

Retirement

Opportunities endless as retirement begins

By Mary T. Carty
Catholic News Service

The first day of retirement is filled with a whole spectrum of emotions: joy of being rewarded for so many years of work; sadness of leaving a place of productivity and a part of self behind; and excitement at having the free time and the freedom to face new opportunities.

Retirement also may carry with it a sense of loss connected to job, status, prestige, income, work relationships and life patterns. The retiree may feel alienation, isolation and low self-worth.

Like maintaining a job in the workplace, creating new living patterns requires energy, planning, patience, the ability to get along with others, commitment and a positive attitude.

A period of adjustment is necessary after retirement as the senior examines and then chooses how to take best advantage of

new opportunities that allow growth on a personal level, a return to long forgotten dreams, and a chance to give back to one's community.

The first step during those first days of retirement is accepting the fact that the transition into making everyday changes is not always easy, and may require even greater amount of energy than one's work schedule.

Seek out the support of those close to you to make that transition smoother. Talk to family members and friends and to people who are already retired to discuss your feelings and/or to share strategies for meeting the challenges of retirement.

Tap into resources to enable you to make informed decisions about the future. A trip to the nearest library or bookstore would provide a great deal of information focused on senior living, as well as information about special interests. Make contact

with organizations serving seniors, such as the American Association of Retired Persons, and other locally based groups.

Actively explore the possibilities before you. Seniors are rediscovering past interests, relocating to retirement communities, volunteering and enjoying recreational activities. In fact, growing numbers are choosing to work part-time or full-time in their field, or are venturing out into a new career.

Many colleges offer classes and courses of study designed for seniors through which retirees can get a degree in a different field and start a new career. Community centers offer a wide variety of classes from needlepoint to wood shop to dance lessons, and these classes are usually offered at reasonable prices.

Health and fitness clubs now cater to this age group and offer aerobics, swimming, tennis and alternative exercise programs for seniors.

Publications are rich with information about opportunities for travel, advice on financial planning and medical issues and features describing activities of their peers and opportunities for volunteer service.

A fringe benefit of reaching retirement age is the wide range of discounts available, including restaurants, travel companies and retail establishments. These discounts are quite helpful because most retirees live on less money than when they were employed.

Volunteering is a way for seniors to give back to the community as well as receive back a sense of worth. Opportunities

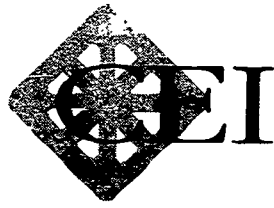


CNS photo from Cleo
Retirement provides much more time for favorite activities. Many retirees rediscover past interests, look into volunteer work or take an interesting class.

for volunteering range from reading at a children's story hour at the local library to hospice work or cooking in a homeless shelter.

The church encourages the use of one's special gifts and talents in creative ways to build the body of Christ. Parish communities offer such volunteering opportunities as visiting the sick, singing in the choir, serving as a eucharistic minister or lector and teaching religious edu-

cation. After working for many years and experiencing a wide variety of situations, retirees are in a position to make new contributions to their families, friends and communities. Through spending the time to research, reflect and respond to the challenges and opportunities available, seniors can experience retirement as the most exciting, productive time of their lives.



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