

#282

March 28, 2011

BARBARA SQUARED

We started out talking about the Winni-Playhouse --- but I quickly realized that there was another equally important story that I hadn't expected.

Last week Barbara Morgenstern and Barbara Zeckhausen, who are both volunteer Board Members of the Winni-Playhouse, last week on my weekly radio show to talk about all the new and wonderful things that the Playhouse is up to. It quickly became apparent to me just how passionate that these two women both were about the Winnepesaukee Playhouse.

Very often I find that people who are associated with different groups and organizations are informed, involved and committed --- but most often they engage at an intellectual level only. There is absolutely nothing the matter with that --- but to find two people at the same time so passionate about the same organization is something very unusual and wonderfully special.

Now I don't want to give away any secrets – but these two ladies are getting close to what many of us would consider *'retirement age'*. I know that both of them are already extremely busy and involved in all kinds of community and faith based projects and organizations. Neither one *'needed'* an extra project and yet here they are sharing their excitement and enthusiasm about the Playhouse. Something about the Winn-Playhouse has resonated with them in a very special way that transcends the usual interest and involvement. They are truly passionate about wanting to help this group!

But this isn't just about the Two Barbara's who jokingly refer to their combined presence as being *'Barbara Squared'* which in mathematical terms implies a

combined influence far greater than just the sum of their individual efforts. It is about a wonderfully refreshing approach in redefining what it means to be 'retired'. I call it '*Purposeful Retirement*'.

In the old days traditional retirement was generally considered to be something akin to a well deserved and somewhat permanent vacation. A number of things have changed including many people retiring at a younger age, longer lifespans and economic factors that make returning to work after retirement a necessity. Increasingly more and more '*retirement*' age people are starting second careers and many are returning to school. Others – like our two Barbaras – have take a lifetime of experience and translated it into a new kind of volunteer service.

The face of volunteering is changing as well. The traditional description of a volunteer is of one who helps out, oftentimes doing support tasks that an organization could not otherwise afford to do. While that role continues – the Two Barbaras are perfect examples of the '*New Face*' of Volunteering --- and that is by taking leadership roles. The two Barbaras might not realize it – but they are ahead of their time! The leading edge of the Boomer generation just started to reach the classic retirement age of 65 this year and their influence – both in terms of their tremendous numbers and different approach – is going to change everything.

The two Barbaras are much more typical of the Boomer generation than they are of their own. Boomers are impatient. They are not going to wait around for something that is needed to happen. Boomers are not going to patiently wait for injustices to be corrected – they are going to step in and step up to fix things right now! Boomers want control and they want flexibility and they pursue both with an unbridled passion.

In the past retirement often meant sitting on the sidelines and focusing primarily on family and recreation while withdrawing from more public life. This isn't the approach that the Boomers will take and it certainly is not the approach that the Two Barbaras take. They are not content to be on the sidelines --- they have put

themselves right into the middle of the game – and our Community is all the better for it!

People of retirement age have so much knowledge and experience to share – but sometimes they are just too polite. They are waiting to be asked to help and if they are asked they gladly do. The Two Barbaras and the Boomers are as impatient as they are passionate and don't wait to be asked – they see a need as an opportunity for them to jump right in.

That's a great lesson for all of us!

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated.

chandler@metrocast.net