FORWARD
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ARTICLE
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The Oxford Dictionary defines *Seniority* as “the fact or state of being older.” This serial, digital magazine is about those who are older. It will be a periodic examination of various issues related to aging. It will address subject matter that we have found to be of vital importance in enhancing our understanding of the paradigm that is senior hunger in America. There are many predictors of senior hunger and each must be examined and discussed in order to effectuate the change that needs to occur in order to ameliorate hunger among seniors once and for all.

The Oxford Dictionary also defines *Seniority* as “a privileged position earned by reason of longer service.” We at NFESH have been privileged to work long on behalf of older Americans, and through our research and communications mechanisms such as this magazine we hope to continue to do so for many years.

We would like to hear from you. Tell us about this article. Tell us what kinds of articles you would like to see us include and issues you would like us to highlight in the future. Be a part of the conversation. By working together we can end senior hunger.

**Upcoming Issues**

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**Can Incentives for Long-Term Care Insurance Reduce Medicaid Spending?**
*Interview with Anthony Webb, Ph.D., Senior Research Economist, Center for Retirement Research at Boston College*
*Research conducted by Wei Sunn, Associate Professor, Renmin University of China, and Anthony Webb, Ph.D., Senior Research Economist, Center for Retirement Research at Boston College*

4 December 10, 2014
**The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Elderly**
*Forward by Nadia Greenhalgh-Stanley, Assistant Professor of Economics, Kent University*
*Article by Katie Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Economics, Seattle University*
It’s really fascinating to think about who the Baby Boomers are, what they represent, and how they have and continue to impact society. “Baby Boomers” specifically refers to the generation born in the post-World War II era (between 1946-64). They were named as such because they are the single largest generation the US has seen, representing more than 75 million individuals. They grew up witnessing radical changes within the traditional nuclear family (if you believe the nuclear family ever really existed), within the business world, with space exploration, and with our country’s political stance with other countries. How African Americans and women were viewed changed enormously. And the one word that is consistently used to describe Baby Boomers is opportunity—meaning they are a generation who has been presented with numerous opportunities that previous generations never had. They have also created opportunities for educational attainment, for careers and entrepreneurship, for travel and recreation, and for retirement. And perhaps because they are opportunity-seekers, they are also now viewed as fairly demanding. They have high expectations for the types of services available to them and the way these services are delivered.

Oftentimes, Baby Boomers are spread apart from other family members. They are embracing technology (think Skype, email, texting) to stay connected to their relatives and friends, their healthcare providers, their co-workers and many other places where they shop and do business. Many Baby Boomers are caregivers for their aging parents while supporting their adult children and likely, their grandchildren (the sandwich generation with several layers). As you read Dennis Domer’s article, you will find the value not only in intergenerational relationships but also in intergenerational living and in housing design to sustain these generational linkages. While Domer presents some of the financial and readiness challenges, remember what the Boomers will want; actually they will expect to be involved in addressing these challenges and making informed decisions for their own futures. These decisions involve their long-term care, and the choices they will have for how and where this care will be provided. The Boomers’ quality of life should be top priority. Are you ready to meet the challenge?
Boomer Futures

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Four years ago my colleagues and I established a so-called “Boomer Futures” Think Tank at the University of Kansas to bring authorities on aging in our university and from other universities into an extended interdisciplinary, inter-generational conversation about the built environment and future housing needs of the largest generation in American history. We made videos of those think tanks that raise many issues about the culture of aging we constructed for members of the Great Generation, what changes the Boomers are demanding in that culture, and what new ideas architects, planners, and gerontologists are considering in response to these demands.

Almost all Boomers want to “age in place” at home for the rest of their lives and this may be the only possibility for most Boomers, though this choice will be laced with complication and difficulty in many cases since most houses in the United States are not built for people to age in place or for caregivers to provide help easily to ailing people. Eventually, if they live long enough, Boomers will have to move whether they want to or not. If Boomers have to move, ideally they want residences that are close to nature and in walkable and sustainable communities. They want to stay near friends, children, and especially grandchildren. The weather is not as important to them as the climate of the place where they can enjoy continuing education, health and well-being, age integrated living, engagement in community projects, chances to mentor young people, good transportation, and affordable and technologically advanced housing.

For many Boomers these desires are more fantasy than possibility.

The Boomers may be the most diverse, best educated, and overall the richest of all generations but growing income inequality throughout our society will determine very different futures for them. Setting aside the superrich who don’t need anything that money can buy, the Boomers fall into three general categories approximately equal in size: A: those who are financially ready; B: those who thought they would be financially ready but didn’t plan or lost much of their wealth in crash of 2008; and C: those who are basically unprepared financially for a significantly longer future than the Great Generation experienced.

