

The

magazine

for a Greater Richmond

Longevity

Project



GREATER RICHMOND
agewave
engaged • livable • stable • well

Welcome to the Longevity Project magazine for a Greater Richmond



By Dr. E. Ayn Welleford, Greater Richmond Age Wave Coalition Co-Lead and Director of the VCU Gerontology Longevity Clinic

Since the inception of Greater Richmond Age Wave Coalition (Age Wave) we have pursued longevity equity and creating a community that is a great place for all people to grow old. As Co-Lead, with Dr. Thelma Watson, Executive Director, Senior Connections, we aim to co-create a community that is engaged, livable, stable, and well.

What does it mean to be a part of a Community-University Collective Impact Initiative? To me it means living the values of courage, inclusion, and fidelity to disseminate evidence-driven work to create a just and compassionate community.

Currently, Age Wave practices these values through our Aging for Life community education; Business for Life research, innovation support, and upcoming Business Roundtable; Neighborhood Livability advocacy and special projects, such as the Garden at Home, Grow with Your Neighbors project supported by AARP -- all toward the goal of longevity equity.

In further pursuit of our goals, I am thrilled to announce that moving forward Age Wave will serve as VCU Gerontology's Longevity Clinic, giving graduate students in gerontology the opportunity to deeply engage in community practices that make longevity real and accessible for everyone.

Living the values of courage, inclusion, & fidelity to disseminate evidence-driven work.

Through the generous collaboration of Age Wave members and partners, as well as our alumni and larger aging network, students may serve in myriad roles: community advocate, researcher, organizer, educator, service coordinator, planner, and care provider. Students will have opportunities to engage in research and project topics such as health and wellness issues, longevity equity, elderhood, housing stability, person-centered-trauma-informed care, social isolation, service coordination, neighborhood livability, transportation and health care advocacy, and longevity research.

This academic learning lab will offer our students a smoother integration of evidence-based gerontological practice, connecting our existing Programmatic Service Learning Model and student fieldwork, in turn providing a more fluid transition from classroom to community.

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"Every day, I encounter individuals who are living their elder adulthood in inspiring, authentic, growth-minded, and truly subversive ways."



Dr. Welleford with Age Wave Co-Lead Dr. Thelma Watson, Executive Director of Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging

Longevity equity takes the efforts of many passionate and enthusiastic individuals. It is an ageist misconception to believe that positive longevity is the responsibility of any single individual or any one entity. This is a village effort.

Improvements in longevity to date have been co-constructionist in nature, blending biological and cultural efforts resulting in the expanded longevity we enjoy today. Surprisingly, this longevity has increased despite the backlash witnessed in our pan-cultural climate of ageism. Individuals demonstrate positive longevity despite a culture that simultaneously lauds and demonizes the accumulation of years.

We cannot allow the contagion of internalized ageism to continue. Ageism bombards our minds daily through the plethora of elderspeak, sensationalized messages about intergenerational inequity in health care spending, greeting card sentiments, and the entire anti-aging industry. In this environment, it does not feel safe to get old. We must resist, together.

Kahlil Gibran said, "work is love made visible." Ours must be a person-directed, multidimensional approach to continuing to promote longevity equity through evidence, courage, and inclusion.

We must resist the narrative of decline and the misery mindset that predominate our current climate and structure around growing older and support the resilience and positive longevity we witness day to day among our elders. We must also educate our own professional network that remains focused on the single story of disease rather than the resilience of the elder generation.

Every day, I encounter individuals who are living their elder adulthood in inspiring, authentic, growth-minded, and truly subversive ways. Each day, they resist the narrative that does not fit their experiences of growing older. It's time that we clear a path for a new way story, a new way of thinking about our elderhood.

Sara Ban Breathnach takes Gibran's statement a step further when she says, "Authentic success is reaching the point where being is as important as doing... It's elevating labor to a craft and craft to an art by bestowing love on every task you undertake."

Join with us in crafting and growing into each and every version of authentic elderhood. This is how we will create a great place for all people to grow old.

Dr. E. Ayn Welleford is the 2018 recipient of the Phoebe and Frank Hall Humanitarian Award.



