

# MORE TO GIVE

Tapping the Talents of the Baby Boomer, Silent and Greatest Generations



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## INTRODUCTION

As representatives of the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations,<sup>1</sup> we are living through extraordinary times. During our lifetimes, Americans have been at the forefront of path-breaking change: overcoming the Great Depression, winning World War II, launching the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe, helping colonial peoples achieve independence, breaking barriers of race and gender, putting a man on the moon, and eradicating deadly diseases. Times of trial have summoned the greatness of our people.

The dangers and opportunities presented by the 21<sup>st</sup> century are greater than ever before. Weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, environmental threats to our planet, and poverty amidst plenty continue to increase the stakes. At the same time, advances in science and technology are lengthening lifespan and providing an aging population with more time and skills that could be harnessed like never before to improve our communities and world. The role of the individual is more important than ever.

Historians have documented the uplifting story of the Greatest Generation that won World War II and protected the home front. Members of the generation that followed them — the Silent Generation — are now in the full swing of their later years. And the role of Boomers in the future of our country has captured public imagination as they near and enter retirement. What will be the final chapters of these generations?

The sheer numbers of people in these generations demand that we do more to tap their reservoirs of experience. The Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations constitute nearly 40 percent of the American population today. They are living, and will live, into their late 70s, 80s, and 90s, benefiting from significant advances in health care.

For all of the efforts to enlist individuals in service to their communities and country — and we have been involved in many of them at the Presidential level — we have not yet

tapped the full potential of these remarkable generations. How we engage the longest-living, best-educated, wealthiest, and most highly skilled generations of Americans will tell us a lot about whether we will confront our greatest challenges or merely sink into our own private lives as we age. And how we treat the aging — by further marshaling their talents or by letting many linger into an aging purposelessness — will be signposts of our country's values. Moreover, whether they are active in communities will affect their life satisfaction and risk of disease and premature death.

In an effort to better understand the civic behaviors and attitudes of Americans as they transition from work to retirement and to help ground the research in the stories and perspectives of the Boomer and Silent Generations, a series of focus groups and a nationally representative survey were conducted of Americans age 44-79, as further described in the Methodology section of this report. Although the survey did not include members of the Greatest Generation, there are still more than 11 million members of this civically-minded group, and we should honor and encourage their service as well.<sup>2</sup>

AARP — a non-profit, nonpartisan organization representing 40 million members age 50 and older — commissioned this research and report for its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The primary purpose of this report is to spark a national dialogue and movement around the civic engagement of these three generations of Americans. We hope this effort will promote that dialogue and movement in earnest so we, as a nation, can look back on this moment as the time that further unleashed the talents of these extraordinary individuals.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he central message of this report is that tens of millions of Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation, while not as civically active as the Greatest Generation in their younger years, are healthier, living longer and appear ready to increase their civic participation in retirement. Sadly, Americans from these two generations believe they will leave the world in worse condition than they inherited it. Many who do not currently volunteer feel they have not been asked, and volunteers and non-volunteers alike identify barriers and motivations that help point the way forward. The sheer number of Boomers provides an opportunity to have a transformative effect. We believe there is significant potential to increase volunteering and civic engagement in America, particularly among regular volunteers, churchgoers, Boomer women, African Americans, and Hispanics, and to design policies and initiatives that tap the talents of these extraordinary generations.

### READY TO SERVE

Most Americans age 44-79 in our survey and focus groups (“Experienced Americans”) report that they have volunteered in the last year. While intentions for future volunteering may outpace reality, many who retire are increasing their service, and many Experienced Americans are healthy, free of care-giving commitments, and ready to serve.

- ◆ **Four in ten Experienced Americans (41 percent, representing 45 million people) indicate they are very or somewhat likely to increase the amount of time they spend volunteering in the next five years, and nearly the same proportion (39 percent) of retired Americans report that they did increase their volunteering when they retired.** The groups most likely to expect an increase are regular Boomer volunteers (52 percent), Boomer women (50%), Hispanics (50%), and African Americans (48%).
- ◆ **A majority (53 percent) of Experienced Americans are unimpeded by health or care-giving for relatives in their home — with 75 percent not limited by physical or health conditions, 76 percent without a child or grandchild under 18 living with them, and 87 percent not providing care to an older relative who lives in their home.** Many Americans still wrongly assume that old age translates into poor health and the need to care for relatives at home. While this is the case for millions of Experienced Americans, it is not true for the majority today.
- ◆ **Fifty-five percent of Experienced Americans believe they will leave the world in worse condition than they inherited it, while only 20 percent believe they are leaving the world in better condition.** Those most actively engaged in volunteer work feel less pessimistic and are more likely to increase their service than those not engaged.

### MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

**Like politics, most volunteering is local. Americans tell us that they want to help their families, neighbors and communities meet real needs.** They also see the value of volunteering in their own lives, both in staying active and healthy and in finding greater meaning and purpose.

**Experienced Americans highlight the key motivations for their volunteer service, including how those who do not volunteer might be motivated to do so.**

- ◆ **Fifty-two percent of Experienced Americans said that their desire to “help people in need” was an extremely important motivation for volunteering, followed by 48 percent who identified the desire to “stay healthy and active.”**
- ◆ **Experienced Americans expressed the most interest in volunteering:**
  - ◆ **through faith-based or religious groups (45 percent);**
  - ◆ **by mentoring or tutoring young people (40 percent); and**
  - ◆ **by helping the elderly live independently (38 percent).**

- ◆ **More than half of all Experienced Americans (51 percent), including 55 percent of Boomers, said that education awards they can earn and give to a child in exchange for significant levels of volunteer service would have a big or moderate impact on their participation in volunteer activities.** Forty-two percent of all Experienced Americans and 47 percent of Boomers cited access to group health insurance as another key incentive to volunteer. Both of these incentives are the most appealing to African Americans and Hispanics.
- ◆ **Fifty-five percent of Experienced Americans are very interested or already participate in at least one established volunteer program, such as Meals on Wheels, Senior Companions, Volunteer Senior Rangers, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Foster Grandparents, Driver Safety, Tax Aide, and the Peace Corps.** Although a relatively small percentage of Experienced Americans expressed interest in any one program, this minority represents millions of Americans who are still very interested in these formal programs.

**Experienced Americans also identify key barriers to their civic engagement.**

- ◆ **Nearly seven in ten (68%) non-volunteers report that they have not been asked to serve.** Existing research shows that when personally asked to serve, more than 8 in 10 Americans (81%) will do so.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ **More than seven in ten Experienced Americans prefer to volunteer without a regular schedule.** One in five (21 percent) prefers volunteering on a regular and ongoing basis. The more a person volunteers, the more likely he or she is to prefer a regular schedule.
- ◆ **While 49 percent of Experienced Americans say they prefer to help others and address problems directly and on their own,** nearly half (47 percent) either express a preference for volunteering through an organization (36 percent) or both on their own and through organizations (11 percent), including 50 percent of Boomers.

- ◆ **The most significant barriers to volunteering are a perception of a lack of time (identified by 70 percent of Experienced Americans) and the need to make money (identified by 54 percent).** Nearly half of Experienced Americans (48 percent) cite not having enough information about volunteer opportunities as a barrier to their engagement. Other barriers include lack of a compatible group, no match for skills and experience, discomfort working with strangers, and lack of transportation.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

The perspectives of Experienced Americans uncovered by the survey and focus groups reveal the importance of listening to them as we develop ways to increase their civic engagement. We propose the following actions at the local, state, and national levels to tap the energy and talents of Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations.

**In Neighborhoods and Communities**

- ◆ ***Developing the Civic Highway.*** A private-public partnership, including non-profit organizations and the appropriate agencies of government, should offer a development grant to the best consortium of organizations that will build an internet “Civic Highway for older Americans.” This would include “on-ramps” for Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to further enable civic engagement of all kinds — from finding volunteer, full-time and part-time service opportunities to opportunities for second “encore careers,” social networking and deeper engagement in communities. Two-thirds of Experienced Americans, and nearly 70 percent who are regular volunteers, indicated they use the internet at least a few times a week.
- ◆ ***A Call to Serve.*** Research shows that when Americans are asked to serve, high numbers of them volunteer. Leaders in the public, private, and non-profit sectors should initiate a national public service campaign that

asks every American of the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to volunteer to help others in need. Experienced Americans should initiate a petition that calls upon the President, Congress, Governors, Mayors, and leaders of other institutions to ask individuals to serve and to create more opportunities for them to do so.

- ◆ ***A Summit of Corporations and Foundations.*** Corporations and foundations are playing significant roles in supporting non-profit organizations in which Experienced Americans volunteer or want to serve. They also are fostering innovation in how the experience and skills of older Americans can be harnessed to meet public challenges. Pace-setting corporations and foundations should convene a national summit to examine the roles that the private and non-profit sectors can play in engaging more Experienced Americans in volunteer, national, and public service.

- ◆ ***Addressing Key Challenges.*** Key organizations should develop signature initiatives to demonstrate the power of Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to address critical challenges. Respondents in our survey expressed interest in mentoring young people and helping the elderly live independently.

■ ***Adult Mentors Help Prevent High School Dropout.*** There is a high school dropout epidemic in America, with nearly one third of all public high school students and almost one half of all African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans failing to graduate from public high school with their class.<sup>4</sup> One way to help students stay on track to graduate from high school ready for college and work is providing adult mentors, tutors and advocates, drawn from civic and faith-based organizations, for students at risk of dropping out. An initial goal should be to place 100,000 new adult mentors with at-risk students in the 2,000 “dropout factories” in the United States – high schools graduating less than 60 percent of their students.

■ ***Living Independently.*** Every American has a stake in the effort to extend the number of years people can live independently in their homes. Initiatives that increase the level of volunteering among Experienced Americans to assist older adults would provide services that allow the elderly to remain independent, while enhancing the independence of the volunteers themselves by staying active and forestalling moves to assisted living and nursing homes.

## In the States

- ◆ ***State Service, Volunteering, and Faith-Based Initiatives.*** In recent years, Governors have increased their focus on mobilizing individuals to serve in their states. California recently created a cabinet-level position for service, all 50 states have service commissions, and 35 Governors and more than 70 Mayors have offices of faith-based and community initiatives. All of these offices, service and faith-based alike, should focus on mobilizing more members of the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to meet the needs of their states and communities, such as enabling more volunteers to mentor young people and helping the elderly live independently.
- ◆ ***State Incentives for Volunteering.*** In budget-constrained environments, some states are starting to experiment with various incentives to increase volunteering by older adults, including free transportation, property and real estate tax abatements, and tax credits for residents who engage in significant levels of service that meet state needs.<sup>5</sup> Non-profit organizations that serve and engage Experienced Americans should partner with the National Governors Association to enlist their state and local chapters to educate state policymakers about various incentives for facilitating volunteering and other public work among the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations as a means to meet state needs and decrease public pressure on state budgets.



