles. But image and appearance is irrelevant when you have something to offer."

Whatever you play, music, sports, cards, dance, do it with gusto!

"Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul."

Samuel Ullman