How Life Can Change

By Larry Gossett

On Monday, September 1, 2013, I had difficulty waking up. Finally, I awakened about 11:30 A.M., sleeping later than I had ever slept in my life. Within moments I realized something was wrong with me. My vision was blurry. I grabbed the newspaper I had been reading the night before and I could not make out any of the words! I was getting nervous because I could not fathom what was wrong with me.

When I got up to walk I was more unsteady than I had ever felt. I then heard my wife, Rhonda, say, “Larry, please get up so we can go to IHOP and eat brunch together with Nia (our granddaughter).” I always loved eating at IHOP. I struggled to get up, but I was having serious problems maintaining my balance. Putting on my sweat pants and jogging jacket was difficult but I finally got them on. Some “invisible force” was involuntarily pulling my entire body to the left. I was scared and did not know what was happening to me. I had to use my left hand to brace myself as I slowly walked down the hallway into our living room.

Once I got there, my wife and granddaughter were waiting for me. I walked slowly to the car and got into the passenger seat. I did not mention the physical difficulties I was having. I did not want to miss the pancakes and eggs at the IHOP restaurant. At the restaurant my wife and granddaughter noticed my vision was impaired when I tried to make a call on my cell phone. They also said I was talking incoherently.

My wife said, “That is enough, I am calling the doctor.” The next thing I knew she was rushing me to Swedish Hospital emergency room. At the hospital I was immediately admitted, given an MRI and then told I had had a stroke.

Since then my life has changed. The main result of my stroke is some loss of memory, attention and recall. I have received excellent rehabilitative care. I am very committed to developing a broad strategy for positively understanding and combatting all of the ill effects of the injuries to my brain caused by my stroke.

I am on the mend and have received excellent professional care from providers committed to working with me. My extremely supportive family and staff at King County have enabled me to continue to serve the people of King County. My wife, Rhonda, has provided tremendous guidance, direction, inspiration and focused leadership during the ordeal of coping with my new health challenges. I had read articles which had praised the role strong spouses or partners can play.

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Help PSARA Plan Our Future

By Susan Levy, PSARA Outreach Vice President

PSARA’s Executive Board established the Long Term Planning and Development Committee (LTPC). We have been meeting, and with your input the Executive Board approved the draft Vision and Mission Statements that are reprinted below. The LTPC is moving forward to prioritize PSARA’s focus for the short and for the long run. Basically we are asking which issues, places, people and communities will be our main focus as we work toward our mission. (We can’t yet do everything all the time.)

To help in this process we ask each of you for your thoughts on what is important to you. Please write down your thoughts on the following three questions and email them to me at outreachvp@psara.org or mail them to the PSARA office. (If you did this at the membership meeting, you don’t need to do it again.)

1. What’s most important to you about PSARA?
2. What could be changed or added to improve PSARA?
3. Imagine that you are recruiting a new PSARA member. Please give one sentence you would use to describe PSARA.

Your responses will go to the LTPC, which will make recommendations first to the Executive Board and then to the membership meeting. Thanks for your help and don’t worry about spelling, grammar or making sure your answers are perfect. No grades will be given! We just really want your main ideas.

Proposed Vision Statement

Through our collective activism, Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA) is helping to create a just and peaceful world where all people can live with dignity and respect.

Proposed Mission Statement

PSARA, a multi-generational and multi-racial organization, is committed to working for economic and social justice, environmental sustainability, economic security, and equal rights and opportunities for retirees and future retirees.

Tour the Wing Luke with PSARA

By Bob Shimabukuro

Diversity Committee Chair Frank Irigon announced at the PSARA semi-annual summer membership meeting that a tour of the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience has been scheduled for PSARA members for August 7, 2014. The tour will start at 10:30 a.m. The “field trip,” hosted by Diversity Committee members Frieda Takamura and Bob Shimabukuro and Museum staff/volunteer experts, will focus on Asian Pacific American activism in immigrant/community/labor struggles dating from the 19th century to the present.

