If there is one topic that Baby Boomers like myself are thinking a lot about, it is retirement. Questions about the stock market, Social Security, health care, housing and other issues have made focusing on our after work life a dreaded necessity. How can we look forward to retiring when we are not sure we will be able to retire at all?

Yet, the theme for Older Americans Month of May, 2012, asks us to remember that there is life yet to be lived in our older years. It seems we need to plan better so that our retirement can be better.

Planning for retirement is precisely what needs to take place. Others have done it, and so must we boomers do our best and do the same. Planning will make all the difference.

Never Too Old To Play!

Bea and Billy actually have been retired for nearly a decade now. When they finally left the workforce, they sold their home where they had raised their two sons and bought a motor coach. They now spend their years in retirement travelling North America, making friends and enjoying life.

While some of the timelines are hazy for me, my recollection is that Billy and Bea got married in Mobile, Alabama, and eventually Billy worked in New Orleans area for the railroad, first as a switchman and then as an engineer. They raised two sons, and as Bea told me, “It was Billy that made sure enough was put away for us to retire.”

And what a retirement it is. Now based in Georgia, they communicate by cell phone with family and friends, and use a mail-forwarding service for a central mail address. Bill and Bea have a national network of friends with whom they visit, and have a circuit of stops that makes me very jealous. Having just spoken with them, they were at their home base, which isn't too distant from one of their sons. Their next stop will be Bay St Louis, Mississippi with visits to New Orleans, and then to the beautiful beaches of Destin, Florida. I asked “Where to after Destin?” Bill answered, “I don’t know, maybe to Arizona, then north to Oregon, Washington, and maybe into Canada. You know, it’s hard work planning the future.”

Meet Billy and Bea from the mountains of northern Georgia. I first met Billy and Bea at a camping resort in Maine where my wife and I have gone for several years. We have become friends over the years, and this past season spent quite a lot of time with them.
seen just about everything we want to see,” Billy said. “It seems like it’s time to settle in a little.”

For these two wonderful folks, the “hard work” of planning has paid off. Bea says they are living one of their dreams (and my wife’s as well!) and that these last years have been filled with fun and adventure. They are two of the nicest people I have ever met, and hope to see them again soon. But I would never have met them, but for their attention to planning for this “third age” of retirement.

And so, Baby Boomers...let’s all wake up! The gloom and doom of economics and politics aside, we STILL need to plan for what we will do when it’s time to end the work cycle. While dreams may or may not come true, in the least our planning will provide a blueprint to get as close as possible to that dream. Without the planning, the road in the future will simply be a crossroads without a map. And remember, none of us are ever too old to play!

It is also common to better understand how stress and anxiety may be increasing the severity of a particular illness. It does this by raising our awareness of how we respond to stressors and the choices we have in responding to them. As a caregiver or older adult, this can be a useful tool.

Often caregivers may find themselves stressed or anxious about the future or dwelling on the past. Anxiety about how to care for loved ones as they age can impair their awareness of the present and the quality of time spent with those they care for. Past hurt in the caregiver’s relationship with those they care for can also be an issue. With mindfulness, a caregiver and those they care for have a greater ability to enjoy one another and rise above any challenges they may be experiencing. Reducing stress and anxiety, mindfulness can improve or enhance any relationship between caregiver and those they care for.

Thankfully, for those that are interested in mindfulness and want to learn more about it, there is the UMass Center for Mindfulness. Located in Shrewsbury, MA, the UMass Center for Mindfulness runs a program designed to teach mindfulness. It is called the “Stress Reduction Program” and utilizes a method developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, known as “Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction,” or “MBSR.” The program consists of eight weekly, two-and-a-half-hour morning or evening classes and a one day retreat. It involves guided instruction in meditation, gentle stretching and mindful yoga, mindful communication exercises, and daily home assignments. The program is paid for out-of-pocket and offers a sliding scale based on family income and payment plans. All participants are required to attend a free orientation session where they receive a firsthand taste of how the program works. After the orientation, participants can decide whether or not the program is right for them.

Another way to learn about the MBSR program and mindfulness is to join us at ElderCare 2012. It is a free event for older adults and caregivers, held at The Manor at 42 West Boylston Street in West Boylston, MA. The event takes place from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and includes a presentation by Diana Kamila, senior teacher at the Center for Mindfulness, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The presentation will be interactive, with plenty of opportunity for participation. Diana Kamila will be available for questions about mindfulness and the MBSR method following her presentation.
Here at the CMAA we are hard at work in the beginning stages of indentifying resources for consumers regarding Compulsive Hoarding. A compulsive hoarder can be defined as someone who excessively collects items they are unwilling or unable to discard; clutters spaces preventing their typical use; and has functional distress or impairment due to hoarding. Resources we are gathering include professional organizers, therapists, assessment measures, and treatment information. All of this information will be available through our online database, or by contacting our I&R Specialists. CMAA is an active participant in the Central Massachusetts Hoarding Task Force. Please contact us if you are a professional working in any of the aforementioned areas, and are interested in being included in our database or joining the Hoarding Task Force.

Recruited to identify and research various resources for hoarding are Eric Leverone, volunteer, and Christian Edge, intern. Eric Leverone graduated from Framingham State College in the fall of 2009 with a B.A. in Psychology. He has since grown interested in elder services and the national aging network, and is considering a masters degree in social work or gerontology. Christian Edge is currently in his last semester as an undergrad at Fitchburg State University studying sociology. His awareness of the growing elder population has guided his path in pursuit to serve the equity of older adults. Christian aspires to receive a master’s degree in social work at Boston College.

How Widespread Is Hoarding?
A 2003 article in the Los Angeles Times notes that “no one keeps statistics on hoarding, but more

and more jurisdictions nationwide are forming special teams to deal with what appears to be a growing problem.”

On July 16, 2010, a more recent Los Angeles Time article noted the following statistics. “Hoarding statistics: A July 17 It’s All Relative column said as many as 6 million people, or 1 in 20, may be affected by hoarding, according to the book “Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things.” Actually, epidemiology studies show a range: from 1 in 50 people in the U.S., or 6 million, to 1 in 20 people, or 15 million, according to the author, Gail Steketee.”

The December 2010 “Hoarding Forum – Statistics Center” offers a snapshot of discussions and concerns and the Clutterless.org website discloses that 46% of hoarders are or have been in therapy.*

*From http://www.homeinvasionnews.com/hoarding-a-new-home-invasion-piles-up/

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING HELD

CMAA recently held its annual business meeting, electing new officers and members. The officers are: Bruce Leger, President; Nick Kaltsas, Vice-President; Gene O’Rourke, Treasurer; and Dorothy Wright as Secretary. Margaret Barry was re-elected to join the Executive Committee as its fifth member.

The meeting was underwritten by donations from Bruce Leger and UMass Medical School, courtesy of Board member James Leary.

Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging is celebrating 38 years of service to the region’s 61 cities and towns.
ElderCare 2012

Never Too Old To Play
Tuesday, May 8, 2012, 10:00 am-3:00 pm
The Manor
42 West Boylston Street (Rte 12)
West Boylston, MA

Free Event for Seniors and Caregivers
60 Exhibiting Companies
Giveaways & Raffles
Refreshments