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Open Forum

A NEW WAVE OF SERVICE

By Marc Freedman

All over the country, volunteering is up as laid-off workers and others coming out of retirement, many of them Baby Boomers, flock to nonprofit organizations to stay engaged while looking for new jobs. This phenomenon could be a temporary one, driven by spiking unemployment rates and the desire to help those hurt most by the recession - or it could be something more.

To be sure, many people now putting in time at food banks and homeless shelters will return to corporate jobs as the economy improves. But research suggests that many may not.

A recent national survey commissioned by MetLife Foundation and my organization, Civic Ventures, uncovered a longer-term trend, underway before the worst of the downturn hit. Last year, as Boomers began to adjust to the reality that they will need to work longer than they had planned, fully half told researchers they want to shift into careers in the social sector - not as a way station but as a destination.

John Armstrong typifies the trend. He spent nearly two decades working at Hewlett-Packard in various management roles. Public service has also been a consistent commitment over the years. A West Point graduate, Armstrong spent six years as an Army officer on the east-west German border and later managing financial operations for the military in Colorado. After earning an MBA, he joined the corporate world, later taking a break to spend two years with the Peace Corps in Slovakia.

When he left HP in 2006, he stepped up his volunteering at a local charter school and at groups such as the Alliance for Climate Change Protection and Habitat for Humanity. Out of a desire to launch a post-retirement or "encore" career in environmental education, Armstrong applied to be a Silicon Valley Encore Fellow. He is spending the year at Environmental Volunteers in Palo Alto, where he says he is "rolling up his sleeves," helping the nonprofit that educates children about the environment bolster their outreach and communications efforts.

Midlife workers such as Armstrong are searching for encore careers that put into action a kind

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of practical idealism, combining income, personal meaning and a chance to make a difference. These desired careers are focused in areas - education, health care, green collar jobs, government service and nonprofit leadership - that have proven largely recession-resistant and that are projected to experience vast labor shortages as the economy recovers.

The movement will get a big boost tomorrow when President Obama is scheduled to sign the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, dramatically expanding opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve.

In addition to tens of thousands of new service roles for Americans in their 50s, 60s and beyond, the law will establish Encore Fellowships nationally, creating an important new bridge to help Boomers make the often arduous transition from the end of midlife careers to encore careers in public service. This important and timely policy innovation is based, in significant part, on a model being pioneered in Silicon Valley by Hewlett-Packard, with support from the Packard Foundation.

Encore Fellowships are great for individuals, to be sure. But the stakes for society are even greater. After all, if we can find a way to help even a small fraction of the millions of Boomers who want to pursue encore careers, the result could be a tidal wave of talent, one capable of transforming our schools, our health, even the health of our planet, of leaving the world a better place for future generations.

Encore Fellowships

Created with the signing of the Serve America Act, the program establishes 10 fellowships in each state.

Who: Workers 55 and older.

What: Up to 12-month paid stints.

Where: Local nonprofits and public agencies.

Why: To help Boomers launch careers in high-priority fields, and to prepare area nonprofits to make full use of their talents.

When: No date set yet for applications.

Marc Freedman is the founder and CEO of Civic Ventures in San Francisco.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/04/20/EDRJ174EDT.DTL>



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LAW OPENS UP 'ENCORE' CAREERS

By Kelly Greene

The deep recession is forcing millions of Americans in their 50s and 60s to rethink plans for retirement. That shift -- coupled with new legislation out of Washington -- could help spur a commitment to national service not seen since the early days of the Peace Corps, say nonprofits.

Older adults and retirees long have donated their time, but have steered clear, for the most part, of establishing second careers in the nonprofit world or fields like teaching or nursing. Nonprofits, meanwhile, have long focused their recruiting efforts on younger adults. A 2007 Conference Board report found that nonprofits were lagging behind the government and private sectors in efforts to retain and recruit highly skilled older workers.

Now, with older adults looking for work to help patch broken nest eggs, and nonprofits needing additional manpower, the two groups are finding common ground.

The catalyst is the Edward M. Kennedy National Service Act, which Congress has passed and President Obama is expected to sign shortly. The bill is designed to encourage more Americans to commit to national service and expand opportunities for them to do so. For instance, the size of AmeriCorps -- which helps link volunteers nationwide with local needs in education, health care and housing, among other priorities -- will be tripled to 250,000 slots from 75,000.

New Nonprofit Roles

For older Americans, in particular, the legislation creates for the first time a series of programs that will help direct retirees into new roles in nonprofit and public service, on the front lines and in management.

This reflects "a new attitude about what people who finish their midlife careers can contribute," says John Gomperts, chief executive of Civic Ventures, a San Francisco nonprofit pushing for older Americans to use their skills to tackle societal ills.

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To start, the legislation would expand nationwide a pilot project under way in California called Encore Fellows. This yearlong program is designed to help people who have finished, or are nearing the end of, their primary careers formally move into the nonprofit sector.