Be part of the change:
Click here to take the survey

Our work at Age Wave calls upon us to create a longevity opportunity for everyone, and that means examining the historical financial inequities and income inequalities entrenched in our region. One need only to study the VCU Center on Society and Health’s life expectancy maps (2016) to realize that longevity does not extend to everyone equally: Life expectancy for a baby born in Westover Hills is 83. Life expectancy for a baby born in Gilpin? 63.

Across the health and human services sector, many are working to create equitable financial opportunities and to disrupt historically and systemically racist policies and practices that have contributed to a longevity gap in Richmond. Important community-wide work is occurring related to prosperity and financial stability. Financial stability models, however, often draw from frameworks that fail to fully consider the changing financial needs across the lifespan but rather, rely heavily upon an upward employment trajectory and decreased benefit enrollment, while downplaying the critical role of social support and reciprocity concerning financial issues such as asset-development, money management, and savings. Age Wave is working with older adults to better understand the opportunities, resources, and mechanisms of financial health and stability in later life.

Financial Health & the Longevity Opportunity

By Gigi Amateau, Director of Grants and Research



By now, we can all likely recite some of the more common headlines about aging:

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.

By 2030, more than one quarter of a million people in the Greater Richmond region will be ages 60 and over.

By 2030, our region's 85 and older population will triple in size, representing an increase by 218%.

In our region, 35,137 adults ages 65+ have incomes at or below 200% of the poverty thresholds (U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2016). For some, a financial crisis may contribute to a traumatic transition event, such as loss of housing. In 2016-17, for example, 39% of all single adults in emergency shelter in Greater Richmond were ages 51+, and in the same year, adults ages 62 + comprised 8% of all single adults receiving emergency shelter (Homeward, 2017). Among older adults experiencing homelessness in our region in 2016-17, 70% were African American (Homeward, 2017).

In recent focus groups with older adults, participants emphasized giving back, mutuality, and the need to talk about historical racial inequalities when considering financial health. Of the focus group participants, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that:

- when discussing financial health, it is important to acknowledge and talk about historical inequality based on race and ethnicity.
- financial health is intertwined with physical health.
- they would like to learn about financial health in order to assist family, friends, and neighbors.
- social ties have an impact on financial health.

Age Wave is also seeking insights from service providers about financial health tools and resources for older adults and a better understanding of how service providers perceive the financial needs of older adults. We believe that learning about financial health and how to improve it is useful at any age. Tell us your thoughts about how, together, we can innovate to close the longevity gap and create financial stability across the lifespan. Please take this short survey today!

[Older Adult Financial Health Survey](#)



Active Aging Week RVA Style

By Annie Rhodes, Director of Outreach



RVA Active Aging Week 2018 has been full of milestones for the Richmond region, where our local committee plans, promotes and sponsors many of the signature events each year. Active Aging Week was established in 2003 by the International Council on Active Aging. In greater Richmond, we have been celebrating since 2014, and our reach and impact has dramatically expanded these last five years.

Age Wave serves the residents of Richmond Regional Planning District 15, which encompasses the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan, as well as the city of Richmond, and the township of Ashland. Covering an area greater than 2,000 square miles and with a population of over 1 million residents, we live and work in an expansive, diverse region. The goal of Active Aging Week has always been to bring community members of all ages, as well as organizations, businesses, non-profits and local governments together to celebrate the opportunity of longevity.

It is important to recognize what distinguishes the 2018 RVA Active Aging Week from previous years and what it means for

the future of this celebration. 2018 is the inaugural year in which each locality within the planning district will have its own, distinct Active Aging Week events and celebrations. We're proud to reach a milestone where our movement, our message, and our support from the community has so grown that we are able to have an intentional presence in each of our localities during this special week.

We strive to make our movement inclusive and to facilitate regional connectedness and collaboration by weaving the common thread of Active Aging Week through all our localities. Creating, planning and facilitating so many celebrations in such a short week was made possible through the tireless work of the Aging for Life committee, the sponsors, and the many people who volunteered their time. Their efforts have paid off.

This year also marks the first Age Wave and Active Aging Week happy hour. We will be joining together at the end of the week at Three Notch'd Brewing Company for networking, a panel discussion featuring the chairs of Active Aging Week and a look back at how far this movement has come in our community. We will also use this event as an opportunity to connect and reconnect with one another and learn about the other efforts of the Greater Richmond Age Wave, look forward to the years to come celebrating active aging in this region we call home.