Age, as currently constructed in our culture, means that C group will stay home until that is impossible and when forced finally to move, housing and services for these Boomers will cost much more than they have available. Moreover, there will be fewer and fewer places for these Boomers. There aren’t enough facilities existing or planned to take care of the approximately 30 million people in C group now and this deficit is growing because many senior housing enterprises are eliminating “Medicaid” beds that don’t pay their way. For C group the future is dismal. It’s not much better for members of B group. They have little choice but to work until that is impossible, struggle along at home until that doesn’t work anymore, and then very quickly spend up all their money in expensive assisted living, skilled nursing, or memory care housing. When that money is gone, caring for the Boomers is going to
cost families and governments trillions of dollars they don't have for potentially many years. While the prospects for members of group A are much better, they have their worries too. In our medium sized town in eastern Kansas near Kansas City, current costs of senior housing run at least $80,000 a year. In Kansas City this cost often rises to more than $100,000 a year. Since Boomers are going to live significantly longer and stay longer in senior housing facilities than their parents or grandparents, a $500,000 nest egg is going to evaporate all too quickly.

The model we developed after World War II to house an aging Great Generation obviously will not provide viable futures for many Boomers. This model is unaffordable, undesirable, and conjures up the Boomers’ greatest fears: that they will have to live in what they call a nursing home, that they will run out of money before they die, and that they will be a burden to their children. What’s more, these children are going to face the same or even more problematic futures, as they grow older, unless we plan for different futures. Our society is only going to get older as longevity continues to lengthen, now longer than any time in history, and the birth rate continues to drop, now at its lowest point in history. We have to construct a new culture of aging because the old model will eventually require us to set our old people out on proverbial ice flows and say goodbye.

Our post World War II society gave up on the extended family system in favor of the nuclear family, though the extended family concept had worked for about 10,000 years. In a brave new world, we thought that families could disconnect, move away from each other, and otherwise go it alone without grandparents, aunts and uncles, and caring neighbors nearby. This was an untested experiment that is showing its unavoidable weaknesses as two-career families try to figure out how to take care of their children by themselves, schools try to do what families used to do in addition to teaching, and distant older loved ones live in anonymous suburbs with little neighborly help.

The nuclear family is not working well for many Boomers, their children, or their grandchildren. The age segregation that it implies has visited upon us a disaster of monumental proportions. The loss of grandparents or “grand friends” will follow children all the days of their lives. For the Boomers, the absence of their grandchildren is just one more tragedy as they face their futures. For parents, the necessity of two careers taxes their abilities to take care of themselves and their children. On the other hand, intergenerational living is not only affordable but also essential to the well-being of old people and young people alike. We must re-establish extended families and neighborliness, re-tool our current housing stock with barrier free design, and build new intergenerational communities, rather than age-segregated ones. Our New Cities initiative at the University of Kansas advocates and is re-building this intergenerational model that returns us to a past that most Boomers know very well. Is there any other choice?
Contributor Biographies

Dennis Domer, Ph.D.

Dennis Domer is the Director for the New Cities project at the University of Kansas, an initiative that focuses on issues of aging and the built environment. During his “ Encore” career, Domer has also directed graduate programs in American Studies and Museum Studies at the University of Kansas. Before he retired in 2006, he was a distinguished professor of historic preservation at the University of Kentucky. He spent 20 years in the School of Architecture, Design, and Planning at the University of Kansas as its associate dean. An architectural historian by training, Dr. Domer has written books and articles on American architecture, vernacular architecture, and cities, especially the Prairie School landscape architecture of Alfred Caldwell.

Christine Jensen, Ph.D.

Christine Jensen is Director of Health Services Research with the Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health, in Williamsburg, Virginia. She teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University in the School of Allied Health and serves as Research Assistant Professor in the Public Policy Program at the College of William & Mary. She obtained her Ph.D. in Human Development & Family Studies, with a specialty in gerontology, from the University of Delaware. She is active with the Gerontological Society of America, the Southern Gerontological Society, the Older Dominion Partnership, and the Alzheimer’s Association. She recently served two terms as Chair of the Virginia Caregiver Coalition. The Center for Excellence in Aging was recently honored with a Commonwealth Council on Aging Best Practices Award for her work with family caregiver programming. These efforts also resulted in a 2012 Best Practices Award by the Southern Gerontological Society for Jensen’s implementation of the “Caring For You, Caring For Me” education and support program in Virginia. This work was also recently featured in “Your Love Never Fails” (22 min.), a film distributed by Terra Nova Films, Inc., which is a documentary following the challenges facing an adult daughter-caregiver. Jensen was just named a Master Trainer with the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving. Jensen is also involved in a telepsychiatry project with Bay Rivers Telehealth Alliance where she is involved in the evaluation of telehealth equipment to deliver geriatric psychiatric services in long-term care facilities.