Included will be a short movie with segments from an interview with Committee Chair Frank Irigon.

Because of limited space, just 15 slots were made available at the meeting. They are going fast so if you are interested in joining us, please send your request to Maureen Bo, adminvp@psara.org, or call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646.
Roger Stark from the conservative/right wing “think tank”, Washington Policy Center, wrote a piece published in the Seattle Times entitled “VA Wait-lists a Result of Socialized Health Care.” Stark posits that the terrible and inexcusable problems faced by veterans in getting care is “typical of centrally planned, government-run facilities, which lead to excessive wait times and rationing of care.” Stark argues that veterans should be provided vouchers to purchase health care any place they choose in our “excellent private health care system.”

Evidently Mr. Stark’s ideological blinders have impeded his reading of the World Health Organization’s ranking of health care systems around the world. The predominantly private U.S. health care system fares miserably on most of the indices, including the all-important life expectancy index. Our “excellent private health care system” outcomes are poor, and our costs are double the next most expensive system in the world.

What is maddening about the genuine crisis with the VA is that these problems result from a failure by Congress and the VA to plan for and fund services that veterans groups had warned would be needed for 15 years. The wars have produced veterans with grievous injuries, both physical and mental. The shortages of primary care medical providers and specialists were totally predictable. By failing to adequately fund the VA so the system could appropriately staff up, private sector hawks are now able to undermine confidence in a government program that is essential to our veterans and their families.

With the wars authorized by Congress, it did not take a rocket scientist to predict that the VA would need a very significant injection of new dollars to add new professional staff to respond to the needs of returning vets. Obtuse bureaucrats, stupid bureaucratic decisions and subterfuge in the V.A. added to the resource crisis, but responsibility for the VA crisis rests squarely on the shoulders of the elected representatives who failed to respond to what was totally predictable.

Mr. Stark’s opinion piece is just another example of right-wing think tanks creating the intellectual justification for the outcome for which the funders of their work are paying. They want privatization of the VA system, as there is money to be made.

We are facing a similar problem with the Social Security Administration. While we are making slow progress in garnering support to increase benefits by “scraping the cap,” there is another very insidious attack on Social Security that is playing out.

Demand for services is surging with the aging of the baby boomers. Meanwhile the Social Security Administration (SSA) is closing field offices and cutting staff. In Seattle, we are well aware of this effort by the SSA. PSARA joined with other organizations in a fight to stop the closure of the Belltown and International District field offices, only to have them consolidated into the difficult-to-access Jackson Federal Office Building.

Recently, the Senate Special Committee on Aging held a hearing to look at the impact of recent Social Security field office closures and service cuts. Although the SSA is receiving record numbers of claims as the Baby Boomer generation hits retirement age, budget cuts have forced the closing of 64 field offices and 533 mobile offices since 2010. Over the last three years, 11,000 SSA jobs have already been trimmed, and a proposal is circulating within the SSA to accelerate office closures, eliminate many in-person services, and shift beneficiary support to online and telephone based service. A report released by the bipartisan Senate committee criticized Social Security administrators for making decisions about shuttering field offices without adequately evaluating how individual communities might be affected.

The SSA, in testimony before a Senate Special Committee, pointed out that funding for administration has not come close to keeping up with “a staggering 27% increase” in claims. A budget document issued by the SSA states, “We have lost a significant number of front-line employees over the last several years rather than increases to account for the growing demand. Does this sound familiar?!”

The operating budget for SSA does not come from general government revenue. Dollars for administration of Social Security are paid out of the Social Security Trust Fund. But Congress determines how much is to be allocated from the Trust Fund for administration. And administration is being underfunded. Therefore the services of the SSA are deteriorating.

Several months ago, Carolyn Colvin, acting Commissioner, and recently nominated by the President to be the Commissioner of Social Security, met with Diane Narasaki, Executive Director...
Generational Warriors

By Dean Baker, co-founder of the Center for Economic and Policy Research

At the same time that we are seeing growing support for proposals to increase Social Security benefits, it appears that we are witnessing another set of calls for generational warfare. The argument of the generational warriors is that the Social Security and Medicare benefits received by our parents and grandparents pose a threat to the living standards of our children and grandchildren.