Thank you 2018 Active Aging Week Sponsors:

- United Way
- Senior Connections
- Family Lifeline
- Anthem HealthKeepers
- Three Notch'd Brewing Company
- SportsBackers
- CommonHealth Partners
- CareMore
- YMCA of Greater Richmond

Now accepting sponsorship for AAW 2019!



"A neighborhood in bloom." - Janei Lofty

VCU Gerontology student and Outreach Coordinator for
Community Preservation and Development Corporation



August 24 Garden Education session at Highland Park Senior Apartments.

Connectedness, Construction, Cultivation

By Catherine MacDonald, Director of Strategy and Innovation

Age Wave, Six Points Innovation Center, Richmond City Office on Aging and Persons with Disabilities, and City Councilwoman Ellen Robertson (6th District) have been hard at work on their collaborative 2018 AARP Community Challenge grant program award, now at its halfway point.

The grant is providing for the launch of our project: *Garden at Home, Grow with your Neighbors*. The project includes installation of self-watering garden boxes in the neighborhood of Green Park and the Highland Park Senior Apartments as well as for educational gardening programs, in the spirit of neighborhood connectedness.

Nearly 1,600 applications were received from non-profits and government entities for the AARP program, now in its second year. A total of \$1.3 million will be distributed to fund 129 "quick action" projects across the country, helping communities make immediate improvements and jumpstart long-term progress to support residents of all ages. The full list of grantees can be found at www.aarp.org/communitychallenge.

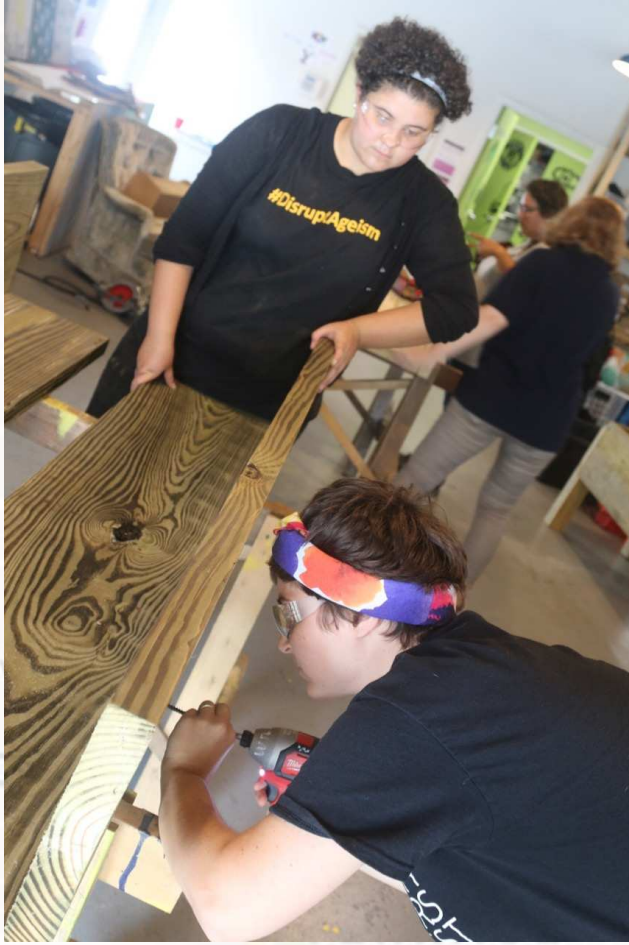
So far we've had one very informative educational session and one very productive build day. Next up: Delivery!

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Forest Lawn Cemetery

Richmond Raceway



September 11 Day of Service Build Day at Six Points Innovation Center.



Who are the Gray Panthers?



Twin Cities Gray Panthers march for women's equality. Founder Maggie Kuhn in the center. www.marchmatron.com



The San Francisco Gray Panthers: Age and Youth in Action in 2002. www.marchmatron.com



By Geunmi Kwon, Administrative Coordinator

The Gray Panthers is an influential network of multi-generational advocacy groups in the United States confronting ageism and many other social justice issues. The organization was founded by Maggie Kuhn after she was forced to retire from her employer, the Presbyterian Church, in 1970 upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65. Today that would be illegal.

Led by Kuhn and five other women who had been similarly pressed into mandatory retirement, the Gray Panthers began as the Consultation of Older and Younger Adults. The name the Gray Panthers was adopted in 1972. The Panthers met initially in Philadelphia, later expanding nationally.