The bill sets up Encore fellowships in each state, with as many as 10 fellows per state. Individuals would help carry out service projects “in areas of national need,” including education, health, energy and the environment, and poverty. The program provides training for fellows to move into full- or part-time service in the nonprofit sector or government. The Corporation for National and Community Service, which also runs AmeriCorps, would select the fellows and potential “host” agencies. The federal government would pay each fellow a stipend of \$11,000 a year and require the host agency to at least match that amount.

With 500 people a year at most participating, Encore Fellows aren’t going to single-handedly reshape public service. “What it can really do is help nonprofits understand that there’s a talent pool out there that they may be overlooking,” says David Simms, a partner with Bridgespan Group, a Boston adviser to nonprofits.

California Pilot Program

In northern California, Civic Ventures pulled together a pilot Encore Fellows program, largely with Hewlett-Packard Co. funding, to provide \$25,000 Encore fellowships to 10 participants so far this year. John Armstrong, 53, quit his marketing job at H-P in December 2006 to volunteer with the Alliance for Climate Protection, Habitat for Humanity and other groups. Now, he’s using a fellowship to develop the job of communications and outreach coordinator for Environmental Volunteers, a local group that teaches elementary-school students about environmental issues.

“My work here brings some focus to all the volunteer activities I was doing,” Mr. Armstrong says. “Now, I feel like I’m able to make a bigger impact.”

From H-P to School

Leslye Louie works for a literacy group as an Encore fellow.

In San Francisco, Leslye Louie, 48, and Lyle Hurst, 54, are working together at Partners in School Innovation, which looks to improve literacy in low-income elementary schools. The two fellows are pushing to improve the group’s communications strategy and marketing materials, and create a system for tracking its progress in meeting its literacy goals. They took voluntary buyouts from H-P in 2005 and 2001, respectively.

“We were post-first career, in transition, and wanted to make a contribution. But we didn’t have a



structured view of how to make that contribution into a second career,” Ms. Louie says. Now, she and Mr. Hurst are each working on projects for the group that could extend beyond their one-year commitments.

Of course, getting people to volunteer their time when they’re trying to find employment can be difficult. But the government efforts could provide the bridge from first careers to later-life careers that many people are seeking, says Stan Litow, vice president of corporate citizenship for International Business Machines Corp., Armonk, N.Y. He heads three programs helping the company’s workers make transitions into second careers in teaching, public service and voluntary service.

“There’s lots of opportunity for people with technology and management skills. Despite the difficult economic times, there are serious shortages for things like patent examiners and a variety of jobs in federal agencies,” Mr. Litow says.

Write to Kelly Greene at kelly.greene@wsj.com

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Opinion

THE BENEFITS OF WORKING LONGER

By Ellen Goodman

LET ME SEE if I have it right:

Older Americans ought to keep working in order to lighten the burden of Social Security and assorted benefits on younger generations.

Older Americans ought to retire in order to make room for younger generations with their noses pressed to the closed window of the job market.

There you go. If this is not the most mixed message to come out of this economic disaster, it will do for a start. The conflict between boomers and their offspring that was first ballyhooed in the 1990s seems to have reemerged in new shapes and sounds all over depressed and recessed Amer-



ica.

So we now have studies such as the one from Northeastern University warning that “We have steadily increased the ranks of the employed with older workers and thrown the young out in the cold.” And we have warnings from economists about the effects of the huge transfer of income from younger workers to older retirees. As Newsweek’s Robert Samuelson put it, “Generational tension, and maybe generational war, is an inevitable part of the Age of Obama.”

What exactly is going on here? And is there any way for elders to be peacemakers?

It is true that in the last 15 years, Americans began to work longer. Changes in Social Security encouraged it, as did longevity, as did, well, attitudes. Now the implosion of the stock market and the descent of 401(k)s have put retirement somewhere over the rainbow.

You find stories in every sector of the older population. People who were ready to leave are hanging on to the jobs that other people expected to fill and so on down the line, freezing the job market in place. Older workers who lost their jobs face discrimination getting new ones. People coming out of retirement are searching for any job at all. I tip my hat to the chivalrous foodie bagging my groceries.

Meanwhile, the folks revving up generational conflict overlook the fact that most of us do not live or think in age cohort groups. We belong to families. If public money is transferred upward from younger workers to older retirees, private money flows downward from older parents to adult children and grandchildren. In this economy, some older workers are clinging to their jobs to keep the younger unemployed members of their own families afloat.

But if the downturn comes with the seeds of generational conflict over jobs, it also carries packets of social change. There is a chance for the boomer generation to make a virtue - or a revolution - out of the necessity of working longer.

We already know that a growing corps of people in their 50s and 60s are more interested in renewal than retirement. Marc Freedman of Civic Ventures talks about “encore careers” for those who want to leave their midlife jobs and move into work with social value.