The generational warfare argument may not make much sense, but many people with money stand behind it. Therefore we are likely to hear it frequently in the months ahead.

The basic facts are simple. The country will see an increase in the ratio of retirees to workers over the next two decades, but it is not qualitatively different than the increase in the ratio that we have been seeing for many decades.

The Social Security trustees project that in 2035 there will be just 2.1 workers for each beneficiary. This compares to 2.8 workers for each beneficiary today. By comparison, the ratio of workers to beneficiaries was over 5 to 1 back in 1960. In short, we already have seen a much larger drop in the ratio of workers to beneficiaries in the last five decades than the decline we face going forward.

Insofar as we would expect a lower ratio of workers to retirees to hurt living standards, we would have already seen most of the effect. In fact, we are paying considerably more in Social Security taxes now than in 1960. The current tax rate is 6.2 percent on both workers and retirees; this compares to just 3.0 percent back in 1960. There is no remotely plausible story in which young people today will see anything like the tax increases faced by their parents’ generation.

The first generations of beneficiaries did get a very good return on their Social Security taxes, but these people have long since passed on. The baby boomers will largely get a return that reflects what they paid into the program. The people claiming the baby boomers are getting a bonanza from their Social Security are either not very good at arithmetic or dishonest.

However, the more important point is that the focus on Social Security taxes is hugely misleading. The next generation’s standard of living depends far more on their before-tax wages than what gets taken out of their check for Social Security taxes. And here there is both good news and bad news.

The good news is that the Social Security trustees project that average compensation will rise by more than 60 percent over the next three decades. This means that for each hour of work in 2043, workers will get 60 percent more on average in wages and benefits than do workers today.

That’s the good news. The bad news is that this figure refers to the average, not necessarily what the typical worker will get. In the last three decades most workers have seen little benefit from economic growth as most of the gains have gone to those at the top: CEOs, Wall Street types, and highly paid professionals like doctors and lawyers. If this pattern continues, then workers may not enjoy higher standards of living in 2043 than they do today.

But it is important to realize that the threat to future living standards comes not from demographics. The impact of a falling ratio of workers to retirees will be very limited even in a worst case scenario. The real threat to the living standards of young people is the continuation of the upward redistribution that we have seen over the last three decades.

This should have led people to wonder why we hear so much about the retirement of the baby boomers threatening the living standards of young people. For example, National Public Radio recently ran a piece which seemed to be complaining that young people didn’t resent their parents’ Social Security and Medicare. MSNBC gave us a segment in which Abby Huntsman, the daughter of the unsuccessful presidential candidate, made bizarre claims about Social Security being an impossible burden for young people.

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And the Washington Post routinely uses both its news and editorial sections to hype the need for cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

There is a simple explanation for the prominence of the Social Security scare stories. There is a lot of money behind it. The one percent types who have benefited from the upward redistribution of the last three decades find it very useful that national debate focus on $1,300 a month Social Security checks rather than the policies that made them incredibly wealthy.

People like Peter Peterson, who made his fortune on Wall Street, would rather not have public discussion focus on the tax loopholes that made his private equity business so profitable. Similarly, Washington Post owner, Jeff Bezos, probably does not want much public debate on the fact that he made tens of billions by allowing people to evade state and local sales taxes.

The list goes on, but as long as the wealthy can focus public debate on retirement benefits for ordinary workers, they can keep the focus away from the policies that allow them to get rich at everyone else’s expense. And the rich are prepared to spend lots of money to keep the public distracted. We can expect to see many more pieces about Social Security bankrupting our children.
The full story of the scandal enveloping Veterans Administration healthcare policies still waits to be written, but what is clear even now is that the real scandal lies at the feet of neo-con Republicans.