## In the Nation

- ◆ ***Volunteer Generation Fund.*** Our survey shows that half of Boomers are open to volunteering through an organization, and Experienced Americans express high interest in volunteering through faith-based groups. Research shows that while charities and religious groups rely on volunteers to fulfill their goals and want to take on more volunteers, they need to increase their capacity to do so. By making grants to organizations focused on recruiting and directing volunteers, a new Volunteer Generation Fund would expand the supply of volunteers to America's non-profits and charities.
- ◆ ***Educational Awards – Silver Scholarships.*** Experienced Americans prefer transferable education awards over group health insurance, monthly stipends and vouchers, and Presidential recognition as a key motivator to increase volunteering. The federal government should initiate a pilot program to provide transferable educational awards of a minimum of \$1,000 to encourage Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to commit to a significant number of hours of volunteer service in their communities. In exchange for such service, volunteers could use or transfer the awards into education savings accounts for their children, grandchildren, or another needy child.
- ◆ ***Senior Corps Programs.*** Today, the federal government helps nearly 500,000 Americans in three Senior Corps programs find opportunities to serve.<sup>6</sup> This is a small fraction of the millions of Americans who have expressed interest in participating in such programs. A national goal should be set to engage one million Americans in these efforts every year by 2012, principally through the largest and lowest-cost Senior Corps program, RSVP. Reforms to all three Senior Corps programs, coupled with additional resources, should make such programs attractive to more participants.
- ◆ ***Experience Corps.*** Experience Corps engages 2,000 people over the age of 50 in 20 cities to tutor and mentor elementary school students, help teachers in the classroom, and lead after-school enrichment activities in exchange for a small stipend and education award.<sup>7</sup> Independent evaluations have shown that Experience Corps boosts student academic performance and enhances the well-being of volunteers. This powerful inter-generational initiative should be expanded and could be a model for how Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations who need to receive financial assistance for their participation can be engaged in a significant commitment to service. The education award should be made transferable.
- ◆ ***Encore Fellowships.*** Existing research shows that about half of those 44-70 who are not already engaged in encore careers are interested in such careers.<sup>8</sup> In addition to providing opportunities for encore career employment in the non-profit and public service sectors through an online Civic Highway, the federal government and private philanthropy should create "Encore Fellowships" that place outstanding Americans over the age of 50 into areas with critical needs and workforce shortages, including education, health care, government, non-profit, and faith-based institutions.
- ◆ ***Raise the Charitable Mileage Deduction.*** Volunteers who drive their own cars for a charity can only deduct 14 cents per mile driven, far less than the 58.5 cents per mile that is deductible for business driving.<sup>9</sup> While the business rate was raised in 2008 to account for climbing gas prices, the charitable mileage deduction has not been changed since 1998.<sup>10</sup> Legislation in Congress to raise the charity rate to 58.5 cents per mile should be passed.
- ◆ ***Accountability for Results.*** The federal government should measure the effective engagement of the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations in civic life, including rates of volunteering, voting and participating in the political process, charitable giving, social and institutional trust, participation in civic and religious

institutions, and participation in community meetings. Data should be disaggregated by age, gender, race and ethnicity, and by the communities and states in which people live. The National Conference on Citizenship and government agencies are making good progress on such indicators.<sup>11</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

- ◆ ***A National Debate and Response.*** Americans of all ages and from all sectors of American life – private, non-profit, public, secular, religious, and the media – should make it a priority to engage the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to meet America’s challenges. Our nation needs a change in attitudes, as well as policies, to foster a stronger culture of service and engagement among these generations. We should undertake all means to encourage leaders to gain a better understanding of the untapped potential these generations of Americans represent, and the promising and innovative ways in which we might further engage them. Such efforts should include summits,<sup>12</sup> Congressional hearings, legislation, Presidential initiatives, conferences of state and local officials, petitions and pledges, and public forums in local communities. In all cases, the perspectives and insights of representatives from the Boomer and Silent Generations should inform the public debate, test our assumptions, guide our initiatives, and help us fulfill their potential to strengthen our nation

# A CALL TO SERVICE – AARP FOUNDER ETHEL ANDRUS



**T**he *Wisdom of Ethel Percy Andrus*, a collection of essays by the founder of AARP, appropriately begins with a chapter titled “Call to Service.” Andrus believed, “We have demonstrated that old age is not a defeat but a victory, not a punishment but a privilege....we all have a responsibility to remain active in retirement, to keep ourselves well informed, to cooperate with responsible public and private agencies concerned with programs and activities that will make our nation strong morally, spiritually and materially for the benefit of all Americans.” Her words described the culmination of her own life as engaged citizen, practical idealist, educator and social innovator. She broke new ground for teachers, administrators, older Americans, minorities and women.

Ethel Andrus’ formative years were spent in Chicago in the early 1900s when Jane Addams’ Hull House and the settlement house movement were in full swing. After earning an associate’s degree from the Lewis Institute and a bachelor’s degree in philosophy at the University of Chicago, Andrus returned to the Lewis Institute to teach English. Andrus volunteered at Hull House and the Chicago Commons, caring for the social needs of immigrants to America. Andrus returned to California with her parents in 1910. In 1916, she was named the first woman high school principal in California, serving for nearly 30 years at Abraham Lincoln High School in East Los Angeles. She earned her master’s and Ph.D. in education from the University of Southern California.

There was a high delinquency rate at Lincoln High School. Students were mostly from poor families and represented races and ethnicities speaking 32 different languages. Andrus’ goal was “to bring to each [student] a sense of his own worth by treating him with dignity and respect, by honoring his racial background, not as a picturesque oddity, but as a valued contribution to the rich tapestry of American life.” As Andrus provided her students with community service activities, the school’s delinquency rate dropped dramatically. During this time, she also served as Executive Secretary of the American School for Girls (in Damascus, Syria) and as President of

the California Secondary School Principals’ Association. When she was named National Teacher of the Year in 1954, TIME magazine ran an article about her work in the May 10, 1954 issue.

After 41 years of teaching, Andrus embarked on a second career, volunteering as Director of Welfare for the California Retired Teachers Association. During this time, Andrus found a former colleague literally living in a chicken coop outside Los Angeles. Alarmed by the lack of financial security, health insurance, personal dignity and social usefulness of many Americans as they aged, Andrus founded the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) in 1947; served as NRTA’s first president, a volunteer position, and fostered the creation of retirement homes and apartments for retired teachers. Thousands of letters poured in supporting Andrus in her efforts for retired teachers. In 1958, Andrus established and became the first President of the American Association of Retired Persons, today known as AARP. An early essay about her vision for AARP stated that “AARP is a nongovernmental organization, nonpartisan and nonprofit, accepting all who qualify by age, regardless of sex, color, creed or previous state or country,” at a time when many establishments were less egalitarian.

Honoring Andrus at her death in 1967, President Lyndon Johnson said, “The life of each citizen who seeks relentlessly to serve the national good is a most precious asset to this land...by her enduring accomplishment, she has enriched not only us, but all succeeding generations of Americans.” The first U.S. Commissioner on Aging, William Bechill said, “Dr. Andrus was one of the first to realize that our nation was neither seriously facing the questions of meaningful use of the retirement years nor concerned enough with a place of respect and purpose of older people in the world around us.”

Perhaps Andrus said it best in creating the motto for AARP – “To Serve, Not to Be Served.” And she herself discovered the secret of the good life – “we learn the inner secret of happiness when we learn to direct our inner drives, our interest and our attention to something outside ourselves.”

# READY TO SERVE

## REMARKABLE GENERATIONS

The gold standard for civic engagement has been set by the Greatest Generation, the group of Americans born in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who came of age while winning World War II. The values of this generation, molded by the hardships of the Great Depression and World War II, helped produce the “long civic generation” that would actively participate in civic and religious groups, give to charities and volunteer their time, trust other people and key institutions, and participate in politics and express political views. As the Greatest Generation reached retirement age, however, their model of engagement was not matched by their successors – the Silent Generation, and their children, the Baby Boomers.<sup>13</sup>

Civic health indicators began to decline steadily starting in about 1970.<sup>14</sup> Connecting with civic and religious groups, connecting to others through family and friends, voting and participating in politics, trusting other people and major institutions, and staying informed all started to show steady declines. One indicator that has not declined is volunteering. Even as generations have grown less civically active,

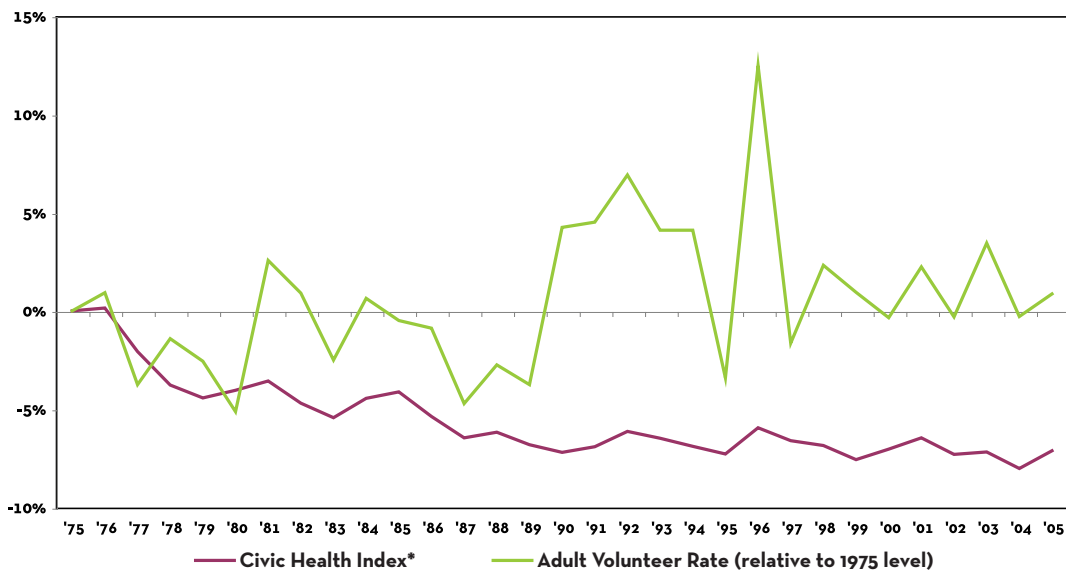
they have maintained their commitment to volunteering, a distinctive characteristic of America as old as our country.<sup>15</sup>

As the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers reached retirement age, they exhibited a number of remarkable characteristics. The Silent Generation has a longer life expectancy,<sup>16</sup> higher levels of education,<sup>17</sup> and more wealth than any previous generation.<sup>18</sup> The Baby Boomers, the most populous generation in history, are wealthier,<sup>19</sup> healthier,<sup>20</sup> and better educated<sup>21</sup> than even the Silent Generation. These two generations of retirees and workers approaching the end of their careers command an unprecedented amount of financial resources and human capital.

## A DEEP COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

The Silent Generation and Baby Boomers have demonstrated a deep commitment to service through volunteering. An original survey conducted for this report revealed that 73 percent of all adults between the ages of 44 and 79 (“Experienced Americans”) volunteered for an organization in the past year. An additional 13 percent reported that they volunteered on their own. Not only are many Experienced Americans volunteering, but over half of those who volunteer do so at least once a month.

### Civic Health Index and Volunteering Rate



\*Without three controversial measures – online chat, the ability to place political parties on an ideological spectrum, and people’s belief that they understand government – which are considered less reliable.

