



North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement Presents:

## Paths To Creative Retirement

June 2008

### Together or Alone?

This past weekend people from 21 states gathered at the Reuter Center at the University of North Carolina Asheville for the 17<sup>th</sup> annual **Creative Retirement Exploration Weekend**. Their motivation for attending was to learn what they could about making retirement relocation decisions. They were eager for checklists, websites, financial calculators, tips on selling or buying, and comparisons of taxes in various locations. They did gain all that knowledge, about potential, future communities where they might live, but they also found something else.

After one day they were seeking out each other at breaks and meal times to compare notes. After two days, they were laughing and kidding around together. By day three, they were exchanging emails, phone numbers and planning trips to see one another. How could stressful topics like whether to uproot oneself and how to think about stretching funds and possibly taking on a post-retirement career engender this kind of camaraderie? “The desire for community,” says Ron Manheimer, executive director of the Center for Creative Retirement. “People are hungry for connecting with others that they recognize as ‘fellow travelers.’ They will seize the opportunity wherever they can. Our programming facilitates the rapid formation of community—whether it only last during the workshop or persists beyond.” He often refers to Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* that documents the decline in clubs and social groups, family dinners, friends visiting and other activities that facilitate community. “Our Center is all about changing that scenario,” says Ron.

Many of those who recently attended the **Paths to Creative Retirement** workshop in April also experienced a sense of “instant community.” In emails immediately after the workshop, several people mentioned their surprise, and delight, at the social capital and development of networks that emerged as an integral part of the workshop.

- “I think everyone's' openness and insightful sharing impressed me the most.”
- “The encouragement that I received from interacting with others and sharing ideas was very empowering. I was most impressed with the willingness of the participants to share very private thoughts. Adults are usually so distant.”
- “Since the end of the workshop I haven’t stopped talking about the interpersonal and the presentations at the end too. Wow. What an experience!”
- “Others became role models on ways to overcome and thrive despite plans going awry. That gave me the confidence boost I needed to overcome my anxiety.”
- “More than any single person or activity, it was comforting to learn as I listened in our workshop that the concerns I had were shared by others.”

Are you, too, “part of all you have met?” When and where and how do you find community? What tips and resources can you offer the rest of us? Or is “belonging” and “communing with fellow travelers” a hunger in your life? If so, how do you cope or fill that emptiness? Send an email to me at [snodgrass@unca.edu](mailto:snodgrass@unca.edu) with your comments; I always love to hear from you.

We still have spaces in the upcoming workshop (August 29-31). Please direct friends and colleagues to our website [www.pathstocreativeretirement.com](http://www.pathstocreativeretirement.com) or have them call me for details at 828-251-6188.

Sincerely,  
Denise Snodgrass