Many media venues simply repeated the surface story that veterans were being denied care and VA officials were falsifying reports to conceal that fact. They never asked how and why that would happen, and that is a scandal in itself.

Here are the facts:

In the 12 years the US has been at war in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 2 million men and women have served in uniform.

Many returned home with complex medical issues, including traumatic brain injuries, multiple amputations, and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). More than half of them served several successive tours of combat duty. According to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the suicide rate for Iraq and Afghanistan vets is three times that of the population as a whole.

On top of that, more than seven million Vietnam veterans are now seniors, and many require more care than they previously did.

While veterans who get their healthcare from VA hospitals report that standards of care are very good to excellent, wait times are too long and getting longer.

These circumstances have stressed the existing VA resources to the breaking point and created a demand for additional resources and funding.

In 2013 House Democrats proposed the Veterans Backlog Reduction Act, but it has languished without even a committee hearing due to opposition by Republican House leaders.

In February the Obama Administration proposed a bill to allocate an additional $24 billion in spending for the VA, which was to include funding for 27 new medical facilities to help meet the demand and relieve the overburdened VA system.

However, Republicans in the Senate blocked this effort too, because they opposed more federal spending. In fact, Republicans would not even allow debate on the administration’s proposal. With 41 of 45 Senate Republicans voting to block the bill, they successfully filibustered more VA funding.

Among those who voted to kill additional funding were many who later professed to be appalled that the VA failed to treat patients in a timely way.

There is an additional factor to think about: VA administrators get so-called “merit pay.” In other words, they operate under a kind of piece-work system for managers, where they get bonuses for booking a certain number of patients within a certain amount of time.

This turned out to be an open invitation to cook the books. Some officials set up elaborate schemes to falsify patients’ wait times in order to comply with VA rules about prompt treatment and thus earn “merit pay” bonuses.

According to internal VA investigations, pressure was placed by VA managers on schedulers to use phony lists or engage in other fraudulent practices to make wait times appear shorter.

One internal VA investigation revealed that at least 35 veterans had died while waiting for care at the Phoenix VA hospital. At least 1700 veterans at the Phoenix VA who asked for an appointment were never placed on an official wait list. Another internal VA audit identified 120,000 veterans who were left waiting or never got care.

The neo-con Republicans who were responsible for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (and parenthetically for the collapse of the Iraqi government they installed), tried to deal with the aftermath of those wars in the same way they tried to fight – on the cheap. They sent men and women into combat initially without adequate equipment, forced them to serve multiple tours of duty in combat zones, and then refused to pay for their medical care when they returned.

They then pretended to be shocked – shocked! – that veterans were not getting timely care. Their actions are both shameful and shameless.

On June 10, the House passed a bill that would allow veterans to use non-VA facilities under certain conditions.

The next day, the Senate passed a similar bill sponsored by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). The bills now need to be reconciled by a joint House-Senate committee.

While these bills will help deal with the backlog of veterans who require medical treatment, they still do not deal with the long-term viability of VA healthcare services. There is also a danger that this stopgap system will become the new normal and that future efforts to fund the VA at a rational level will be put on the back burner.

The issue once again is whether Congress will address the needs of human beings – in this case, human beings who had to pay the price for a dreadful lapse in political leadership.
movement gets better conditions. Our responsibility is to keep our eyes on the enforcement issues."

Sawant also stressed the necessity of linking the $15 minimum wage bill with others: from Social Security (Scrap the Cap) and better college student funding programs, to housing injustice—rent control and evictions. "Don’t think your job is done," she added. "We need your voice for a state-wide tax on the wealthy and big business to finance education; we need to talk about public transit."

During the question and answer period after her speech, Councilmember Sawant, in her reply to a question about why the "seven-year phase-in loophole" was left in the $15 minimum wage bill, summed up her thoughts (and the thoughts of most of the people at the meeting):

"We got [only] as much as we got, because we didn’t have enough power. The best way to make this happen is to become more powerful. Despite the loopholes, we accomplished a lot—which was recognized world-wide."

