

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

# *Strategic Plan*

2006-2010

*Improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering*



# HARNESSING *Baby Boomers'* experience



It is clear that America is on the forefront of an unprecedented demographic revolution, with older members of the 77 million Baby Boomer generation a mere five years away from age 65. Beginning about 2010, the share of the population that is age 65 and over will begin to climb substantially, resulting in profound implications for our society, our social service delivery systems, our economy, as well as Social Security and Medicare.

Baby Boomers bring the advantages of experience and education, and are motivated to make a difference. There is tremendous potential to provide solutions to some of our most intractable social needs, including the expanding need for independent living support. Research tells us that Baby Boomers, as a whole, will not withdraw completely from the work place in “traditional retirement.” Instead, they will seek a balance of work, leisure, civic engagement, and other interests. Offering opportunities to capture their talents and experience and engaging them in the process of solving critical social issues through service must become high-priority goals for the nation in the coming years.

One such critical social issue is independent living. Demands for affordable long-term care and independent living services in particular will increase sharply in the next four decades. Beginning in 2020, approximately one in six Americans will be age 65 or older. Americans ages 85+, the group most in need of long term care services, including community-based care, is projected to triple by 2040, from today’s four million individuals to about 14 million.<sup>13</sup>

The discussion about America’s aging Baby Boomers often centers on the increasing costs ahead for taxpayers as the ranks of older Americans swell. The other side of the equation, however, is the potential of Baby Boomers to deliver critically needed services, including independent living support. According to the Government Accounting Office,<sup>14</sup> “Family and other informal caregivers play a critical role in supplying the bulk of long-term care. Effective policy must create incentives and supports for enabling informal caregivers to continue providing assistance.”

America faces a near-term opportunity to unleash an unprecedented increase in civic engagement and volunteering in local communities. As we look to the horizon, we believe

that the aging of the Boomer generation can produce a civic revolution that:

- » Provides opportunities for Boomers to deliver independent living to today’s seniors in need, including the 80-plus population;
- » Lays the foundation for affordable independent living services to meet the rapidly accelerating demand; and
- » Offers fulfillment that yields a higher quality of life for Boomers who serve.

Baby Boomers on the whole are better educated and will live longer and healthier lives than any generation before them. They offer an array of experiences, talents, and available time. If properly engaged, they could have a positive impact on some of our country’s most challenging social problems and alleviate the volunteer sector’s greatest recruiting challenge—finding volunteers during the workday.

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*The nation and its communities can greatly benefit from the sheer volume, high motivation, and broad talents of Baby Boomers, who can bring innovative ways to address the most pressing community needs*

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*“One out of every four adults in the United States is a caregiver to a family member or friend. Caregiver stress and burnout significantly place older Americans at risk of institutionalization.”*

Administration on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2004)

Picture communities where volunteers help improve the quality of life for increasing numbers of older Americans by helping them continue to live independently in their homes. Envision some of the more than 22.4 million informal caregivers in the United States receiving respite services from volunteers to help alleviate caregiver burnout.

To meet the challenge of engaging the vast number of the coming wave of Baby Boomers in service to their communities, we need to:

- ◇ Encourage a significant cultural shift in the thinking of the nonprofit sector in how groups use volunteers, and help nonprofits create meaningful opportunities for service by the coming wave of Baby Boomers;
- ◇ Secure commitments from the business sector to expand volunteer programs, offer flexible work options to Boomer employees, and enhance notions of good corporate citizenship;
- ◇ Give an appropriate role to government, including charging the Corporation for National and Community Service with bringing Baby Boomers into prominence in America's civic activities; and
- ◇ Promote an increase in volunteering, service, and civic engagement by baby boomers, including through a public education campaign to promote volunteering.

David Eisner  
Testimony to the Policy Committee for the 2005  
White House Conference on Aging

George Ferguson, a retired Baby Boomer, started mentoring a seven-year-old boy through the Grandfathers Group, an RSVP project in Alexandria, Virginia. The child worried about how long Ferguson would be available. Five years later, he is still mentoring the same child. Imagine how our society would be different if Boomers were deployed to ensure two million more pre-school children from impoverished neighborhoods were ready for school. Consider how mobilizing retired teachers could solve tutor shortages in depressed urban areas.

The Baby Boomer population contains a wealth of talent. Many Boomers are still working; others are retired, or semi-retired. They have an array of extensive experiences in areas such as law, medicine, and education, management of a home or small business, and a wealth of other areas. They can be a valuable resource to strengthen nonprofits and the clients they serve. The Corporation is focused on creating meaningful and flexible service opportunities that both engage the large number of Boomers who currently volunteer as well as motivate non-volunteers who are looking for the time and the opportunity to make a difference in their communities.

In addition to helping solve community needs, service offers important benefits for Boomer volunteers. Older Americans who receive or deliver service are more connected with the community, remain more active, and have a more optimistic outlook. Research tells us that Boomers are different from the population of older Americans who currently volunteer in their communities. First, they tend to respond more positively to articulations of the benefits to themselves, including personal fulfillment, excitement, social opportunities, or opportunities to learn something new. Second, they will generally respond more favorably to flexible opportunities, such as those that allow for full-time, part-time, or episodic service. They also respond to service that meets their personal interests and to opportunities that demonstrate visible benefits to the community. Consequently, we must support programs and institutions that effectively engage these Boomers.

Currently most of the volunteers age 55 and over who participate in Corporation supported activities serve through Senior Corps programs: RSVP, Senior Companion Programs (SCP) and Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), but Boomers (who by the end of 2006 will be ages 42 through 60) also serve in AmeriCorps\*VISTA and AmeriCorps\*State and National. Over the next five years, the Corporation will build on its experience recruiting Boomers in national service programs by: 1) assessing how the skills of this

group can be tapped; 2) strengthening our support for engaging Boomers in Senior Corps programs; 3) exploring strategies for increasing the participation of Boomers in AmeriCorps; and 4) encouraging collaboration between Senior Corps and AmeriCorps in promoting service and volunteerism among Baby Boomers as they reach the traditional retirement age.

We are standing at the dawn of a new era if we can successfully recruit Boomers into community service; but that cultural shift will require great effort. Making

full use of Boomers' experience will take strategic and extended commitments from nonprofit groups, business, and government, with each group offering unique and attractive opportunities for engaging Boomers (such as creating flexible work schedules for service participation). By changing how nonprofits view and use volunteers and pioneering alternative models of service, we will take full advantage of Baby Boomers' talents, skills and experience and make tomorrow better for people of all ages.

*National service members and volunteers can deliver critical respite services to ease the burden on caregivers.*

**NATIONAL TARGET FOR 2010**

- » Engage an additional 3 million Baby Boomers in volunteering, up from 25.8 million in 2005

**CORPORATION TARGETS FOR 2010**

- » Engage 500,000 Baby Boomers in Corporation-sponsored national service programs as participants and recruited volunteers
- » Ensure at least 75 percent of Baby Boomers in Senior Corps and AmeriCorps rate their overall service/volunteer experience as excellent
- » Ensure at least 75 percent of Baby Boomer volunteers in Senior Corps and AmeriCorps believe programs have given them a significant chance to bring about change in their community
- » Provide (through service and volunteering) 250,000 seniors support from Corporation-sponsored national service programs to live independently
- » Provide 100,000 families and caregivers of seniors support from Corporation-sponsored national service programs

For data sources and updates on annual targets, see [http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role\\_impact/strategic\\_plan.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/strategic_plan.asp)