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Jane Glenn Haas: Our Time



JANE GLENN HAAS
OUR TIME
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So we were sitting around talking about productivity - trying to define what makes a person feel productive - and the discussion, naturally, came down to money.

There were nine of us. All career women, two retired. And the question became: Do we equate our productivity to our paycheck?

Are we, like generations of men, coupling our job and our identity?

Is this the legacy of the women's movement: You measure your worth in money; you equate your power to position; you value external opinion rather than internal assessment of yourself?

In other words, do we know what we're doing with our lives after 50?

None of us did, really. We had thoughts. We talked about what made us comfortable and uncomfortable, such as volunteering and being personally creative.

Some women who volunteer feel valued. Others felt exploited. Again, it had to do with a mindset that we should receive a paycheck for services.

No one expects a paycheck for volunteering, but if you're not paid, is your work valued? Do agencies depending on volunteers treat them with enough dignity and respect?

And, as one retiree said, if I spend my free time painting, am I being creative or am I taking advantage of retirement? Maybe the only way to know is if I sell a painting, she said. Then my paintings are worthwhile.

The fact that we can discuss the values of productivity is a real plus for our generation, said one woman. Our mothers never did. They just kept cooking and cleaning.

Nothing is really new about this discussion, says Brent Green, Denver-based speaker and author of "Marketing to Leading Edge Baby Boomers."

ADVERTISING

Green will be among more than 20 speakers helping midlife women at "Creating a New Agenda: 2005" at the second annual WomanSage conference Oct. 29 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Orange. For information, go to www.womansage.com or call (949) 222-4210.

"We know boomers are going to look at retirement as a new chapter in their lives," he says. "They expect to make a difference, have an impact on the world, have a more meaningful life in retirement."

And more women than men feel this way, he says.

"They feel called upon to give back. They believe that what you wish for will appear. They are the generation that contributed to every social need to further causes of social justice.

"They are ready to stand up and be counted."

Green's assessment echoes the findings of a Merrill Lynch study on boomers and retirement, particularly the transformation of the "me" generation to the "we" generation. Boomers are more likely to put their children and grandchildren first, the study says. And boomer women are inclined to social activism.

According to the study, boomer women view the dual liberations of empty nest and retirement as providing new opportunities for career development, community involvement and personal growth.

Boomer men are looking forward to working less, relaxing more and spending time with their spouses.

"Boomer women are more assertive," Green says. "They are taking charge and have more self-esteem."

He expects boomer women will provide a lot of the leadership about how to have a productive retirement career.

"They will embrace a different view of themselves," Green says.

The question still remains: What will make us feel productive? The dilemma is to get over valuing ourselves in marketplace terms such as paychecks and titles and start thinking about the contribution we can make by being good human beings.

Do your genes put you at risk?

Other than your blue eyes and curly locks, what else did you inherit from your grandma?

Some cancers - particularly breast and ovarian - are linked to genes inherited from either parent.

Join WomanSage for a special evening dedicated to delving deeper into your family tree. Go to www.womansage.com and click on the Genetic Risk Assessment Profile provided by St. Joseph Hospital. Or call (714) 771-8075. Submit your profile before Oct. 3 and pick up the confidential results at the Oct. 11 WomanSage meeting.

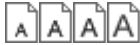
The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at First American Corp., One First American Way, Santa Ana. The cost is \$20 for non-members, free for members. Space is limited. RSVP to St. Joseph Hospital Marketing Department, (714) 771-8075.

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