Sawant and the Socialist Alternative party is not going to be sitting still in the near future. Sawant announced that Jess Spear, Organizing Director of $15 Now, is running for the 43rd Legislative District against 20-year incumbent and House Majority Leader Frank Chopp. She called Chopp a corporate politician who led the passage of Boeing’s $8.7 billion tax breaks at the expense of working people.

This could be a very interesting race.

Bob Shimabukuro is Associate Editor of The Retiree Advocate and a member of the PSARA Executive Board.
A Busy Month: PSARA's June in Pictures
This June, PSARA held our summer membership meeting as well as hosting two forums on Social Security, one in Seattle and another in Bellingham. More than 400 PSARA members and members of the public attended these educational events. (Photos: Garet Munger)
Elizabeth Warren and Thomas Piketty: "Wealth Does Not Trickle Down... It Trickles Up."

By Jon Queally, Common Dreams (reprinted from Reader Supported News)

Sharing a stage with French economist Thomas Piketty on a Monday night in Boston, Sen. Elizabeth Warren discussed a range of issues related to economic inequality during a joint interview with the Huffington Post. She said that people should be careful not to separate the far-reaching implications that outsized wealth and power in the U.S. can have on vital, planetary issues like climate change.

Piketty, the author of the groundbreaking and bestselling book Capitalism in the 21st Century, offered his perspective on the rise of global wealth disparity as Warren focused on her familiar rhetoric surrounding the politics of inequality by describing the numerous ways in which "the system is rigged" against working people in favor of the financial and political elite.

In a direct refutation of the infamous Reagan-era ethos of “trickle-down economics,” Warren said that Piketty’s invaluable research presented in his book shows that "wealth does not trickle down... it trickles up."

“It trickles from everyone else,” she said, “to those who are rich.”

In a striking moment of the discussion, Warren stopped to make a cogent point about the intersection between the inequality that Piketty has so well documented and the overwhelming issue of climate change which she argued should not be treated as something separate from the current political realities created by enormous wealth inequality.

“I think [these two issues] are the same debate,” said Warren as she crossed her arms to represent intersection. And continued:

"Think of it this way: We have tens of millions of people who live right near coasts, just to pick one example. And so what's happening right now in the debate in the United States? There are giant industries that pollute and the consequence is they make immediate profits and the effects of their pollution will be felt by lots and lots people around this country and ultimately around the globe. Now, it's in their interest to continue to be able to pollute, because they make short term profits and everyone else will bear the costs."

“Think about it, they are able to amass the lobbyists to go to Washington, to influence the lawmakers, to influence the regulators, to do everything they can to maintain their opportunities to foul the air and poison the water in order to support short-term profits. Everyone else—who has to pay the price on that—doesn't have that same kind of organized ability to make their voices heard in the same way with lobbyists and lawyers in Washington.

“And so for me, this is just one more example of how we have inequality, of how we have a rigged system, where a handful are able to reap benefits at the cost of everyone else. And I think climate change, like economic inequality, are both symptoms of the same problem. The same problem as those with enough power writing the rules too much in their favour, and leaving everyone else behind.”
Drive for Dignity: Home Healthcare Workers Take $15 Minimum Wage Campaign on the Road

By Mike Andrew

Home healthcare workers and their supporters kicked off a new phase of the campaign for a $15 minimum wage with an 8:00 a.m. rally in front of Seattle City Hall on June 10.

With a banner reading “Drive for Dignity: $15 for Caregivers,” 60 caregivers set out on a three-day bus tour to take the $15-an-hour campaign statewide. The tour took them to Everett, the Tri-Cities, and Spokane, picking up additional supporters on the way.

The “Drive for Dignity” wrapped up with a June 12 rally of more than 100 people at Riverfront Park in Spokane.

Home healthcare workers offer vital services for seniors and disabled patients, often providing their clients’ only link to the outside world, but they are typically some of the state’s lowest-paid workers. In fact, state statistics reveal that as many as one-third of caregivers live in poverty.

