



Baby Boomer Volunteers

Are you taking advantage of this new influx of talented volunteers?

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

Prime Time: How Baby Boomers Will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America

By Marc Freedman. 292 pages. Hardcover. Public Affairs, 250 W 57th St., Suite 1321, New York, NY 10107.

In this forward-thinking book, Marc Freedman describes a new reality of volunteerism. As baby boomers retire, they are catapulting their energy and talents into their communities, transforming the nonprofit world. This book, better than any other, can help us confront this new reality.

Both family and community have suffered devastating blows in recent years. Neither will be wholly reinstated in its old form. But it is time to face reality and move forward in pragmatic and innovative ways.

Many nonprofits are doing just that. One example is Troops to Teachers, in which retired military officers help in school classrooms. In another program, working-class retirees mentor high-risk youth,

giving the older people a sense of importance and showing the teens that someone cares. The key to these programs' success, Freedman explains, is matching retirees' skills with community needs.

Freedman extols the benefits of making use of what older Americans have to offer. Civic involvement in retirement offers a concept of a whole life. It elevates civic life. It rebalances responsibilities from overworked middle-agers. It promises a better future.

Retired people are living healthier, longer lives and doing so sooner than most of us are prepared for. Baby boomers can look forward to 20 to 30 healthy retirement years—a new third age of their lives.

Many see this new third age as an opportunity to give back to the

society that helped them reach this age of leisure. What this means for nonprofits is a huge influx of retirees who want to decide how they will help.

Retirees tend to know their strengths from years of experience. Successful organizations will play to those strengths. ■

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