In addition to successfully advocating for the elimination of mandatory retirement, the Gray Panthers quickly adopted other action plans, including pressing for an end to the war in Vietnam and controlling the raging arms race of the 1970s and 1980s. They also advocated for affordable housing, prevention of long-term care facility abuses, civil rights, health care, and creating structure for grassroots populations to facilitate social change at the community level.

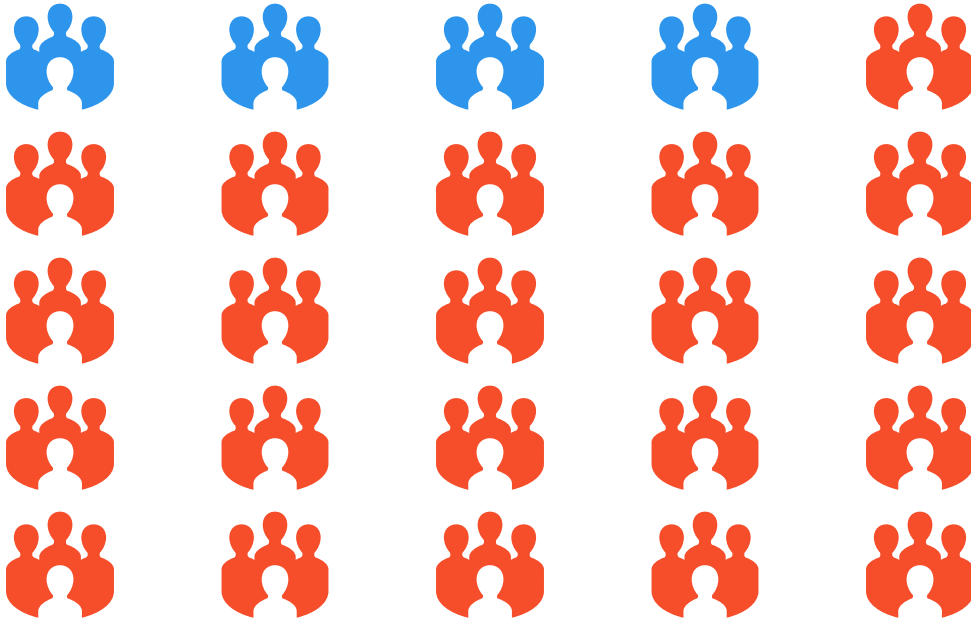
"Speak your mind even if your voice shakes." - Maggie Kuhn

The Gray Panthers have challenged other ageist laws and stereotypes and led campaigns to preserve Medicare and Social Security, to promote inter-generational housing, LGBT rights, environmental causes, the fair treatment of people in long-term care facilities, and single-payer health care.

At the international level, the Gray Panthers developed its consultative status with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council to champion a host of global issues, such as implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, rights of older persons, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its priority list also included the status of women, human rights, social development with a human face, statistics, demographic issues, health, disabilities, and humanitarian crises.

The Gray Panthers helped establish the Stakeholder Group on Ageing (SGA), which brings together global and national networks of organizations, representing 800 million older persons around the world.

The Gray Panthers plays a key role in shaping the annual SGA reports and statements on aging that are submitted to the High Level Political Forum at the UN. It also represents the SGA in Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), which is a platform for civil society seeking to fashion a world "where social and environmental development justice is assured, and all people are able to live in prosperous, healthy and peaceful environment."



“We can re-imagine our old age, look after one another, and embody the wisdom that will enable us to help heal the future.”

What is an Elders' Guild?

Beginning with the Live Oak Project in 1977, which sparked a civil rights movement for people in long-term care facilities, Berkeley couple Barry and Debby Barkan sought to build what they described as a new culture of aging, and in 2014 brought together elders in their area for companionship and discussion. The couple urged participants to “give a damn” about the social issues affecting their livelihood, which the Barkans called “conscious aging.” Barry Barkan has devoted his 40-year career to this mission.

It was one particular episode that spurred Barkan into further action. One day, he asked the people in a long-term care facility how they saw themselves. One person stood up and said, “You see that piece of furniture over there? They move me like a piece of furniture even without asking me. I put five kids through grad school and when I need to be with them, this is where they put me. I feel like I’m in a warehouse.”