Source: National Conference on Citizenship, Civic Health Index, 2006; DDB Needham Life Style Survey



The rate of volunteering for an organization is highest among: those who attend religious services regularly (86 percent); college graduates (85 percent); professionals (84 percent); those with incomes over \$75,000 (83 percent); and evangelical Christians (80 percent). Women are more likely to volunteer for an organization than men (76 percent v. 70 percent). The volunteer rate for Hispanics is significantly lower than for any other demographic group, with only 48 percent saying they volunteered for an organization in the last year. This is still significantly higher than the 13.5 percent of Hispanics found to volunteer by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2007.<sup>22</sup>

We also note that among Boomer and Silent Generation respondents alike, volunteering is driven most by whether individuals attend religious services, vote, and are healthy. Also, there is a strong drive among them to make a difference by helping others. One woman from our focus groups reflected the views of many in our survey, stating that “Making a difference in my own life by helping other people gives me a reason, when I turn off the lights at night, [to] sleep...instead of laying there.”

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that although volunteer rates decrease with age after peaking during the mid-40s, the amount of time spent volunteering increases. The result is that the percent of people volunteering on any given day generally increases by age.<sup>23</sup>

More than one-third (36 percent) of Experienced Americans report serving in a leadership capacity, particularly professionals (57 percent), the college educated (48 percent), and individuals who make more than \$75,000 per year (47 percent). Sixty-five percent of regular volunteers volunteered in a leadership role.

## EFFECT OF RETIRING ON VOLUNTEERING

A natural point at which Experienced Americans can begin volunteering or increase the amount of time they spend volunteering is retirement. Although most workers look forward to the increased leisure time afforded by retirement, many retirees want to stay active and continue to be productive. A 2002 study conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates indicated that staying active, productive, and involved are the most common reasons that retirees continue to work.<sup>24</sup> Volunteering simultaneously offers a way to contribute to society and the flexibility to spend time enjoying retirement

Original data from our survey confirm that the point of retirement is an ideal time to recruit volunteers. Seventy percent of respondents who have not retired said that they expect to become more involved in volunteer activities when they retire, and 30 percent of this same group said they expect to be much more involved. Only seven percent said they expect to be less involved. We note that intentions to increase volunteering may be much greater than the reality when individuals do retire. But our survey demonstrates a significant openness to increasing time spent helping others after retirement.

As would be expected, although many current workers *intend* to volunteer more when they retire, a smaller percentage of current retirees said that their level of volunteering increased when they retired. Thirty-nine percent of retired respondents say they became more involved in volunteer activities when they retired, but only 20 percent said they became much more involved. Twenty-three percent said they became less involved. Those who increased their involvement most were Hispanics, African Americans, women of the Silent Generation, those with at least some college education, and individuals who prefer to volunteer on a regular basis.<sup>25</sup> The groups who increased their involvement the least were people who vote less often, who prefer to volunteer on their own, men of the Silent Generation, and individuals who do not volunteer through an organization or as an individual.

## INTEREST IN VOLUNTEERING MORE

When asked how likely they are to increase their level of volunteering in the next three to five years, 41 percent of Experienced Americans said they were very or somewhat likely to do so. When applied to the total population of Experienced Americans, this represents over 45 million people who say they are likely to increase their volunteering in the near future. Of all survey respondents, 26 percent said they were very likely (score of eight, nine, or ten) to increase the amount of time they spend volunteering, and 15 percent said they were somewhat likely (score of six or seven on a scale of zero-to-ten) to do so.

An even higher percentage of respondents said they would be somewhat likely to increase the amount of time they spend volunteering if there were opportunities in their community that fit with their interests and schedule. Eighteen percent of respondents said they were somewhat likely to increase their participation, and 32 percent said they would be very likely to do so.

## A NOTE ON POLLING

The rate of volunteering found in this survey is significantly higher than the rate of volunteering measured in the official statistics on volunteering collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (“BLS”). Over-reporting of volunteering is a common problem for surveys other than those reported by the BLS. The BLS reports that volunteer rates vary from 31 percent to 24 percent for this population, less than half the rate found in our survey. We attribute the discrepancy between these figures to a lower response rate for our survey and to the fact that our entire survey was about volunteering and civic engagement. Survey respondents may have exaggerated their commitment to service and their likelihood of increasing their volunteering in order to please the interviewer, and potential respondents who were uninterested in the topic were probably less likely to agree to complete the survey.

Although we note the difficulty in making, in this and many other surveys on the subject, accurate estimates of volunteering, we also note that precisely because we spoke with Experienced Americans who may be predisposed to volunteer, their responses are especially relevant to understanding what might be done to foster increased volunteering in the future. Although the absolute levels of volunteering, actual and prospective, reported in this survey should be taken with a grain of salt, we are confident of comparisons within groups of volunteers, the existence of significant untapped potential, their attitudes and behaviors toward volunteer service, the motivations and barriers for doing so, and their preferences and insights that can strongly inform initiatives and policymaking.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, those who say they are most likely to increase the amount of time they spend volunteering are those who already volunteer at least once a week. Seventeen percent of regular volunteers said they are somewhat likely to volunteer even more in the next three to five years, and 30 percent said that they are very likely to increase their volunteer commitment. On a continuum based on age and current level of volunteering, the likelihood to increase volunteer hours is highest among Boomers who volunteer regularly and lowest among those in the Silent Generation who do not volunteer.

Other demographic groups that expressed a high likelihood of increasing their volunteering were those in their 50s and early 60s, Boomer women, African Americans, Hispanics, regular churchgoers, those who care for older relatives, those who earn more than \$75,000 a year, those with kids younger than 18 in their households, and professional managers. Respondents age 70-79, and those whose activities are limited by their health, were less likely to say they would increase their time spent volunteering.

Much of this “interest” in volunteering may be aspirational, rather than realistic. As projections about the future, these numbers are almost surely inflated. But even if we discount for that exaggeration, the realistic number of potential vol-

unteers is still high – and certainly worth efforts to ensure the potential is tapped.

## HEALTHY AND UNIMPEDED

Not only are Experienced Americans interested in volunteering more, but most are able to do so. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported they are unimpeded by health and care-giving for relatives in their home. Only 23 percent of respondents said that their daily activities are limited by physical or health conditions, 22 percent care for a child or grandchild who lives with them, and just 11 percent care for an older relative who lives in their household. While none of these characteristics are necessarily impediments to volunteering, each could make it more difficult for someone interested in volunteering to find the time and have the ability to volunteer.

Additionally, most have access to the internet. Two-thirds (66 percent) of those surveyed, and 70 percent of regular volunteers, said that they use the internet at least a few times a week. This represents a significant opportunity for the expansion of web-based information on volunteer opportunities for Americans as they reach middle age and beyond. In our expanding technological age, these trends of internet use are likely to increase as the generations age.

## ENCORE SERVICE

A new trend is emerging among Experienced Americans: encore careers. Rather than retiring in the traditional sense, or after experiencing retirement with rest and recreation for some time without new work and additional income, many Americans are seeking these second careers. And a growing number of them are seeking such new jobs in fields of public service or in work they view as a contribution to the common good.

Three years ago, the MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures *New Face of Work Survey* found that half of Americans age 50-70 said they were interested in work that would improve the quality of life in their communities, with one fifth of those 50-59 identifying such work as a top priority. In his book *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*, the founder of Civic Ventures, Marc Freedman, has given this concept of work after “retirement” the name “encore careers.”<sup>27</sup>

In a 2008 survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, the latest MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures report finds that an encore career is more than an appealing idea: it is a livelihood and lifestyle for an unexpectedly large group of Experienced Americans, who without abundant pathways or much help, have found a way to do work that matters – work they want to do and that society needs to have done. More than 6 percent of those 44-70 years old, or more than 5 million people, have found such work. They have found such work in various forms of public service. They are helping in our schools to ease the shortage of qualified teachers and classroom assistants; as social entrepreneurs

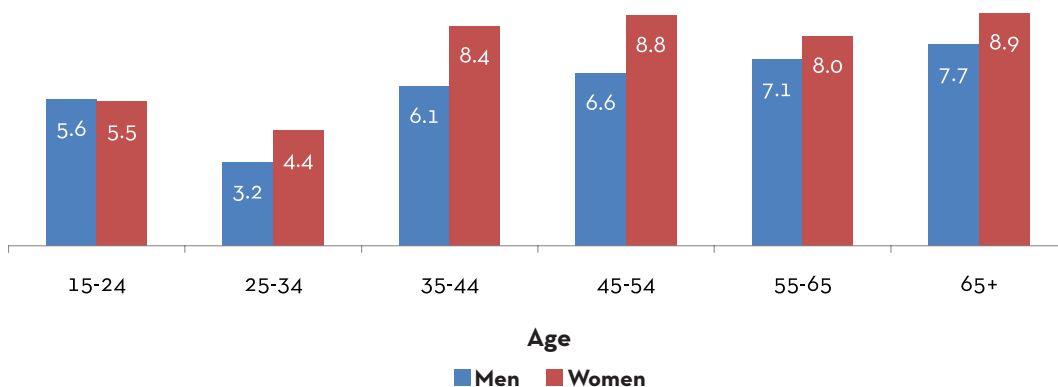
*“Making a difference in my own life by helping other people gives me a reason, when I turn off the lights at night, [to] sleep... instead of laying there.”*

starting non-profits and businesses to improve local education, clean up the environment, or provide health care to the uninsured; as nurses and hospital workers; and as leaders of non-profit organizations.<sup>28</sup>

Research shows that the number of people now in or considering encore careers is growing. Estimates place one third to one half of older Americans currently in “bridge” jobs before retiring completely.<sup>29</sup> Since Experienced Americans list the need for additional income as the second biggest barrier to unpaid volunteering, the “encore career” approach is another, very promising way for them to help others and secure the added income they need in jobs that contribute to their communities.

Similar to regular, sustained volunteering, the benefit of encore work to the participants includes their own health and happiness. As noted by Freedman in his book, there is “increasing evidence that extended work improves the psychological and physical health of people in the second half of life.”<sup>30</sup>

### Percent of population who volunteered on an average day



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

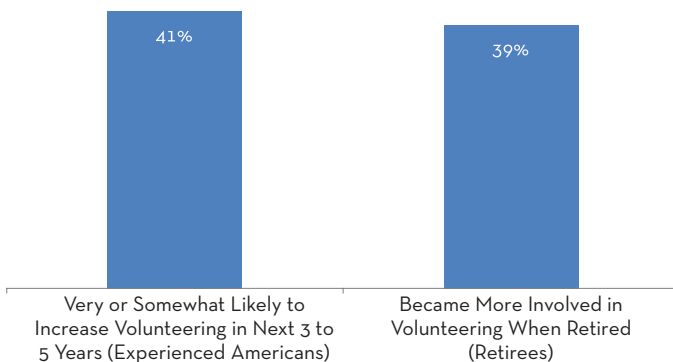
While our report focuses on the potential for civic engagement by unpaid volunteers or volunteers who may receive reimbursement for expenses, a small stipend or an educational award, encore careers should be recognized as an important dimension of civic engagement. Indeed, with the greater income possible through such public service work, those workers may themselves have greater capacity and commitment for some traditional volunteering.

While seeking encore careers, as with volunteering, many Experienced Americans will press for flexible work schedules and for part-time jobs. Because of the shortages developing from the retirement of the Boomer Generation, employers may be more ready than ever to offer such flexible or part-time work in order to get the work-force they need.

In California, for example, Governor Schwarzenegger estimates there will soon be a shortage of more than 30,000 math and science teachers in the public secondary schools, and he has launched a program for “encore teachers” to be recruited by major corporations from among their skilled employees soon to retire. It will be interesting to see how the school systems respond to this opportunity, and whether they are able to meet teacher shortages with more flexibility in qualifications and schedules.