“We see Seattle as the first step in winning $15 an hour for home healthcare workers statewide,” Sterling Harding, Vice President of SEIU 775NW, told The Retiree Advocate at the rally.

SEIU 775NW represents some 43,000 caregivers, and was the driving force behind the successful $15 minimum wage initiative in SeaTac last year. SEIU 775NW President David Rolf was also co-chair of the committee that drafted Seattle’s new minimum wage ordinance.

“We’re taking this around the state,” home health aide Sharon Kitchel told reporters at the rally, “to let other caregivers know we are a profession, we love our profession, and we should be treated with dignity.”

Kitchel now makes $10.98 and hour, and because she lives and works in Olympia, Seattle’s new minimum wage ordinance will not increase her income.

Wages for home healthcare workers start at $10.53 an hour, she explained, with a 15-25 cent increase after every 2,000 hours worked.

“There’s no way my wage will ever get to $15 that way!” she exclaimed.

Kitchel has worked in her profession for 23 years, and became an SEIU 775NW member in 2005. The union has made a huge difference in her life, she says.

“Before [joining the union] I barely made minimum wage, I didn’t get mileage, I couldn’t afford healthcare for myself. Once I joined [the union], I got a raise immediately, I got mileage, I get healthcare for $17 a month.”

Like Kitchel, most of the state’s caregivers are independent healthcare workers paid through Medicaid, and they bargain a new contract every two years. SEIU 775NW and the state’s negotiators began bargaining a new contract in May.

Caregiver Uba Adin told the rally that she makes $10.95 an hour, “not enough to make ends meet.” A $15 an hour wage would enable her to buy shoes and clothes for her children and still be able to take them out for dinner once in a while, she said.

“Things most people take for granted are things home healthcare workers struggle for,” Rihana Martinson told the rally.

Martinson works at Target, making $9.61 an hour, and will benefit from Seattle’s new minimum wage when it goes into effect April 1 next year. She was one of the fast food and retail workers who called a one-day strike last spring, kicking off the $15 an hour campaign in Seattle.

“I wanted to come and show my solidarity and support,” she said, “because everybody deserves a living wage.”

PSARA President Robby Stern was asked to speak at the Seattle kickoff rally. He expressed solidarity with the campaign.

“PSARA supports a $15 minimum wage throughout Washington,” he said. “Our members rely – or will rely – on home healthcare workers, and those workers need stable jobs with a wage of at least $15 an hour.

“I want to see people who receive care have a safe place to live, food on the table, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to enjoy all-important continuity of care. A $15 wage allows caregivers to stay on the job and also be able to save for education and their own retirement. That benefits our community.”

Also speaking at the rally was PSARA member Pramila Jayapal, former executive director of One America and candidate for the Washington State Senate from the Thirty-Seventh District.
of the Asian Counseling & Referral Service, and me. We tried to discuss with her the damage that has been done to our communities by the closures of the Bell Town and International District offices. Frankly, trying to discuss the community’s needs with her was like trying to talk with a brick wall. Her mantra was that our budgets are being cut so we are going to make cuts and people will have to learn to apply online or by phones. Her bureaucratic responses were outrageous.

SSA is developing a new plan entitled Vision 2025 that would close the bulk of their field offices. People are expected to apply for Social Security either through an already overextended phone service or online. Often times, filing for Social Security or Social Security Disability can be a very complex process. This effort to restrict access to personalized assistance will create an enormous hardship for a large number of eligible recipients.

Who is to blame? Certainly insensitive bureaucrats who fail to take a stand for the beneficiaries must be held accountable. But ultimately, the blame lies squarely with the Congress and the President who are failing to fund these essential programs and are refusing to raise the revenue necessary (from those who can afford to pay) to provide the services to which we are entitled. The answer to these funding problems is clear – Scrap the Cap!

Unless the income cap is eliminated, the outcome is predictable. People will be very angry at the lack of services which are critical and for which we have paid. Right-wing proponents of the free market will wage a campaign arguing that the private sector (i.e., Wall Street) could do the job much better.

