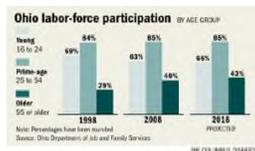


Columbus, Ohio • Feb 10, 2014 • 7° Haze

The Columbus Dispatch

» Hot Links:

Help exists for seniors to find jobs



View Larger

CONNECT WITH US

Facebook

Twitter

E-Newsletters

RSS Feeds

Mobile Text Alerts

My Yahoo!

THE BOTTOM LINE

» Forget selfies. Ohio farmers join the #felfie movement

OTHER BUSINESS FEATURES

» Workers worry Obamacare will lead employers to cut hours

» Cincinnati development project not meeting forecasts

LOCAL STORIES FROM THISWEEK

» Demand for city permits paints sunny picture

» Sunbury settles power and waste contracts, buys siren

» Three arrested in Delaware on robbery charges

» Village on chain's redesign: Now that's not better

» Agencies to receive \$713,924 in funding

» Four file for GOP commissioner race

» Fouras land to remain in authorized gunfire zone

» Community group

By Encarnacion Pyle

The Columbus Dispatch • Monday February 10, 2014 6:07 AM

Reeling from the death of her mother, Carol Gilmore took the plunge and retired after working for the federal government for 30 years, even though she had just turned 50.

Things went well at first. Then the recession hit in 2007, and three years later, her 34-year-old son was shot and killed in a still-unsolved ambush in Dayton. Gilmore, an East Side resident, became the primary caregiver for her twin grandchildren, Treyesha and Treyvon, then 11.

“Life instantly changed,” Gilmore said. “One minute, I’m this empty nester bracing for retirement as a single woman, and the next, I’m caring for these two precious children who had been traumatized, (and) struggling to make ends meet.”

Gilmore, now 59, had worked a few jobs after her retirement in 2005 because she missed feeling like she was making a contribution. But this was different: Her life, and her grandchildren’s lives, depended on her finding a job that was more stable and long term.

At the same time that the American population is aging, people are living healthier, longer lives. And as the economy continues to struggle, more people such as Gilmore are putting off retirement or are returning to work in their golden years. By 2015, 1 in 5 of all U.S. workers will be 55 or older, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Experts predict that, for the first time in generations, the next wave of retirees — a majority of them baby boomers — might have fewer choices about whether to return to work because they’ll be the first generation to fund a big chunk of their own retirements.

“Too often, today’s seniors have to cobble together Social Security benefits, income from savings and investments, and part-time jobs just to get by, and they still don’t have what investment experts say they’ll need,” said Suzanne Kunkel, the director of the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University.

They might have taken a hit in the stock market, be underwater on their homes or just worried about having enough squirreled away to maintain their lifestyles, she said.



ADAM CAIRNS | DISPATCH

Forced to return to the workforce after her early retirement in 2005, Carol Gilmore, 59, is back at a full-time job at Columbus Sign Co., thanks to Employment for Seniors, a local nonprofit group.

strategies for campaign efforts

Money isn't the only thing keeping many seniors in the workforce. Research has shown that working is a good way to stay productive and healthy.

THE DISPATCH E-EDITION



The

E-Edition includes all of the news, comics, classifieds and advertisements of the newspaper. And it's available to subscribers before 6 a.m. every day.

SUBSCRIBE

All current subscribers have full access to Digital D, which includes the E-Edition and unlimited premium content on Dispatch.com, BuckeyeXtra.com, BlueJacketsXtra.com and DispatchPolitics.com. Subscribe today!

But more job-training programs are needed, advocates say, because it frequently takes older workers longer to learn new skills and reinvent their careers. It also can take them longer to find new jobs.

A recent national survey found that job seekers 55 or older had been out of work an average of 56 weeks — 20 weeks longer than their younger counterparts.

Fred Walker, 57, of Reynoldsburg, was laid off from his position as a trainer for a local collections agency in July 2009 after more than a decade with the company. Always figuring that he eventually would retire from there, Walker didn't have a resume or know how to begin searching for a new job.

"I was going to job fairs, looking on the Internet, and it just wasn't working for me," he said.

He and his wife scraped by on her income as a Columbus schoolteacher for three years until he stumbled across Employment for Seniors in 2012. The Columbus nonprofit group matches companies with job seekers 50 or older.

That's when he decided he could do two things to beef up his already-considerable experience in finance and collections: Start volunteering to prove to prospective employers that his skills weren't outdated, and go back to school.

Employers sometimes have misconceptions about older workers — they don't want to learn new things, for example, or they're slow to embrace technology, said Carol Ventresca, the executive director of Employment for Seniors. Her group works to dispel those myths by showing companies the value of hiring older workers.

It also helps older workers realize that they might have been overlooked for jobs not because of their age but because they didn't prove they were the best candidates.

"Mature workers bring experience, knowledge, reliability and good customer skills to the workforce," Ventresca said. "They're also good role models and mentors to younger workers. They're the jewels of the job market."

Walker started volunteering two days a week at Employment for Seniors, helping other older workers navigate the new job climate.

"I try to encourage people that you're not the only one out there, it's not the end, and you still have worth no matter what your age," he said.

In January 2013, he enrolled in the master of business administration program at Ashland University. Eight months later, he landed a supervisory position at the Pauline Home Association, a nonprofit group that helps senior citizens and people with disabilities manage their budgets so they can live independently.

Supportive of Employment for Seniors' mission, Walker's new employer still allows him to volunteer every Friday.

For many seniors, the key to finding a job is taking that first step.

"Our challenge is to harness the experience and skills of our older population to help society, whether it is through employment, lifelong learning opportunities or volunteerism," said Marcus Molea, chief of the strategic partnerships division for the Ohio Department of Aging.

Every year in Ohio, about 2,000 low-income seniors 55 or older gain up-to-date work experience and refresh their job skills through the federal Senior Community Service Employment program. Participants work up to 20 hours a week in a charitable group or government agency for up to 48 months, earning minimum wage.

They then can use the skills they've learned to find regular employment, Molea said.

"It's great because they get support looking for work while providing a genuine community service," he said.

Gilmore, who's raising her grandchildren, found a job as a part-time receptionist at Columbus Sign Co. in June 2012 and has since moved to a full-time position with some accounting duties. She obtained the job through Employment for Seniors.

Carol Saylor, Columbus Sign's office administrator, frequently calls Employment for Seniors when she has a job to fill.

"The employees that we've gotten there have been dependable, knowledgeable, experienced, courteous, respectful and a really great asset for our business," said Saylor, who at 64 sees herself in her own "encore career."

Gilmore is grateful for the job, but she had trouble adjusting to the pay cut — not uncommon for returning workers who had been earning peak salaries when they left their jobs.

"I was making close to \$30 an hour when I retired from the federal government, and I'm now earning \$12 an hour, which is a struggle when you're raising two teenagers," she said.

She also wonders about opportunities for advancement.

"I'm healthy. I don't look my age. I'm very aggressive," she said. "And I still have spunk, but I sometimes feel shrugged aside, pushed to a corner, all because of how old I am.

"Is it wrong to want to feel valued and wanted and appreciated?"

epyle@dispatch.com

@EncarnitaPyle

[Add to Favorites](#)

[Print Story](#)

[Email](#)

COMMENTS

Login or register to post a comment.