Beyond their value to local communities, increasing encore careers can help address the impending critical problems of Social Security by helping to maintain the tax base for a longer period of time.<sup>31</sup>

### Potential for Increased Volunteering



### GENERATIONAL PESSIMISM

Despite their commitment to helping others and to volunteering, Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation display surprising pessimism about their generations’ impact on the world. Only 20 percent of those surveyed said that their generation will leave the world in better condition than it was before and 55 percent said that they would leave the world in worse condition.

Women are far more likely than men to feel pessimistic about their generation’s impact, with 60 percent of all women and 62 percent of Boomer women saying their generation will leave the world worse off, compared to just 50 percent of men and 47 percent of Boomer men. African Americans tend to be less pessimistic, with only 44 percent saying their generation will leave the world in worse shape – and nearly a third (31 percent) saying they will leave it in better shape. Hispanics are also less negative with 49 percent saying they are leaving the world in worse condition and 28 percent saying in better condition than when they inherited it. A recent study conducted by Pew Research Center highlights Boomers’ negative outlook of their own lives. The report, released June 25, 2008, indicates that Boomers have a more pessimistic view of their quality of life, earning potential, and standard of living than the older and younger individuals that participated in the survey.<sup>32</sup>

Those who volunteer the most are the least likely to say that their generation will leave the world in worse condition, although even a majority of them are still pessimistic. Whether justified or not, many adults at or near retirement age feel like their generation has not done its share. By tapping into this feeling that our children may be left with a world in worse condition if we do not act, and by providing an opportunity to serve others, the power of these generations can be harnessed through volunteering and civic engagement.

We do not know exactly why this is the case and further research is merited that could probe the specific reasons — such as decline of the family, the energy crisis, mounting debt, environmental threats to the planet, terrorism and more.



## MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

### MOTIVATING A GENERATION

The motivation to volunteer varies for each individual, with some volunteers hoping to make a difference, some looking to stay active, and others who are expressing their faith or values. Responses to the survey indicate that volunteering helps adults from the Boomer and Silent Generations achieve their life goals. When asked to rate various goals by level of importance, respondents said “making a difference by helping others” was the fourth most important goal in life, following “having a close-knit family,” “being healthy and physically active,” and “maintaining friendships and social connections.” For those who volunteer at least once a week, making a difference by helping others was ranked third in importance. Helping to “make your community a better place to live” ranked seventh out of nine possible goals. Our survey and others have found that volunteers are also motivated by the desire to improve their own lives and pursue their own interests.<sup>33</sup>

All adults surveyed, including volunteers and current non-volunteers, identified their motivations for past and present volunteering. Fifty-two percent of all respondents said that helping others in need was an extremely important motivation. This view was shared by 67 percent of those who volunteer at least once a week, but by only 41 percent of non-volunteers. Seventy-two percent of African Americans also shared this view.

The second most important motivator was staying healthy and active, shared by 48 percent of all respondents, 67 percent of Silent Generation women, and 64 percent of those 70-79. African Americans (73 percent), Hispanics (70 percent), and the Silent Generation (59 percent) cited staying healthy and active among their leading motivation.

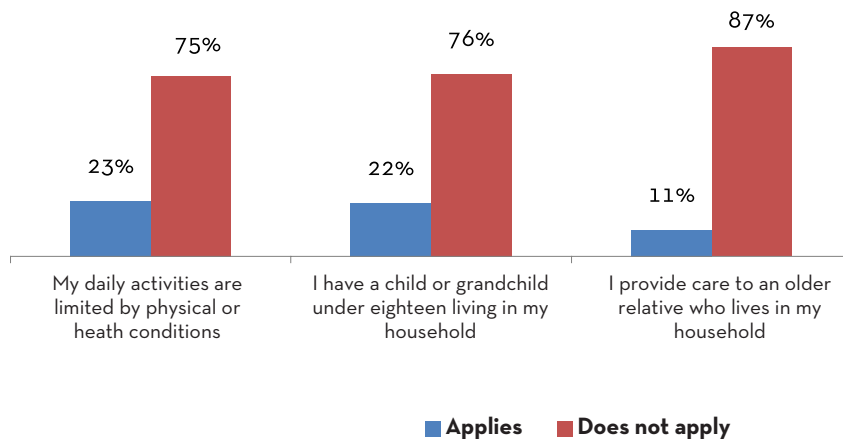
Making a difference on an issue or problem they care about was the third most important motivation for all adults (47 percent), followed by feeling a responsibility to help others (46 percent) and giving life greater meaning and purpose (45 percent), and expressing religious beliefs or values (44 percent).

Some focus group respondents expressed the importance of reciprocity as a motivation to volunteer: that some day they may need help, and they want someone to be there to volunteer for them. A man from our focus groups put it simply: “But, you know, who knows what, somewhere down the road...you might be on the receiving end for it. Because you never know what’s going to happen in the future.”

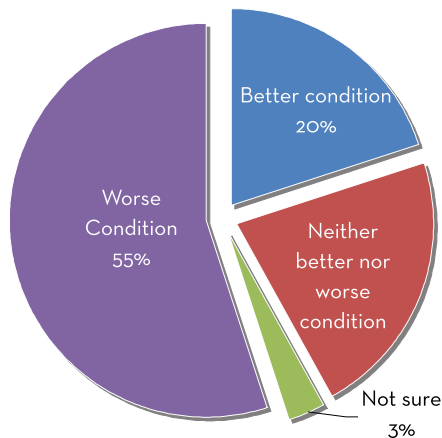
### PREFERENCES FOR VOLUNTEERING

Compared to other ways to become involved, respondents prefer volunteering through faith-based or religious groups, with 45 percent of adults saying they are extremely or very interested in volunteering or already volunteer for such an organization. Besides this point of entry, the two issues of most interest to Experienced Americans are volunteering to mentor or tutor young people and helping elderly people live independently, which showed current participation or high interest among 40 percent and 38 percent of the

### Most Older Americans are Unimpeded by Health and Caring for Relatives



## Widespread Pessimism about Generation's Impact



Compared to the condition of the world when your generation inherited it, will your generation leave the world in better condition or worse condition?

population, respectively. Regular volunteers (those who volunteer once a week or more) and episodic volunteers (those who volunteer once a year to three times a month) alike expressed the most enthusiasm for this point of entry and these two activities. College-educated, professionals, and those with higher incomes expressed more interest in mentoring youth, while non-college educated, blue collar workers, and members of low-income households are more interested in helping the elderly.

Consistent with these findings, a previous survey conducted for AARP in 2003 revealed what causes volunteers over the age of 45 to serve. The survey found that over half (56 percent) of all volunteers performed service that benefited the elderly, either through an organization or on their own. Forty-seven percent volunteered to help children or teens, 42 percent served their neighborhood or community, and 41 percent assisted the disabled.<sup>34</sup>

### EDUCATION AWARDS AS INCENTIVES

Rewards and incentives can influence behavior, and policymakers wisely use them to encourage activities that benefit the public. Just as donations to charity are tax-deductible in order to encourage philanthropy, volunteering can be rewarded in order to foster a commitment to service. Currently, a wide range of incentives are offered to encourage people to serve, including full-time and part-time stipends to cover living costs, education awards, travel reimbursement, and Presidential recognition.

Our study found that the most effective incentive for volunteering is one not currently in use – offering an education award that recipients could earn and give to a younger relative or other needy child.<sup>34</sup> Fifty-one percent of all Experienced Americans said that such an award would have a big or a moderate impact on their participation in volunteer activities. An education award was especially influential among those who said they were most likely to increase their volunteering. Fifty-seven percent of regular volunteers who said they are likely to volunteer more in the future also said that an education award would have a big or moderate impact, as did 58 percent of those who do not volunteer or only volunteer once a year and are likely to increase their volunteering. By providing an incentive that they identify as highly influential, we can hopefully capitalize on the enthusiasm of these future volunteers.

*“We have demonstrated that old age is not a defeat but a victory, not a punishment but a privilege...we all have a responsibility to remain active in retirement, to keep ourselves well informed, to cooperate with responsible public and private agencies concerned with programs and activities that will make our nation strong morally, spiritually and materially for the benefit of all Americans.”*

– Ethel Percy Andrus,  
Founder of AARP

Access to group health insurance also tests relatively well, with 49 percent of those likely to increase their amount of volunteering saying it would have a moderate or big impact. Not surprisingly, the individuals most interested in access to group health insurance are those between the ages of 55 and 62, 53 percent of whom say it would have a moderate or a big impact on their volunteer habits.

### ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS

Fifty-five percent of Experienced Americans are extremely interested, or already participate, in at least one volunteer program like Meals on Wheels, Senior Companions, Volunteer Senior Rangers, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Peace Corps. Looking at these figures as a portion of the total population of Experienced Americans who are likely to increase their volunteering, there are millions of Americans who are very interested in these established programs. African Americans expressed the most interest in nearly all of these programs.

### MAJOR BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING: TIME & MONEY

Increasing Americans' commitment to volunteering requires not only identifying points at which they are likely to increase their level of involvement, but it also requires understanding and addressing the barriers that people face. While it is hard to know whether barriers cited as important by

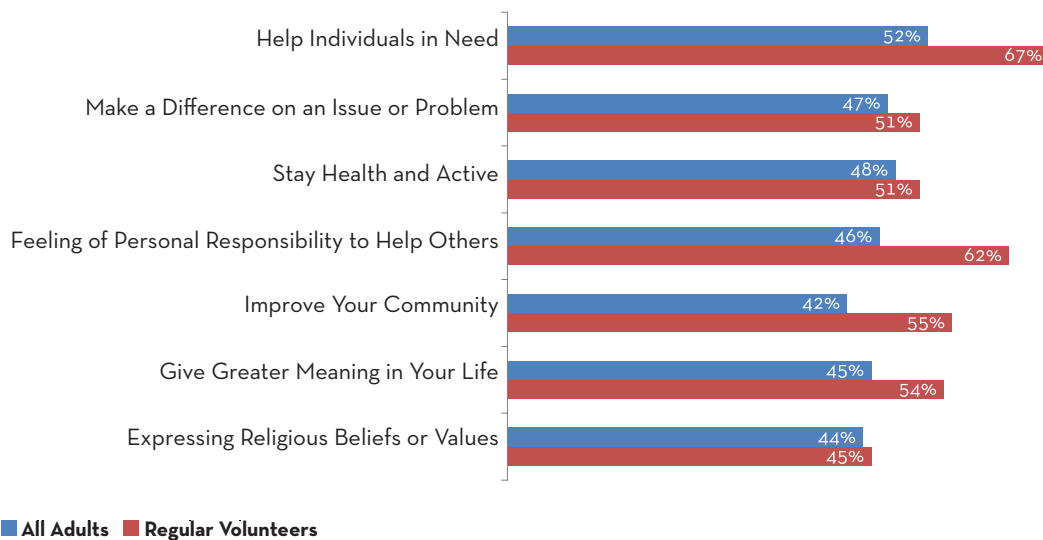
respondents are actually what prevents them from volunteering, rankings do help to show how respondents perceive the relative importance of one barrier over another.

The most important barriers to volunteering by Experienced Americans are a lack of time and the need to make money. Seven in ten adults between the ages of 44 and 79 said that their busy lives did not leave them with enough time to volunteer. Additionally, 64 percent of the adults surveyed said that most volunteer opportunities require too much of a time commitment and do not offer schedules that are flexible enough. One woman from our focus groups expressed the concerns of many when she said, "I'm afraid to give anybody a commitment and have them count on me to be there ... at the moment." Another woman said, "I'm pulled in a lot of directions with the family, you know."

