

## Opportunities for artful aging

By Tappy Kimpel/ Guest Commentary

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Remember when you thought that as soon as things calmed down with the kids, the career and the million other distractions that life springs on you in your post college years, you would get back to that interest that really seemed to bring out the most authentic part of you? You'd write short stories, try your hand at painting, take up the piano.

Life sweeps us up and we get consumed with the practical - making a living, putting dinner on the table, shopping for lawn furniture.

But then one day comes along and you can almost hear a decrease in the noise level. The kids are gone (most of the time); your career is established and more predictable - and maybe just not as consuming anymore. You don't have to be at soccer games on Saturday mornings or on college tours for the weekend. And you've actually sorted out the mess in the attic. So what's next?

Maybe its time to look back at the list of things that you thought you'd do if you had time. Because it could be that you'll find a new sense of yourself that is even more rewarding than all the wonderful but hectic years that have gone before.

On Tuesday night, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at the Newton Free Library you can meet some people who have done this. Discovering What's Next - Revitalizing Retirement, is sponsoring a forum, "Exploring Your Creative Side." A panel of community members will talk about their experiences in discovering, or rediscovering, a creative passion that has made their lives more vital than ever before.

Fred Mandell, who will moderate the forum, was formerly a financial executive at American Express. After 20 years of involvement in business, he became a sculptor, then later a painter. He founded a consulting firm in 2002 focusing on creativity and innovation. He is currently co-writing a book that looks at "the phenomenon of personal self reinvention as a creative process."

Panelists include three other people who focused on creative interests later in life.

Tamara Bliss raised two children and wore many professional hats, from inner city community organizer to the human resources department at Honeywell. Although she played piano as a child, she completely gave it up from age twelve until her own children had left home. She has recently begun to play again and has connected with other musicians to play chamber music. She is animated about her new passion for chamber music. "It takes greater concentration that anything else I have ever done."

Norman Kattwinkel practiced rheumatology in a large medical center for 35 years and retired recently. "The transition to retirement had some rough spots, with one false start, but I'm now moving ahead and energized by my new career - full time writing of a personal and family memoir."

Jean Dibner did not work outside the home until she had raised 4 children. She then went back to school at age 37 to get a second degree in computer science, which led to a 20-year career as a senior executive in high tech. When the growth of the industry slowed, she volunteered for early retirement. After that, sculpture, which she had always dabbled in, became her main focus. She now sells her work regularly and enjoys teaching sculpture to others. Though she is active on corporate and nonprofit boards, and does some corporate consulting, she reflects that now "the center of my life remains creating sculpture with meaning for others to enjoy."

All of these people have found enormous rewards in creative pursuits that they had not focused on until after the "hectic years". But they all agree that you can't do it in a rush. You need to allow yourself the time to listen to what it is that draws you.

Why not start the process now by attending the Library Forum. After the panelists tell their stories, there will be an open discussion with the audience.

If you do decide to pursue a creative interest, Newton is full of organizations to help. New Art Center has wonderful courses in painting, drawing, ceramics and photography. All Newton Music School can teach you practically any instrument you want to learn - no matter what your age. The catalogue for Newton Community Education is full of intriguing classes at the high school. In addition, there are choral groups, acting troupes, quilting clubs and dance lessons. Representatives from many of these groups will be at the forum to answer your questions.

Discovering What's Next: Revitalizing Retirement (DWN), the sponsor of this Library Forum, is a community based collaboration engaging mid-life and older adults in creative exploration of their next life stage. For more info about DWN, call 617-969-5906 ext. 299 or [dwnext@comcast.net](mailto:dwnext@comcast.net). Tappy Kimpel is a longtime Newton resident who serves on the boards of

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