Now, he says hopefully, “The one benefit of this economic crisis is to drive home the reality that longer working lives are going to be necessary and desirable. If we can give people a sense that contributing longer is not another set of years at the grindstone but an opportunity to do something they can feel proud of, we’ll have accomplished something significant.”

That’s still a big if. So far, there’s been little help making the transition. But one innovative idea



would make national service an onramp for encore careers. The bipartisan Serve America Act coming to the Senate floor not only expands AmeriCorps with its young and old population but provides model fellowships in 50 states that would help older adults enter areas where they're needed, such as education or the environment.

As Freedman says, we are just beginning. "We've had this half-century aimed at getting people out of the labor market. It was a vision of the American dream focused on the golden years. Now we need to come up with an equally compelling image that encourages people to work longer and directs them to areas most in need of talent."

It's not surprising that this job falls to the baby boomers. The social-change generation led this country to think differently about race and gender. There is time and energy enough for the "youth" generation to make America think differently about age.

So, generational conflict? Not necessarily. Instead of being competitors, we can be mentors in the changing business of aging.

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Op-Ed Columnist

GEEZERS DOING GOOD

By Nicholas D. Kristof

This month Bill Gates starts his new full-time career as a humanitarian, leaving behind the software bugs to swat the kind that cause malaria.

We often think of those trying to save the world as bright-eyed young people, but Mr. Gates is part of a booming trend: the "encore career" as a substitute for retirement. Definitions are still in flux, but an encore career typically aims to provide a dose of personal satisfaction by "giving back."

Some 78 million American baby boomers are now beginning to retire, and one survey this year by a research institute found that half of boomers are interested in starting such new careers with a positive social impact. If we boomers decide to use our retirement to change the world, rather



than our golf game, our dodderdom will have consequences for society every bit as profound as our youth did.

One example of this trend is Peter Agre, a medical doctor who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2003 for research on ... on ... well, on something to do with cell membranes that I still don't understand. Dr. Agre could have run his lab indefinitely but was restless to assume a challenge that would more directly affect society.

He thought about politics, but ended up taking on a fancy administrative position at Duke University, thinking he could help shape students and education. Then he became restless again, and this year he took a substantial pay cut to head the Malaria Research Institute at Johns Hopkins University.

“It wasn't a matter of being a Mother Teresa,” Dr. Agre said. “It was a matter of, ‘Boy, that sounds like fun!’ ”

Yet he concedes — a little bashfully — that there is also a thrill at the possibility of helping overcome malaria, one of the great scourges of humanity. These days, Dr. Agre presides over a team of 20 scientists working on everything from designing malaria vaccines to engineering a malaria-resistant mosquito that in theory could outcompete others if released in the wild.

Marc Freedman, author of a book called “Encore: Finding Work that Matters in the Second Half of Life,” notes that adolescence is a relatively modern concept; until the 19th century teenagers normally were treated as adults. In the same way, he says, a new life stage is emerging — the period of 10, 20 or even 30 years after one's main career is completed but before infirmity sets in.

The best things that graying do-gooders bring to philanthropy is their management experience and Rolodexes. Bill and Melinda Gates are most noted for showering billions of dollars on public health, but perhaps just as important has been the hard-nosed business sensibility they invoke, demanding metrics to demonstrate that particular approaches are cost-effective.

Aside from Mr. Gates and Dr. Agre, another general in the war on malaria is Rob Mather, a British management consultant who — thank heaven! — isn't very handy with a TV remote. Mr. Mather was trying to turn off his set in June 2003 when he accidentally flipped to another channel and was riveted by the image of a 5-year-old girl who was struggling to overcome severe burns all over her body.

Mr. Mather suggested to several friends that they swim as a fund-raiser for the girl. Because Mr. Mather is relentless, the swim ended up involving 10,000 people in 73 countries and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Bowled over by the possibilities of mobilizing people for good causes, Mr. Mather set up a swim the next year to raise money against malaria — and this time 250,000 participated. He left the business world and founded a group called Against Malaria, now one of the world’s leading organizations battling the disease.

Mr. Mather browbeats businesses into donating services and covering overhead — “we have 17 legal firms working for us, and we’ve never paid a legal bill” — so every dollar donated to the organization ends up actually used to buy bed nets for families that can’t afford them.

He said he had just received e-mail about an African village that had 387 cases of malaria per month before the bed nets were distributed and seven cases per month afterward. Mr. Mather’s work has resulted in hundreds of thousands of bed nets being shipped abroad to save lives so far — all of which he finds rather more fulfilling than his previous, more lucrative career.

If more people take on encore careers like that, the boomers who arrived on the scene by igniting a sexual revolution could leave by staging a give-back revolution. Boomers just may be remembered more for what they did in their 60s than for what they did in the Sixties.

I invite you to comment on this column on my blog, www.nytimes.com/ontheground, and join me on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kristof.