The groups that view time as the biggest barrier include those who are younger (age 44-49), those who are employed, those who are not religious, and those who vote less often. Expectedly, members of the Silent Generation and retirees are the least likely to cite time as a barrier. African Americans are also less likely to cite time as an important barrier.

The need for many Boomers to make money is related to time as a barrier. While many people earning a living also volunteer, 54 percent of all Experienced Americans say that the need to make money is a barrier to volunteering. People who vote less often are the most likely to say the need to

### Extremely Important Motivation for Volunteering (Rating 9 or 10 on zero-to-ten scale)



earn money is a barrier to volunteering, with 71 percent citing this reason. White collar workers and those who make less than \$30,000 annually are also likely to say it is a barrier. Members of the Silent Generation and retirees are the least likely to say that the need to earn money is the barrier, as many of them can rely on Social Security and pensions for their income.

### OTHER BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

Another barrier to volunteering after time constraints and the need to work for pay is a lack of information about volunteer opportunities. Forty-eight percent of adults surveyed said that this is a barrier, as did 61 percent of non-volunteers.

Notably, 69 percent of blue-collar workers indicate that the lack of information about volunteer opportunities is a barrier to volunteering. Other groups that cite the lack of information as a barrier include Hispanics (58 percent), those who live alone (55 percent), those who are not religious (57 percent), those who vote infrequently (58 percent), and those who earn less than \$30,000 a year (59 percent).

A more encouraging way to look at the data is that 84 percent of all Experienced Americans do not think that a lack of information is a *major* barrier.

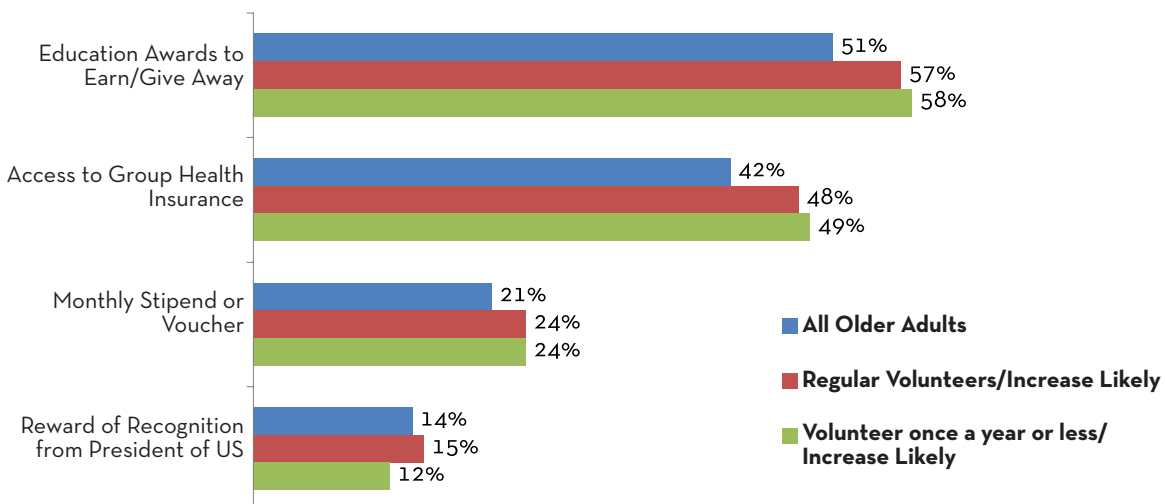
However the data are viewed, the fact that nearly half of Experienced Americans surveyed reported that a lack of

*“But, you know, who knows what, somewhere down the road...you might be on the receiving end for it. Because you never know what’s going to happen in the future.”*

information about volunteer opportunities is a major or minor barrier shows that more and better information needs to be provided. The Civic Highway we propose will help enable more Experienced Americans to become aware of the available opportunities.

Other barriers were cited by large groups of Experienced Americans. These include not having found a group in which they fit. Fifty-seven percent of blue collar workers, 58 percent of those with a high school education or less, and 56 percent of Hispanics cite this as a barrier. Fifty-five percent of Hispanics and 53 percent of Catholics say they have not found an opportunity that matches their skills. Health issues are cited as a barrier by 59 percent of those with incomes of less than \$30,000 a year, 58 percent of African Americans, 56 percent of respondents age 70-79, and 55 percent of those who live alone. Fifty-seven percent

### Effectiveness of Incentives



Percent saying each would have a big or moderate impact on their participation in volunteer activities



*“I’m afraid to give anybody a commitment and have them count on me to be there ... at the moment.”*

of Hispanics and 45 percent of African Americans also cite a lack of transportation as a barrier to volunteering.

Despite these barriers, there is hope for reaching the untapped potential of these groups. As mentioned previously, studies indicate that the response is overwhelmingly positive when seniors are asked to volunteer.<sup>36</sup> Other recent survey findings indicate these potential volunteers are interested in serving causes they care about, easily accessible opportunities, and interesting and challenging activities.<sup>37</sup>

### FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES

Although volunteers differ markedly in what they look for in their volunteer experiences, they do share some preferences. Experienced Americans overwhelmingly prefer volunteering without a specific schedule, so that their service can flexibly fit their busy lives and other responsibilities. Seventy-one percent of respondents said they prefer volunteering without a specific schedule, while only 21 percent said they prefer regular and ongoing

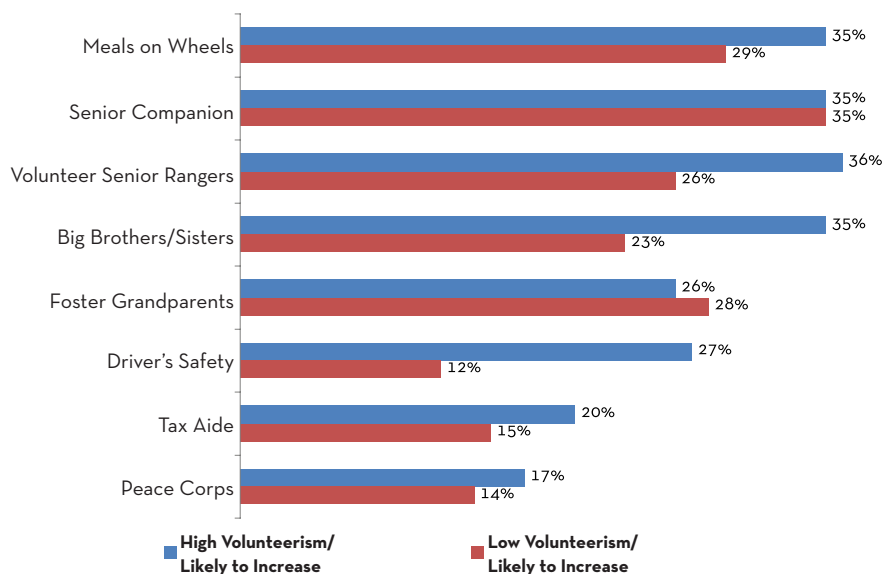
opportunities. A woman from our focus groups said, “It can be intimidating to get involved with an agency or something... [because] you have to be able to give 15 hours a week.” Interest in regular, ongoing volunteering is higher for regular volunteers who are likely to increase their volunteering, 39 percent of whom expressed a preference for regular and ongoing volunteering. These data suggest that there need to be low barrier entry points so that Experienced Americans can get an introduction to volunteering.

Results are less varied regarding preferences of whether to volunteer for an organization or on one’s own. Forty-nine percent of Experienced Americans prefer volunteering on their own, compared to only 36 percent who prefer volunteering through an organization. But these numbers are reversed for regular volunteers likely to increase their volunteering: 52 percent prefer serving through an organization while only 29 percent prefer doing so on their own. This suggests that although people generally prefer serving on their own, those with the most experience and the biggest commitment to volunteering find organizations a preferable means of volunteering.

### VOLUNTEERING IN THE PROCESS OF AMERICAN SELF-GOVERNMENT

While this report focuses on volunteering in non-partisan, non-political community and national service, largely through non-profit service organizations or

## Percent of respondents very interested or currently participating in select programs



*“I’m pulled in a lot of directions with the family, you know.”*

self-directed, we do not discount the value of direct participation in the political process. This includes voting and registering to vote, joining in campaigns to register voters, and active work for a candidate or party. In the 2008 campaign season, the good news for civic engagement is the high level of individual participation.

Our survey shows a direct connection between such participation and non-partisan volunteering for service. Eighty-two percent of Experienced Americans who vote in all local elections volunteered for an organization during the last year, while only 59 percent of those who vote in just some or fewer elections did. Thirty percent of those who vote in all local elections said they are very likely to increase their level of volunteering in the next three to five years, compared with only 20 percent of those who vote in only some or fewer.

There are also some differences by party affiliation. Republicans tend to volunteer more often than Democrats, with 83 percent of Republicans saying they volunteered for an organization in the past year, while only 67 percent of Democrats said the same. However, this disparity can be explained by the greater tendency of Republicans to

regularly attend religious services. After controlling for religious attendance, there is no significant difference in volunteering between Republicans and Democrats. Additionally, 69 percent of those who identified themselves as independents volunteered for an organization in the past year.

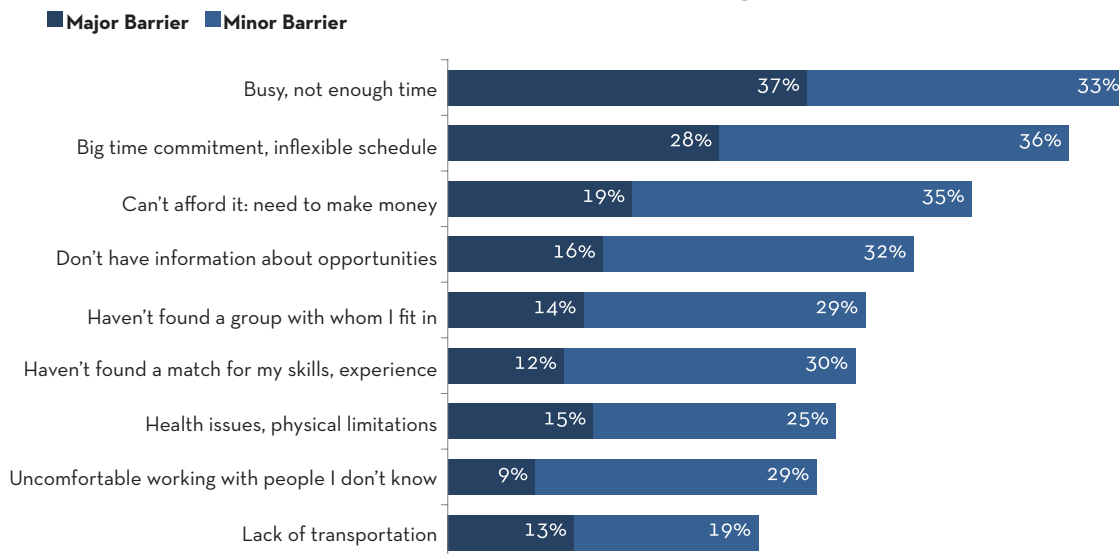
These figures show that volunteering and political engagement are closely related and that volunteering is not a partisan issue. Republicans, Democrats and Independents all show high levels of interest in volunteering, and this issue is supported across the political spectrum. This highlights the fact that the national and state governments, regardless of which party is in power, should get behind efforts to buttress volunteering among the Boomer and Silent Generations.

