

CHALLENGE TO BOOMERS

Campaign Urges “Share What You Know. Mentor A Child.”

(NAPSA)—In a society that worships youth, aging has never been “cool.” But look out, here come the boomers.

Throughout their lives, boomers have left their mark on society—around music, fashion, sex, race, family, and gender equality. Now they’re poised to reinvent aging in America. The first wave of boomers will start turning 60 next year.

A new report from the Harvard School of Public Health and MetLife Foundation, “Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement,” spotlights the positive side of aging. Thanks to the longevity revolution, the average 60-year-old can expect to live to 83; many will continue well into their 90s. According to the report, these bonus years—nestled between middle age and old age from 60 to 80—constitute a new stage of life. This stage doesn’t have a name yet and doesn’t have a defined purpose.

With their children grown, millions of older boomers will confront the question “What do I want to do with the rest of my life?” Many will remain in the workforce, perhaps pursuing second careers or part-time work. Others will retire and opt for travel and leisure. And some will look for ways to channel their time, energy, skills and experience to help their communities.

The report focuses attention on an “unprecedented opportunity” on the horizon to mobilize millions of older boomers as community vol-



John Glenn helped to “reinvent aging” when he rocketed into space at the age of 77.

unteers. (The report is available at www.ReinventingAging.org.) According to the report, nearly one-third of boomers say they expect to participate in community service after retirement.

The report calls for the creation of new programs that build community by integrating the old with the young, transmitting knowledge and experience to future generations and reinforcing the value of people of all ages. Studies have found that young people in such programs show measurable improvements in school attendance, attitudes toward school and the future and attitudes toward elders. Adult volunteers report substantial benefits to themselves: the satisfaction of sharing their experience, feeling useful, and giving back to the community.

As a follow-up to the report, the Harvard School of Public Health and MetLife Foundation are launching a national media campaign to help reshape societal

attitudes toward aging, change Hollywood’s images of aging, encourage older boomers to participate in civic life and promote healthy aging. This is one of a number of initiatives that MetLife Foundation is funding around the country to promote healthy aging.

Initially, the campaign will encourage older adults to consider volunteering as a mentor to a young person in their community. The annual National Mentoring Month volunteer recruitment drive takes place every January. It’s spearheaded by the Harvard School of Public Health and MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership. The campaign’s message to boomers is “Share What You Know. Mentor A Child.”

In a public service announcement recorded for the mentoring campaign, former astronaut and U.S. senator John Glenn—who rocketed back into space at the age of 77—put it this way: “I don’t think people need to retire and just sit on the front porch and rock. They’ve had a lifetime of experience. They can pass that on. There’s nothing like inspiring a young person in these areas of curiosity of their own, and a mentor can do that. It’s very important today for young people to have mentors in their lives. It’s life experience and that’s what the young people lack.”

For more information on volunteering as a mentor, visit www.WhoMentoredYou.org.