We face a very determined, vicious and wealthy opposition to strong, efficient government programs. We need to stay active, speak with a strong voice and take nonviolent direct action when appropriate, whether directed at bureaucrats or our elected officials.

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**LGBTQ Intergenerational Conference: September 28**

By Mike Andrew

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) seniors and youth will get together for the first Seattle-area Intergenerational Conference on September 28 at Seattle University.

The conference will highlight issues both generations experience, ways they can interact and be allies to each other, and formulate future plans for advocacy work.

Debbie Carlsen, executive director of LGBTQ Allyship, the organization that initiated the conference, says the idea grew out of work her group had been doing with both youth and seniors in the past few years.

“The conference really grew out of our ‘Queerly Classed’ discussion series,” Carlsen said. “In 2010 and 2011 we had discussions on healthcare, partnering with the Northwest LGBT Senior Provider Network, Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, and other senior leaders. We also had discussions on youth homelessness in 2010, 2011, and 2012, which led us to develop youth focus groups in 2011.

“We’ve also been involved with the Caring Across Generations project since 2012, which helped us connect with seniors, healthcare, providers, immigrant communities…”

Based on these experiences, Carlsen says, Allyship saw some common threads in the experiences of LGBTQ youth and seniors, and potential for the two groups to interact in positive ways.

“We developed additional focus groups for both youth and seniors to see what both groups wanted in an intergenerational project,” Carlsen explained. “And we made sure we were inclusive of all gender identities.”

Seniors reported that they often experience “ageism.” In other words, they felt excluded from the LGBTQ community because events and services were not geared toward seniors.

They also reported feeling that younger people did not value their experience, and they did not get recognition for the movements they led and continue to lead.

Young people, on the other hand, said they experience “adultism.” Although many of the seniors had never heard that term before participating in the Allyship focus group, youth said they felt undervalued and often totally ignored by adults simply because they are young.

“We found shared experience – similarities in how seniors experience ageism and youth experience adultism,” Carlsen told The Retiree Advocate. “From the youth perspective, they wanted to be connected to seniors, and seniors also wanted a connection with the youth.”

From that realization came the idea for an intergenerational conference that could foster dialogue between the two generations.

The agenda for the conference is being developed in the same open, grassroots way that the initial idea came about. Five seniors and five young people will be chosen to engage in weekly getting-to-know-you conversations that ultimately will help frame the discussions at the conference.

“We want people to talk from their own experience,” Carlsen said, “to give each other the space to do that, and to trust that both sides are experts in their own experience.

“We hope to see clear ideas develop about what these communities want next, and how these communities can connect more strongly with each other.”

Seniors age 50 and over who want to participate in this dialogue, beginning in July, or who want to help with the conference in September should apply now to info@allyship.org.
How Life Can Change

Continued from Page 1

helping their loved ones get well. I now can testify about the huge difference having a caring and totally involved spouse makes on the road to recovery. Rhonda has made sure I make every medical and therapeutic appointment, she does research to make sure we ask the appropriate follow-up questions and she does not allow me to ever stray from my new strict diet. She is a blessing, and I am lucky I have her in my corner.

Rhonda also set up appointments with a wide variety of doctors, nurses and other health care workers helping me deal with my stroke. She has made sure I see a very experienced neurologist and a specialized eye doctor. She made appointments with a heart specialist, foot doctor (DPMS), physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech therapist who specialize in working with stroke victims. She also insures there is the proper follow up. She makes sure I follow up with counselors and dieticians who have superb reputations for their work with patients dealing with traumatic brain injuries. Rhonda makes sure I avail myself of every health care program I need to address the varied health problems exposed by the stroke. My medical care has been comprehensive, primarily because King County has such an excellent health care coverage plan.