### ONLY THE BEGINNING

Although the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomers demonstrate a remarkable commitment to volunteering, they still feel that they are leaving the world in worse condition. Members of these generations hold huge potential for increasing their volunteering as they enter retirement, with more than four in ten indicating they will increase the time they volunteer in the next five years and nearly the same number of retired Americans reporting that they did so. And a majority of these Americans are unimpeded by health or care-giving for relatives in their home.

The time Americans spend volunteering and serving each year makes a dramatic impact on solving problems and

### Barriers to Volunteering



meeting needs. Volunteers allow important organizations to function, provide care for the poor and needy, help disadvantaged youth and the elderly, deliver essential services, and offer relief following national emergencies and local disasters.

According to a report published by the Urban Institute in 2005, the value of volunteer and unpaid activities by people ages 55 and older is more than \$160 billion each year.<sup>38</sup> Volunteers already provide enormous benefit, but Americans also hold the potential for dramatically increasing the impact they have on the welfare of the nation. Increasing the rate of volunteering among Americans between the ages of 44 and 79 by even 10 percent could go a long way toward addressing some of the biggest problems facing the country and could provide a benefit to the nation worth tens of billions of dollars annually in services provided and a number equally high in decreased medical and nursing costs by keeping these generations active.

*“It can be intimidating to get involved with an agency or something...[because] you have to be able to give 15 hours a week.”*

## THE WAY FORWARD

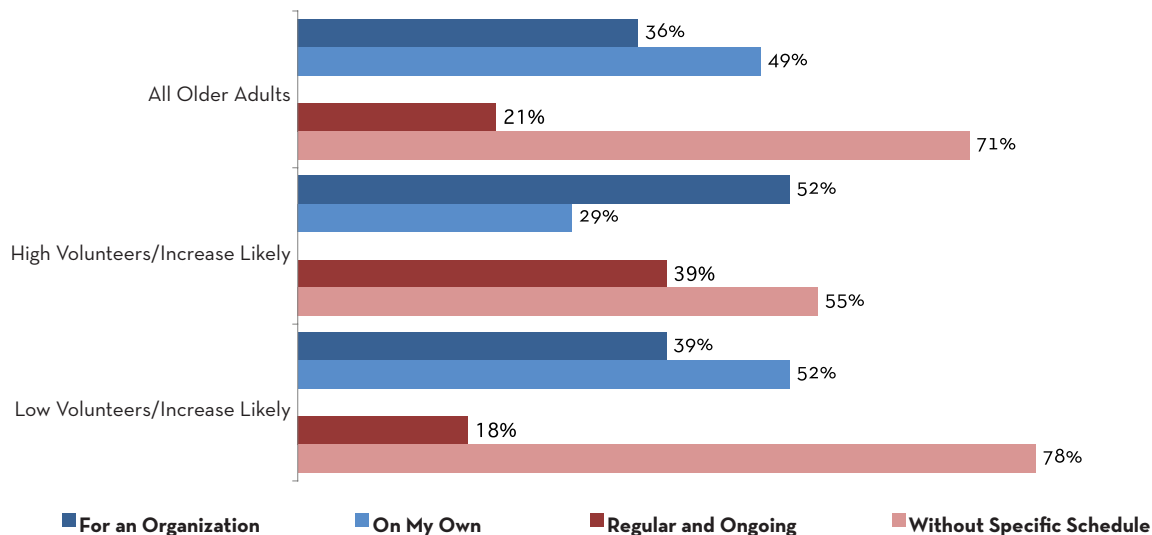
**W**e believe the perspectives and insights from our survey and focus groups of Experienced Americans add a new, personal, and needed dimension to the discussion of the engagement of Americans from the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations in civic life. We offer ideas for new initiatives, policies, reforms and additional work to harness the power of America’s older generations to strengthen our communities and country. People recognize the value of getting involved at the local level and how the aggregation of millions of individual acts of compassion could affect the world. One woman from our focus groups said, “I think if everybody would take care of just helping their own community, you know, the country and the world would straighten out.” We hope that this report and these ideas will foster a national dialogue on how America can tap the talents of its Experienced Americans to address our toughest challenges and, in the process, bring new purpose, meaning and happiness to the lives of millions of people.

### IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES

#### *Development of the Civic Highway*

Seniors in our survey and focus groups talked about the importance of family and community. They also talked about “helping others,” “making a difference,” the social

### Preferences of Those Likely to Increase Volunteering



and health benefits of volunteering, and seeing a direct impact of their efforts in their neighborhoods and communities. Many seniors felt that their ability to impact the country or the world would be through the aggregation of individual acts in local communities. Service to others begins in response to the needs of a family member, friend, neighbor, or person in a community. How can America harness the appetite to help others through the best available technologies?

Two thirds of all adults in our survey and nearly three-quarters of those who are active volunteers use the internet. Nearly half of all Experienced Americans (48%) identify a lack of information about volunteer opportunities as a barrier to volunteering. In the past two decades, significant advances have been made in connecting individuals to opportunities to serve others in their communities. VolunteerMatch enables individuals to enter their zip code or home town, identify their area of interest such as “education” or “health” and find dozens of opportunities to volunteer that indicate how far the opportunities are from a person’s community and whether such opportunities are a good fit for people 55 and older. Servenet.org performs similar functions for millions of young people and for Americans of any age interested in helping young people. The Hands On Network has a 1-800-volunteer phone and technology system that connects volunteers to their local volunteer centers. The United Way’s Volunteer Solutions and Idealist.org perform related functions, the former helping organizations with the critical function of volunteer management and the latter connecting individuals to jobs in the non-profit sector. The Partnership for Public Service is working to engage Experienced Americans in federal civil service jobs to address the retirement crisis that will affect mission critical positions in the federal government.

New social networking technologies have emerged in recent years, such as Facebook Causes, Google, and Salesforce.com, connecting individuals, especially young people, at a spellbinding pace. Facebook Causes, for example, enables individuals to post their personal profiles and create or join causes of any kind, such as supporting the purchase of bed nets for African women and children at risk of malaria. MeetUp uses online technologies to bring people with shared interests together offline to discuss everything from politics to pets. Volunteer.gov provides one of the largest searchable online databases of volunteer, community and national service opportunities around the country and world. The Corporation for National and Community

Service and USA Freedom Corps recently launched VolunteeringInAmerica.gov, that provides statistical data on volunteering for communities, states, and the nation.

Corporations are playing an important role. IBM, for example, has created an “On Demand Community” website that matches more than 100,000 employees and retirees in more than 100 countries worldwide with local volunteer opportunities, as well as second careers in teaching, public service and non-profit service, and arms them with a wide variety of tools, such as online presentations, videos, and software solutions that train employees on mentoring a student, helping teachers with technologies, and sharing with non-profits project management skills and new technologies. Employees can track their volunteer hours, qualify for recognition, and prompt a matching grant from IBM to the non-profit or school in which they serve for at least 50 hours in a year. Other websites, such as Eons.com, ReZoom, Maya’s Mom, BOOMj and BoomerTowne, are designed specifically for Baby Boomers and older generations. Much more can be done with these technologies to connect Experienced Americans.

A public-private partnership, including leading non-profit organizations and the Corporation for National and Community Service, should offer a significant grant to the best consortium of organizations that will develop volunteer matching and social networking technologies. The purpose would be to develop the most user friendly, individual-centered, sophisticated technology to connect Experienced Americans to volunteer opportunities in their local communities while maintaining the proprietary interests of each organization.

Such a Civic Highway system would create numerous ramps for Experienced Americans to access information online according to their own interests. This system should include the use of the internet or telephone, the most localized volunteer opportunities possible, and social networking in neighborhoods and across the world. It should connect

*“I think if everybody would take care of just helping their own community, you know, the country and the world would straighten out.”*

to faith-based institutions, where most Experienced Americans are likely to volunteer. It should also allow Experienced Americans the ability to organize group events, create new causes of their own, and enlist others to join. This system will help to ensure that organizations are managing volunteers well and connect Experienced Americans to federally-supported service opportunities, such as Meals on Wheels, Peace Corps, USA Freedom Corps, Seniors Corps, AmeriCorps, Citizen Corps, Volunteers for Prosperity, and the Volunteer Senior Rangers Corps. It can also connect Experienced Americans to non-profit jobs, jobs in the federal, state and local governments and other second careers in public service.

This Civic Highway should offer information on local town hall meetings on public issues and other educational and civic activities, enable Experienced Americans to record their service experiences and hours, and facilitate applications for the President's Volunteer Service Award and other recognition from organizations. The grant should specify a timeline that designs and builds the system for use within one year, so the system is up and running by September 11, 2009.

### ***A Call to Serve***

Sixty-eight percent of Experienced Americans who did not volunteer in the past year reported they had not been asked to do so. Research shows that when Americans, including Experienced Americans, are asked to serve, high percentages of them volunteer. Public service campaigns with the Ad Council after 9/11 issued a repeated call to service from well-known Americans, including the President of the United States, sports stars, leaders from the Greatest Generation, actors, and ordinary individuals. Ads were in movie theaters before shows, broadcast on TV, radio, and in taxicab recordings, and aired during sports games. While we cannot prove cause and effect, volunteering grew from 59.8 million Americans from September 2001-2002 to 65.4 million Americans just four years later. Volunteering among Americans 45-54, 55-64, and over 65 during this period jumped as well.<sup>39</sup> Millions of Americans were connected by phone and internet to volunteer opportunities in their communities or in villages across the globe.

Leaders in the public and non-profit sectors should initiate a national public service campaign that asks every American to volunteer to help others in need — to sign a pledge to keep informed about the challenges facing our communities, country and world to volunteer to help meet

those challenges, and to sign a petition to call upon the President, Congress, Governors, Mayors and leaders of other institutions to ask individuals to serve and to create more opportunities to do so over their lifetimes. This public service campaign would connect Americans to a website and a toll free number where they could find out more information about how to volunteer in their communities and participate in the campaign.

### ***A Summit of Foundations and Corporations***

While the federal government plays a large role in funding the Senior Corps and other volunteer service programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service that engage Experienced Americans, most of these Americans will serve in local communities either on their own or directly through a non-profit organization. Those organizations often rely on the support of foundations, corporations and individual contributions to provide the necessary start-up, matching or sustaining funds. Often foundations have initiated and have been the primary funders of pace-setting programs, such as Atlantic Philanthropies' funding of the Civic Ventures' Experience Corps and the annual Purpose Prizes to outstanding volunteer leaders who are helping solve critical problems in their communities during the second half of their lives, defined as over 60.<sup>40</sup>

When we see what philanthropic organizations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, have done to define national problems and priorities, and provide seed money or longer-term support to social innovation, we can imagine what foundations can do to help finance a quantum leap in service by the three oldest generations. They have great power to help change the prevailing mind-set that sees older Americans primarily as problems and to help society see them instead as problem-solvers for their communities.

