



Baby Boomers Finding 'Encore' Careers

Economists Say Encore Workers Will be Needed After Economic Recovery

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Boston -- Given the state of the economy, changing careers might not seem like such a smart idea. But many baby boomers are doing it or thinking about it.

There's even a name for it: "encore careers." And, surprisingly, some economists say the more encores the better, because a shortage of workers may be in our future.

Polly Cummings, 60, started her career as a massage therapist four years ago. After her husband died of cancer, she volunteered at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute giving patients massages.

"I fell in love with it," said Cummings.

Eventually she decided to go to school to become a licensed massage therapist.

"I always wanted to find something that had meaning, that I could give back something and also have a job. I like to get paid," she said.

National surveys show that more than 5 million baby boomers have already started encore careers. Now organizations are popping up to help baby boomers explore what they want to do next. Encore.org features profiles of people with new careers, forums and tips on how to change jobs.

"An encore career is a job that has personal satisfaction, social impact and it has a paycheck," said Deborah Banda, Massachusetts director of AARP. "That's what people are looking for, that's what they need. They want to refresh their souls in the workforce but they also need some money to come in."

According to a recent study by Northeastern and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, after the economic recovery, the country will need those workers.

The study finds that by 2018, there will likely be more jobs than people to fill them. The reason is if the baby boom generation retires at the same rate as older workers, the "baby bust" generation that follows will be too small to fill many projected new jobs.

"By the end of the decade, employers are going to have to look for older workers to fill their workforce needs," said Banda. "That opens the door for many of these people to land jobs that they would really like to do," she said.

According to Encore.org, the most in-demand jobs will be in healthcare, education, nonprofits and government.