Since The Retiree Advocate asked me to write about the impact my stroke has had physically and psychologically, I started thinking deeply about being 69 years old. Had I already retired from work and only had Medicare when I had my stroke, I might be “in a world of hurt.” I do not think Medicare would have covered the comprehensive care I have received, and I would not have been able to afford the level of comprehensive medical assistance I am receiving. To cover the health care I am getting would more than likely have caused me to consider borrowing significant money. I would have been forced to choose between receiving less comprehensive care or using credit cards, putting my family into serious debt simply to afford good and necessary health care after an unforeseen health crisis.

It has been difficult to accept I am now a person living with disabilities. I am much more appreciative and empathetic to the thousands of people in our community who have suffered from heart attacks, strokes, cancer, and other serious illnesses—especially retired and/or low-income seniors without adequate health coverage.

As an elected official for nearly 20 years, I have always advocated “health care for all.” But it was not always from the deep, personal perspective. My stroke has made clear to me why we must demand comprehensive health care coverage for ALL residents of our country.

At this historic juncture, I believe we need to support implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act. However, the ACA is limited to just providing “basic” health care for all citizens. “BASIC” is not enough. We can and must do a lot better in bringing comprehensive health care benefits to all people!

A Luta Continua.

Larry Gossett is Councilmember on the Metropolitan King County Council, District Two. He and his wife, Rhonda Gossett, are PSARA members.

Growing Our Membership

By Susan Levy, PSARA Outreach Vice President

We are proud that we have gained 126 new members in the first six months of 2014. Over 70 were recruited or gifted by executive board members and the rest came from you. Thanks for your efforts to help grow PSARA. And welcome all of you who are new members and thanks to all of you who renewed your membership. We are only as strong as our members.

Currently we have 1,260 individual members and 59 organizational members. That makes about 1,330. That’s wonderful but we could be even larger and stronger.

If we recruited another 126 members in the last six months that would make us about 1,500 strong. Or if each current member could recruit just one more member, that would give us a membership over 2,500.

Will you help? Will you ask a friend or relative to join? Or will you give a gift membership to a friend or relative? Or will you please share your copy of the advocate with a neighbor and ask them to consider joining?

Each small action will help PSARA grow larger and stronger. Thanks so much for what you’ve already done, and I hope you can help find one more new member.

To subscribe or renew visit

http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara
Meetings and Events

**PSARA Diversity Committee:** 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Thursday, July 10, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Room 226, Seattle. The Committee is planning a tour and program for PSARA members at the Wing Luke Museum. The committee will do more planning for this unique event.

**PSARA Environmental Committee:** 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Thursday, July 10, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Room 226, Seattle. All members welcome as we continue to define our role in the movement to address the growing threats caused by climate change.

**PSARA Executive Board Meeting:** 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, July 17, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Ave S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

**Green Lake Discussion Group:** Noon to 1:00 p.m., Thursday, July 24, Green Lake Library, 7354 East Green Lake Drive N., Seattle. Brown bag lunch. The gathering will discuss the book, For All of Us -- One Today, by Richard Blanco. Copies are available to borrow.

**PSARA Education Committee:** 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Monday, July 28, Seattle Labor Temple, Room 226, 2800 First Ave, Seattle. All members welcome as we evaluate the labor/community forums and discuss any follow up.

**PSARA Tour of Wing Luke Museum:** 10:30 a.m., Thursday, August 7, 719 South King St., Seattle, 98104. PSARA Diversity Committee members will lead PSARA members on a tour of the Museum, a unique treasure in our community. We will view several of the exhibits including “In Struggle -- Asian American Acts of Resistance.” We will follow the viewing with a discussion, and then we will adjourn for a no-host lunch at a restaurant in the International District for anyone who wants to have lunch together. Space is limited. This tour will be first come, first serve for the first 15 PSARA members who RSVP. Either call the PSARA office, (206) 448-9646, or email Maureen, adminvp@PSARA.org.

**Save the date - Martin Luther King County Labor Council Labor Day Picnic:** Monday, September 1, 11 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Lower Woodland Park, N 50th St & Woodland Park Ave N, Seattle. Be part of PSARA’s presence at the picnic.