Corporations and corporate foundations are also playing important roles, and have a great, still-to-be-tapped potential, in helping to change the traditional concept of retirement as a stage just of rest and recreation. For example, as part of its large commitment to improving American public education, IBM is encouraging its retiring employees to help meet the growing shortage of secondary school teachers in math and science. It supports the teacher



training for employees willing to teach full-time or part-time — a model which inspired Governor Schwarzenegger to launch California’s EnCorps Teachers program, supported and led by philanthropist Sherry Lansing with various corporate partners.

Corporations and foundations can help ensure that the call to service reaches more Experienced Americans to volunteer and engage in encore service. That call itself must be a challenge to the foundation and corporate sectors of society to play a leading role in turning the population wave of Boomers as they enter a new stage in life, and of all older Americans, into a growing wave of service, social innovation, and civic engagement. To share innovations, spark new initiatives, and build on current momentum, we propose a national summit of corporations and foundations that examines the roles they can play in further fueling the civic engagement of Experienced Americans.

### **Signature Initiatives**

To demonstrate the power of Americans from the Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations to meet critical challenges, key organizations should develop signature initiatives. Respondents to our survey — both Boomers and the Silent Generation — expressed high interest in: 1) mentoring young people; and 2) helping the elderly live independently. These two initiatives have the benefit of engaging individuals in volunteer activities that can make a significant difference in advancing two national priorities and, in the process, foster intergenerational cooperation.

#### **1. Adult Mentors Help Prevent High School Dropout**

There is a high school dropout epidemic in America, with nearly one third of all public high school students and almost one half of all African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans failing to graduate from public high school with their class. More than one million students drop out of high school every year, right at a time when a high school degree is the bare minimum to compete in a globally competitive service economy. The price of ignorance is high — dropping out is a one million dollar mistake for dropouts themselves and writ large is a multi-billion dollar cost to society. Each class of dropouts costs the nation \$148 billion over the course of their lifetimes in lost tax revenues and higher costs of public assistance, prison, health care and other social services.<sup>41</sup> A woman in our focus groups said, “Truant and aimless youth, and then also the people that

are 50 and plus. You put those together..., doing something together, then maybe the youth would not be truant and aimless any longer.”

The dropout crisis is a fixable problem — we know who drops out, why they drop out, and from which schools they drop out. This awareness should enable a targeted and focused approach to addressing the dropout phenomenon. Innovative research tells us what works, including new research from the dropouts themselves. One solution to ensuring that students stay on track to graduate from high school ready for college is providing adult mentors and advocates for students at risk of dropping out.<sup>42</sup>

An initial goal should be to place 100,000 new adult mentors with students in the 2,000 “dropout factories” in the United States — high schools where less than 60 percent of students who start as freshmen will graduate in their senior year.<sup>43</sup> With more than one million students dropping out of high school every year, these adult mentors would be reaching a significant percentage of young people at risk of dropping out. Dropouts cited the need for more caring adults in their lives, particularly those who hold high expectations for them and believe they can fulfill their dreams if they graduate ready for college.<sup>44</sup> These mentors would thus become adult advocates for these students, providing a caring adult in their lives, and identifying the supports they need, such as tutoring, counseling, help with class and school attendance, and community service experiences that connect to classroom learning. Mechanisms are already in place to track changes in high school graduation rates in these schools, arrayed against such volunteering. Adult mentoring will be one component of comprehensive school-based and community-based reforms and interventions.

Older volunteers should work in partnership with a powerful dropout prevention coalition that already has been assembled within the last two years, including the leading education organizations in the United States, the National Council of La Raza and the NAACP representing minority youth who disproportionately drop out, and a network of more than 100 youth-serving organizations. Delivery channels for the matching and training of adult mentors with at-risk youth include: Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, Communities in Schools, City Year and faith-based groups such as Amachi, all of which have preventing high school dropout as a priority. These efforts would be coordinated with General Colin and Alma Powell’s America’s Promise Alliance, which is

coordinating 100 dropout summits in all 50 states over the next few years.<sup>45</sup> Lessons can be learned from the Experience Corps program, which has been independently evaluated and has demonstrated gains in academic performance among younger students who are tutored by Experienced Americans.<sup>46</sup>

## ***2. Living Independently***

Every American has a stake in a renewed effort to extend the number of years a person can live independently. Efforts to support independent living will improve the quality of life for millions of Americans, engage more Americans in respecting and valuing the dignity of others as they age, and save billions of dollars by reducing the costs of health care in nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. A woman in our focus groups said, “I have neighbors, elderly neighbors that I take care of, take them to the store, ...pick up prescriptions for them... let them know you’re there if they need me for something.” Another woman recognized the value of volunteering for the volunteers, saying that “When you volunteer, you stay young. You volunteer. It keeps you going.”

Scientists have identified the components of successful aging: 1) avoiding disease; 2) maintaining high cognitive and physical function; and 3) engagement with life.<sup>47</sup> They have found that lifestyle choices have a much larger effect on how we age than heredity. In addition to healthy behavior like eating well, monitoring blood pressure and cholesterol, and exercising regularly, a major factor in achieving healthy aging is the quality of mental health and social relationships. Socio-emotional support (through love, esteem, and respect) and instrumental support (getting help when necessary with chores, transportation, and care when ill) play essential roles in promoting vitality. We need Americans of all ages, including generations of Experienced Americans, to help older Americans.

Volunteering helps promote independence for volunteers and for those being served. When volunteers take their time to help older people who need assistance, they develop relationships that work both ways. Not only do the recipients receive services that allow them to remain independent, but the volunteers enhance their own independence by staying active and fulfilling responsibilities. Policies and initiatives that effectively increase the level of volunteering among Experienced Americans would be instrumental in extending the period of independence for more Americans, especially when the service targets older adults.

This service can include the expansion of informal volunteering through the Civic Highway, such as organizing health promotion and disease prevention campaigns, walking groups in neighborhoods, and transportation for grocery shopping, medical visits and social activities. It also could include more formal volunteering such as Meals on Wheels and the Senior Companion program, both of which enlist many Experienced Americans to meet needs and provide companionship to elderly Americans in need.

## **IN THE STATES**

### ***State Service, Volunteering & Faith-Based Initiatives***

New state efforts to tap individuals to serve should have a focus on marshalling the talents of Experienced Americans. In recent years, Governors have increased their focus on mobilizing individuals to serve in their states. In February 2008, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an executive order to create the first cabinet-level position for service – the Secretary of Service and Volunteering.<sup>47</sup> The new cabinet position raises the profile of service in California to a national level; improves coordination of vital volunteer activities statewide and supports local service efforts; encourages more Californians to become involved with service and volunteering; helps California respond to natural disasters and emergencies; and gives California’s volunteers a voice at the highest levels of state government. All 50 states have state service commissions that coordinate volunteer and service programs, but California can be a model for the nation in how it gives volunteering a priority and how it mobilizes Experienced Americans.

*“Truant and aimless youth, and then also the people that are 50 and plus. You put those together..., doing something together, then maybe the youth would not be truant and aimless any longer.”*

States are also beginning to recognize that most volunteering occurs through faith-based institutions. In the past decade, Governors and Mayors are creating faith-based efforts to engage individuals in civic work through faith-based institutions and to break down the government regulations and barriers that have resulted in an unlevel playing field between religious institutions and their secular counterparts in terms of federal and state funding.

Progress has been rapid. Thirty-five Governors, including 19 Democrats and 16 Republicans, and more than 70 Mayors now have offices of faith-based and community initiatives. Each should dedicate time to mobilizing more Boomers and Silent Generation members to serve through faith-based, non-profit and other community serving institutions.

A particular focus should be given in two areas where Boomers and Silent Generation members express the most interest – mentoring young people and helping the elderly live independently. Reviews of federal and state support for volunteers in these areas should be conducted by these offices to strengthen partnerships that provide support to Experienced Americans to serve their communities and states through and in partnership with faith-based institutions. A man from our focus groups shared, “I think that’s kind of like the basis of why we’re here on this earth. More or less, it’s to love thy neighbor and do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” A college-educated woman from Boston said that, “It’s like a spiritual, physiological benefit. Say somebody was prone to depression. All you would have to do is go out and help somebody ... it’s like that exchange of energy. It just clicks and it makes all people feel better.”

### **State Incentives for Volunteering**

States are getting creative in providing incentives to volunteers to do important public work. Tight state

*“When you volunteer, you stay young. You volunteer. It keeps you going.”*

budgets and a more general interest in mobilizing human capital to solve problems in states are acting as a catalyst.

In Michigan, older volunteers can reduce their property taxes by 600 to 1,000 dollars if they meet a minimum threshold and provide charitable services to a community-based non-profit.<sup>49</sup> In New York, efforts are underway to increase income tax credits for emergency services volunteers.<sup>50</sup> Other states, such as Massachusetts, are permitting employees to mentor and tutor youth, and work in foster care and related fields up to 8 hours a month during work hours.<sup>51</sup> In other areas of the state, residents over 60 who perform 100 hours of service by a certain date can receive property tax abatements.<sup>52</sup> Illinois provides free transportation to all seniors in the state in the hopes that it will facilitate greater access to volunteer opportunities.<sup>53</sup> The National Governors Association has a center for best practices on increasing volunteering among Experienced Americans.<sup>54</sup>

## **IN THE NATION**

Support for existing programs to engage more Experienced Americans in significant levels of volunteer service has come primarily from the federal government through Senior Corps programs, AmeriCorps (which includes older members and funds Experience Corps), and the Peace Corps, which has always sought older Americans and now is pressing a recruitment campaign for “Fifty Plus” Peace Corps Volunteers. This is likely to continue, with both Presidential candidates in 2008 having proposed the expansion of AmeriCorps from 75,000 members to 250,000, and with the goal of doubling the Peace Corps gaining support since the President proposed it after 9/11. Major expansions of such national service programs would open many new opportunities for Experienced Americans.

After 9/11, the President launched the USA Freedom Corps -- the first White House-based effort to coordinate the role of all federal assistance to volunteering at all age levels. It offers support at the highest levels of government, and has initiated a new Volunteers for Prosperity program to deploy highly-skilled volunteers for overseas service on urgent needs such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and a new Citizens Corps network of homeland security volunteers that is engaging many Experienced Americans in serving with police and fire departments, on community emergency response teams, and in a new Medical Reserve Corps.

*“I have neighbors, elderly neighbors that I take care of, take them to the store, ...pick up prescriptions for them... let them know you’re there if they need me for something.”*

Since most volunteer service is local, including service by national service volunteers, and the vast majority of Experienced Americans will not serve in full-time or part-time national service programs, new efforts also should focus on ramping up the capacity of non-profits, faith-based institutions and other community serving institutions to utilize effectively the growing number of Experienced Americans.

### **Volunteer Generation Fund**

Our survey showed that a majority of Boomers are open to volunteering through an organization, and Experienced Americans express the most interest in volunteering through faith-based groups. Research shows that while charities and religious organizations rely heavily on and want to use more volunteers to accomplish their goals, they need to increase their capacity to do so.

By making grants to organizations focused on recruiting and directing volunteers, a new Volunteer Generation Fund would expand the supply of volunteers to America’s non-profits and charities and the capacity of those institutions to use those volunteers. A priority might be placed on supporting organizations that mobilize volunteers into non-profit organizations to be volunteer coordinators and managers. A new program under the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Volunteer Generation Fund would make competitive grants to local and national non-profit organizations, statewide coordinating agencies, and consortia of human service organizations that commit to engage more volunteers through non-profit, faith-based, and civic organizations, consistent with high-quality performance standards and with transparency for results.