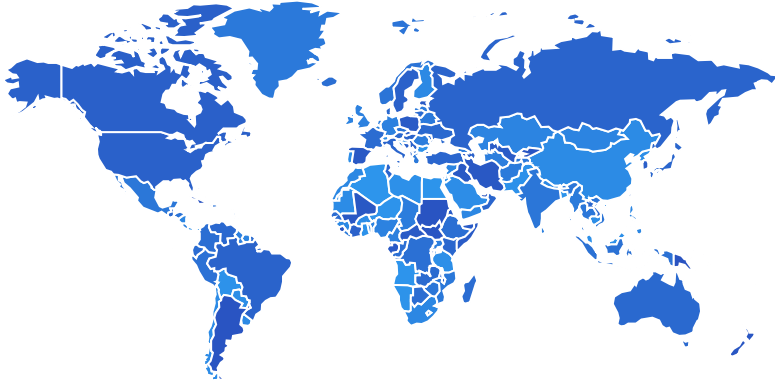
Jolted, Barkan decided to devote himself to help alleviate the plight of older adults in many different situations and re-think the nature of growing old in society in general. Barkan launched the Elders' Guild movement with the mission to create communities where “we can re-imagine our old age, look after one another and embody the wisdom that will enable us to help heal the future.”

The Elders' Guild has implemented a three-pronged approach to their work: building community, culling the wisdom of participating older adults, and vigorously championing their priority concerns.

The Elders' Guild is organized into interdependent communities where older adults can be present for one another through good times and bad, through good and failing health, and through times of loss and renewal. In these multigenerational enclaves, people seek to enliven one another and strengthen their ties with their friends and family members through rituals, celebrations, and multi-generational events.

The Elders' Guild vision fashions a world where older adults join together in common purpose to bring healing, joy, and connection to their lives, families, communities, and the world. This movement emphasizes older adults as people who are growing and learning, with full potential and promise for the future. A hallmark principle of this approach is that our birthright to the pursuit of happiness, joy, and pleasure remains intact across the lifespan. Moreover, an older adult is a person who deserves respect and honor, who can synthesize wisdom from long life experience, and formulate an expression of their lives into a legacy for future generations.

A continuing priority of the Elders' Guild is forming grassroots organizations that are local in nature, and sharing the same design, mission, and culture with other local Elders' Guild organizations around the world - in other words, establishing multi-generational, interdependent, and diverse Elders' Guild communities in as many neighborhoods with a shared sense of purpose with local people. Through this process, they hope a new tradition for the role of older adults will be established for all.



Life in the Blue Zones

From BlueZones.com with permission

Here at Age Wave, we've been learning a lot from [the Blue Zones](http://BlueZones.com). Blue Zones researchers teamed up with National Geographic to find the world's longest-lived people and study them. They worked with a team of demographers to find pockets of people around the world with the highest life expectancy, or with the highest proportions of people who reach age 100. They found five places that met their criteria:

Barbagia region of Sardinia – Mountainous highlands of inner Sardinia with the world's highest concentration of male centenarians.

Ikaria, Greece – Aegean Island with one of the world's lowest rates of middle age mortality and the lowest rates of dementia.

Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica – World's lowest rates of middle age mortality, second highest concentration of male centenarians.

Seventh Day Adventists – Highest concentration of Seventh Day Adventists is around Loma Linda, California. They live 10 years longer than their North American counterparts.

Okinawa, Japan – Females over 70 are the longest-lived population in the world.

Blue Zones researchers and National Geographic then assembled a team of medical researchers, anthropologists, demographers, and epidemiologists to search for evidence-based common denominators among all places. They found nine: [the Power 9](http://BlueZones.com).

The Power 9

1. Move Naturally

The world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They grow gardens and don't have mechanical conveniences for house and yard work.

2. Purpose

The Okinawans call it "Ikigai" and the Nicoyans call it "plan de vida," for both it translates to "why I wake up in the morning." Knowing your sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy

3. Down Shift

Even people in the Blue Zones experience stress. Stress leads to chronic inflammation, associated with every major age-related disease. What the world's longest-lived people have that we don't are routines to shed that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour.

4. 80% Rule

"Hara hachi bu" – the Okinawan, 2500-year old Confucian mantra said before meals reminds them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80 percent full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. People in the Blue Zones eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then they don't eat any more the rest of the day.

