

Returning to our roots in retirement



Margaret McDowell

Many of us postpone personal goals during our prime working years, whether we are running a business, pursuing a career, raising a family or a combination of the above. But if we've planned well financially, it's never too late to live our dreams.

Last week we considered the story of Jeannette

Goldstein, who graduated from the Syracuse School of Law at age 83 and hopes to begin practicing soon. Jeannette's journey inspired me to research the activities of others who have eschewed traditional "retirement." With the aid of everydayhealth.com, I discovered several retirement adventures worth our attention.

Hank Brunjes performed more than 200 shows (singing and dancing) in the Fabulous Palm Springs Follies in California five years ago at age 78. Brunjes, who began dancing at age 4, was a member of the original cast of "West Side

Story" in 1957. "This has been the best time of my life," said the stepping septuagenarian.

South Africa's Georgina Harwood skydived with 15 friends and family members on her 100th birthday. Georgina utilized the publicity from her jump to raise money for the South African National Sea Rescue Institute. Her personal reward for such bravery? A champagne and cake celebration!

Two days later Georgina performed a cage-dive with great white sharks near Gansbaai, South Africa. Her motto is "Do it now! Whether it's

comfortable or uncomfortable ... relaxing or challenging, don't delay."

Herschel McGriff is also noteworthy. In 1989, at age 61, he won a NASCAR race. In 2009, at age 81, he competed again, finishing 13th. Herschel credits his wife's Pilates routine for his continued good health.

Nola Ochs, who at age 95 is believed to be the oldest American to graduate from college, received her diploma alongside her 21 year-old granddaughter. Nola began taking college courses in Kansas in 1930. She raised four sons, and is the grandmother of 13 and great-grandmother of

15. Nola attended classes occasionally through the years, until finally she noticed that she was only 30 hours shy of a degree. So 77 years after she attended her first college class, she finished her undergrad work, with a 3.7 GPA. And, oh yes, she went on to earn a master's in liberal studies.

"I would like ... to encourage people to keep on learning," she said. "Our education is never complete."

Let's close with the story of Harriette Thompson, a classically trained pianist who has played Carnegie Hall three times. At age 76, she ran her first

marathon. Last year, at age 92, she became the oldest woman to finish a full marathon, covering the 26.2 mile distance in seven hours, 24 minutes and 36 seconds. Harriette has raised over \$90,000 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society since she began running.

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