Eligible grantees could include volunteer centers, volunteer connector organizations, non-profit resource centers, training clearinghouses, community colleges, or other civic

organizations. Volunteer Generation Fund grantees would use best practices to recruit, train, and utilize volunteers, including Experienced Americans, to meet important needs. Grantees will be expected to match federal grants with local contributions to amplify the impact of the federal investment and ensure a strong community embrace. The Volunteer Generation Fund would align federal policy with the fact that most Experienced Americans who want to volunteer will be recruited and utilized in the non-profit and private sectors and not through a government program.

### **Educational Awards – Silver Scholarships**

Of the incentives that would have a big or moderate impact on their participation in volunteer activities, Experienced Americans said that providing education awards they could earn and transfer to a child if they volunteered 50 hours a month was their top choice. Transferable education awards outpaced group health insurance, monthly stipends or vouchers, or Presidential recognition.

The federal government should pilot test the value of providing transferable educational awards to encourage more senior Americans to commit to a significant number of hours of volunteer service in their communities. Awards of a minimum of \$1,000 could be given to any American over the age of 50 who performs at least 600 hours of volunteer service in a year certified by a community-based organization.

In exchange for such service, thousands of Experienced Americans could use or transfer the award into an education savings account for their children, grandchildren or another needy child. In all cases, results from this investment, both in terms of the outcomes that volunteers generate and the access to college that these awards might help provide, should be carefully tracked and reported. Whatever the public purposes, the provision of transferable education awards could become a strong incentive for more Experienced Americans to devote significant time volunteering in their communities. Federal policy would be providing incentives to individuals who are making significant commitments of time — akin to other full-time or part-time national service participants — to volunteer.

### **Senior Corps Programs**

Today, the federal government engages nearly 500,000 Americans in three Senior Corps programs. A national goal should be set to engage a million Americans in these efforts every year by 2012, principally through the largest of these



programs – the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). RSVP connects Americans over the age of 55 to non-profits that meet community needs on schedules that are flexible for the volunteer, ranging from a few hours to 40 hours per week. RSVP engages 400,000 people in a wide range of volunteer activities, such as tutoring children, providing independent living services, renovating homes, teaching English to immigrants, and assisting victims of natural disasters. Under RSVP, more than 340,000 frail elderly and nearly 75,000 children were served within the last year.<sup>55</sup> Participating organizations can reimburse volunteers for costs, such as travel and meals.

The Senior Companion program taps individuals over 60 to help frail seniors maintain independence in their own homes, providing personal assistance and companionship. These senior companions volunteer between 15 and 40 hours a week, typically serve between two and four clients, and assist with the tasks of daily living, as well as alerting family members and doctors to health problems. Respite care is provided to family caregivers. The Senior Companion program provides low-income Americans over the age of 60 a tax-free, hourly stipend to its volunteers. The Senior Companion program engaged more than 15,000 volunteers, serving more than 57,000 clients, last year.<sup>56</sup>

Additionally, Foster Grandparents provides nearly 30,000 tutors and mentors to children and youth with special needs in schools, hospitals, drug treatment centers, correctional institutions and child care centers. In exchange for their 15 to 40 hours of volunteer service every week, Foster Grandparents provides a tax-free stipend to low-income Americans over 60. In all Senior Corps programs, volunteers get pre-service orientation, training while serving, and supplemental accident and liability insurance.

*“I think that’s kind of like the basis of why we’re here on this earth. More or less, it’s to love thy neighbor and do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”*

More seniors could participate in the Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents programs if Congress increased the income threshold to qualify for the programs, decreased the qualifying age, or set aside a certain percentage of program participants who would not have to prove eligibility at all. Reforms of these programs should open them up to more participants.

The Corporation for National and Community Service and the Administration on Aging should use their existing authority pursuant to the 2006 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act to ramp up the capacity of the RSVP program to attract additional Experienced Americans to serve two vulnerable populations — the frail elderly and disadvantaged youth. Changes in the mileage deduction suggested below should increase the number of Experienced Americans who can participate in RSVP.

### **Experience Corps**

Experience Corps has been highly successful in deploying teams of older adults to tutor and mentor at-risk young people in cities across the country. As part of a broader expansion of the opportunities for Experienced Americans to serve, the Experience Corps model of high-impact service should be significantly expanded to other forms of service to young people, and to other major national challenges and community needs.

Many Experienced Americans are interested in making a significant commitment to a volunteer activity that is specifically focused on meeting a community need or national priority. The track record of the Experience Corps demonstration project has shown that to encourage and enable that high level of commitment for many individuals, and to create an environment of rigor and accountability, paying a small stipend to defray expenses and cement commitment is highly successful. Using this approach, Experience Corps has succeeded in attracting a diverse group of Experienced Americans into intense service that has produced powerful results for at-risk children who have received tutoring and mentoring, while also demonstrably improving the lives of Experience Corps members. Members also receive an education award, which should be transferable.

The key elements of the Experience Corps model that can be applied more broadly and to new national and community challenges include: a high level of commitment; significant training and continuing educational opportunities for participants; a focus on specific outcomes on major community and national challenges; and a team or



corps-based approach to service. This model of service has proven extremely successful in producing real outcomes and in providing a highly satisfying service experience for participants.

### **Encore Fellowships**

One of the significant barriers that Experienced Americans identified in our survey is the need to make more money after they finish their first career. Many also want to help others and meet needs in their communities. Existing research shows that about half of those 44-70 who are not already engaged in encore careers are interested in such careers.<sup>57</sup> In addition to providing opportunities for encore career employment in the non-profit and public service sectors through the online Civic Highway, the federal government and private philanthropy should create Encore Fellowships that place outstanding Americans over the age of 50 into fields with critical needs and workforce shortages, including education, health care, government, non-profit, and faith-based institutions.

### **Mileage Deduction**

Americans can deduct any donations they make to charities from their taxes, and can even deduct in-kind donations. However, volunteers who offer to drive their own cars for a charity can only deduct 14 cents per mile driven, far less than the 58.5 cents per mile that is deductible for business driving. While the business rate was raised this year to account for climbing gas prices, the charitable mileage deduction has not been changed since 1998.<sup>58</sup> A bill has already been introduced in Congress to raise the charity rate to 58.5 cents per mile, which would have a major impact on allowing volunteers to serve those who live in places that require driving. This bill should be passed.

### **Accountability for Results**

Just as it does for the economy, the federal government should adopt a robust set of civic indicators, akin to the National Conference on Citizenship's Civic Health Index, to help measure the effective engagement of Experienced Americans in civic life, including volunteering and charitable giving, voting and political participation, social and institutional trust, participation in civic and religious institutions, and participation in community meetings. Data should be disaggregated by age, gender, race and ethnicity, level of education, and by the communities and states in which people live. The National Conference on Citizenship, a congressionally-chartered non-profit, has assembled

*"It's like a spiritual, physiological benefit. Say somebody was prone to depression. All you would have to do is go out and help somebody and it makes both people, it's like that exchange of energy. It just clicks and it makes all people feel better."*

a team of experts to develop these civic indicators over the past few years and has been collaborating with government agencies to increase the collection and reporting of civic data. The Census Bureau, working with the Corporation for National and Community Service, has already begun collecting some of these data, and their efforts should be continued and expanded.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **A National Debate and Respose**

Americans from the Baby Boomer, Silent, and Greatest Generations represent a lifetime of experience and skills that can help meet urgent needs. They are poised to give more to their communities and nation. We have talked for too long about the potential of these remarkable generations, without doing enough to unleash their civic potential. In order to foster a better understanding of the untapped potential these generations of Americans represent and the promising and innovative ways in which we might further engage them, a host of efforts should be undertaken – including summits, Congressional hearings, legislation, Presidential initiatives, conferences of state and local officials, and public forums in local communities. In all cases, the perspectives and insights of representatives from the Greatest, Silent, and Boomer Generations should guide our public debate and actions.

## CONCLUSION

**T**he many talents of millions of Baby Boomers and members of the Silent Generation cannot remain on the sidelines in the face of so many pressing community problems, among them staggering high school dropout rates and millions of Americans who need services to live independently in their homes. Our effectiveness in engaging these extraordinary generations of Americans — meeting them where they are, sensitive to their motivations and barriers, and pulling institutional levers to encourage them to give more — will make the difference in whether our country fulfills its civic promise. A woman in our focus groups recalled the words of a past President while reflecting on America's potential, saying "And I think we're a great country because of the volunteers. President Reagan said one time, 'what would America be without volunteers?' It's so true."

We hope this report will give existing initiatives new energy, and that new efforts will be born, to engage these generations of experience in strengthening our communities, nation and world. And we hope the reflections and insights of Experienced Americans will show us that in enlisting them we not only extend the quality of their own lives, but create new hope for future generations of Americans to inherit a world better than their parent's generation found it.

*"And I think we're a great country because of the volunteers. President Reagan said one time, what would America be without volunteers? It's so true."*

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The views reflected in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AARP.

## METHODOLOGY

Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted original research for this report. A national survey was conducted by telephone among a total of 1,012 adults between the ages of 44 and 79 from June 6 to 11, 2008. The audience interviewed includes “Baby Boomers” born between 1946 and 1964, as well as “Silent Generation” members born between 1929 and 1945.

The sample includes a representative nationwide base sample of 808 adults between the ages 44 and 79. At the 95% confidence interval, the statistical margin of sampling error associated with the base sample is  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points, although sampling tolerances for subgroups are larger.

Oversamples were conducted among 104 African Americans and 100 Hispanics, all between the ages of 44 and 79. The oversamples were weighted to their proper proportion of the population according to Census figures. The margin of error among African Americans is  $\pm 7.3$  percentage points, and the margin of error among Hispanics is  $\pm 8.1$  percentage points.

In April 2008, Hart Research conducted four focus groups among older adults who expressed some level of willingness to increase their volunteering. The groups were held in Cincinnati, Ohio and Boston, Massachusetts. This qualitative research was conducted to provide context and inform the development of the survey instrument.

## END NOTES

- 1 Throughout this report, we refer to three generations of Americans: the Baby Boomers, the Silent Generation and the Greatest Generation, labels found in existing literature. Although there is some disagreement about the ages of each generation, for the purpose of this report the generational breakdown is as follows: Baby Boomers, those who were born during the spike in birth rates, includes those born between 1946 and 1964 (currently ages 44 to 62). The Silent Generation, first referred to as such in a 1951 TIME Magazine article because of their place between comparatively revolutionary generations, includes those born between 1929 and 1945 (currently age 63 to 79). The Greatest Generation, who served in or supported the country through World War II, includes those born between 1901 and 1929 (currently 80 and older). John Bridgeland is a Baby Boomer, Robert Putnam a member of the Silent Generation, and Harris Wofford a member of the Greatest Generation.
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- 11 Civic Enterprises has worked with the Corporation for National and Community Service, the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics over the years on the Volunteering Survey in the United States and additional indicators will be included in this year's survey. Indicators around life satisfaction, social and institutional trust and participation in social and religious institutions are indicators that should be included.
- 12 The ServiceNation Summit and presidential forum will be held on September 11-12, 2008 in New York City. Underwritten by a grant from Carnegie Corporation and presented by TIME, AARP, and Target, ServiceNation is a year long campaign to increase the number of service opportunities in America.
- 13 See Putnam, Robert (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
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- 25 African Americans were among the group of current workers least likely to expect to increase their involvement upon retirement.
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