5. Plant Slant

Beans, including fava, black, soy and lentils, are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets. Meat—mostly pork—is eaten on average only five times per month. Serving sizes are 3-4 oz., about the size of deck or cards.

6. Wine @ 5

People in all Blue Zones (except Adventists) drink alcohol moderately and regularly. Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. The trick is to drink 1-2 glasses per day (preferably Sardinian Cannonau wine), with friends and/or with food. And no, you can't save up all weekend and have 14 drinks on Saturday.

7. Belong

All but five of the 263 centenarians we interviewed belonged to some faith-based community. Denomination doesn't seem to matter. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4-14 years of life expectancy.

8. Loved Ones First

Successful centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families first. This means keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby or in the home (It lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home too.). They commit to a life partner (which can add up to 3 years of life expectancy) and invest in their children with time and love.

9. Right Tribe

The world's longest lived people chose—or were born into—social circles that supported healthy behaviors, Okinawans created "moais"—groups of five friends that committed to each other for life. The social networks of long-lived people have favorably shaped their health behaviors.



See more @
bluezones.com

Age Wave Mission: To make our region a great place for all people to grow old.

Developed by Age Wave staff, leadership, and stakeholders, the values and vision support Age Wave's mission.





Guy Kinman and the Art of Time

This article ran in Age Wave's Fall 2016 'zine [Come Together](#). We have chosen to run the article again in celebration and in memory of the life of our friend Guy Kinman, Jr. who passed away this summer, having lived 100 years on this earth.

By Tom Nash, Guest Contributor

The directions given by Guy Kinman to his studio apartment at Brookdale Imperial Plaza are clear, to the point of worrisome in their detail. The moment-by-moment directions make navigating the last few feet of the parking lot sound like a quest befitting a wizard more than an interviewer.

"I don't mean to sound condescending," Kinman assures. "I just want to make sure you're OK."

The relatively small space is adorned with images, art, and memories placed with the same clarity of purpose. The room appears twice its size. As the former Air Force chaplain, career counselor and longtime Richmond gay rights advocate explains, his 98 years have revealed truths about time and space we'd all do well to learn.

"What I'm learning at this age is to discover that the secret of happiness is having a new sense of time. To realize the moment, now, is what's important. I used to always wake up feeling guilty and feeling burdened, saying 'Oh my god, there's so much I'm supposed to do, or to be.' I want now to make every moment a measure of joy."

That means even Kinman's morning routine is filled with purpose. From the moment he wakes up, to brushing his teeth, even the toothbrush is worth noticing. "That's how artists think, and I think that's how we are all born to think. That's not to say we don't get things done, just to enjoy the moment."

Kinman motions to his walker. It's there as an aid, a backup. But his outlook makes it less necessary. "I will not stumble if I think in the moment." The philosophy has broader implications, including how each day passes

"For much of your life, you're hurrying because of something that might happen. That's not to say the goal wasn't good, but at 8:30 in the morning it's not to your advantage to worry about eight things."

Clarity comes from experience: "You discover there are only two things that need to be done. And when you've got it down to two, you're doing them because you want to, not because you ought to. And this is one of the glorious things about getting older."

This lesson, he adds, may come more easily to younger generations than it did to him. He graduated from college without a sense of what his career should be. It took decades for him to come to terms with his sexuality. Even if finding one's passion takes decades, he says, finding happiness in one's daily life should be the goal.

"Many seniors are not learning how to live until they retire, because their heart isn't in anything. Kids now are being advised that they can probably earn a living doing what they love to do."

Kinman is an advocate for aging in a community where every day brings new people or experiences into one's life.

"When I walk through the hall, the relationship with people here is key. I see 15 people on my way to breakfast in the morning. Each one of them reveals in their own way that they're learning to take not just one day but one moment at a time. The way people greet me is wonderful. They're not ready to have a conversation in the hall, but they say something magnificent: 'Another day.'"



Thank you to the organizations that support Age Wave's work:

AARP

DispatchHealth

Genworth Foundation

Richmond City Office of Aging and Persons with Disabilities

Richmond Memorial Health Foundation

Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging

The Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia

United Way of Greater Richmond & Petersburg

VCU Department of Gerontology

Westminster Canterbury Foundation



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