

From
overweight,
unhealthy
to Ironman

When she turned 51 on Oct. 21, 2013, Marcia Scott wrote herself a letter. In it, she reflected on the year that had passed, and how hard she had worked to improve her health. She reminded herself how she'd always been a major goal setter, starting as a young girl when she vowed to sell the most Girl Scout cookies in her community. She did. She was the first female news producer at her local NBC affiliate in southern Maine in her 20s and a top Mary Kay Cosmetics representative in her 30s (and still).



DIANE
ATWOOD

But some goals have given her a struggle. Important, potentially life-saving goals. By her mid-40s, she had high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

"No matter how well I ate and how much I exercised," she says, "I could not shake the extra weight and get control of my blood sugar levels. The mental turning point came for me when my brother died at 48 years old — never living a healthy life. It was time for me to set a goal and take action."

First thing she did was fire her primary care doctor, "who had me on too much medication and not getting results," she says, "and who actually told me, 'Maybe this is just how your body is meant to be.'"

She found another doctor who was willing to partner with her on her goals. By the time she hit 50, Marcia had lost 50 pounds, five months ahead of her target date. Her blood pressure and cholesterol are now under control, and so is her diabetes.

She'd always been active, but now she ramped things up even more. She completed seven sprint triathlons. She completed countless short races and sporting events, and she made incredible new friendships through her new, more active lifestyle.

Three years have passed since Marcia wrote the letter to herself. Now she's edging up on 54 years old. While her health is under control, she says she still struggles with her weight.

"I keep going back up about 15 pounds, down 10, etc.," she says. "The most I have been back up is 15. It is a constant battle."

But she isn't letting that battle stand in the way of setting yet another goal. She's going to do the 2016 IRONMAN Lake Placid on July 24.

And what does the full Ironman entail? A 2.4 mile swim followed by a 112-mile bike through the Adirondack Mountains of New York, followed by a 26.2 mile marathon.

That's more than 140 miles all in the same day!

"I like the personal challenge," she says. "It continues to improve my health. I went to Lake Placid to support my friend Mary last summer when she did it and discovered the Ironman Charity partner is raising money for cancer. That finalized my decision be-

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Judy Lizotte, 58, works at Bangor Savings Bank's wealth management division in Augusta. She hopes to keep working until she's 66 or 67 to boost her Social Security payments but, for personal reasons, "I may go beyond that," she said.

Mutual benefit

Motivated older workforce
a boon to Maine employers

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

Your job provides a paycheck and valuable benefits. It's a social connection, a mental exercise and a professional identity. It's a reason to get up in the morning, a place to go, a source of personal satisfaction and the immediate response to the question, "What do you do?" For better or worse, our jobs are an essential element of our lives, even as we age.

For all those reasons, 73-year-old Rosemarie Hahn hated to leave her accounting job at Eastern Area Agency on Aging earlier this year.

Hahn and her husband first retired in 2005 and moved from Massachusetts to Maine. They had family connections here, she said, and life was more "cost-effective." They bought a house in the rural town of Stetson and settled in.

"Then I said, 'Now what?'" Hahn said. "I'm wasn't going to sit around and do nothing all day."

So she signed up for some volunteer shifts, providing transportation through the local chapter of the American Red Cross.

"It was great," the former administrative assistant said. "I met all kinds of people, and I got to know the area."

Then she heard Eastern Area Agency on Aging was looking for receptionist that would work 10 hours per week. She applied and was hired. She liked the work and the workplace, and eventually her hours got bumped up to half time, which made the commute from Stetson more worthwhile.

Two years ago, when she was 71, she was offered a 25-hour-per week job in the agency's fiscal services office.

"They told me, 'You'll have to learn to use the computer,'" she recalled. "I had to learn the specific program they used for accounting, and a lot of accounting terms I wasn't familiar with, too."

She mastered the new skills quickly and soon she was working independently in the small office.

For Hahn, the job at Eastern Area Agency on Aging was more than a paycheck.

"It was nice to have the extra income," she said, "But it was really more about getting out there, keeping up my skills and having a purpose other than cooking dinner and cleaning the house."

Unfortunately, Hahn's husband recently suffered a series of medical problems, and in January, reluctantly, she retired again in order to care for him and manage their household. They have enough money to live on without her modest paycheck, and she's grateful for that.

"But, it was enlivening," she said, a touch of wistfulness in her voice. "There was always something going on at that agency. I learned a lot about senior care, for one thing. If things get really tough at home, I can always turn to the Eastern Agency for help."

Changing demographics,
changing priorities

Along with the rest of the state's population, Maine's workforce is aging. Data from



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Bangor Savings Bank's wealth management division in Augusta.

the Maine Department of Labor show a significant increase in the number of older workers between 2005 and 2015. In 2005, with an overall unemployment rate of 5 percent, there were 106,000 workers between 55 and 64 years old; in 2015, with an unemployment rate of 4.4 percent, the number was 143,000. During the same period, the number of workers 65 and over more than doubled, rising from 25,000 to 52,000.

The figures reflect the bubble of aging baby boomers passing through the workplace, according to Glenn Mills of the Maine Department of Labor.

"We have a much larger population of workers headed toward retirement than we have teens heading into the workforce," he said.

The natural demographic shift is compounded by younger Mainers leaving the state for more vibrant economic climates, he said, increasing pressure on Maine employers to keep older workers on their pay-rolls.

But older Mainers have their own reasons to keep working. According to national labor sta-

tistics, one-third of Mainers age 65 and older have no retirement income other than Social Security, at an annual average of \$16,000. For many, continued employment is the key to financial survival.

Mainers in higher income brackets also find themselves needing to work into their 60s, 70s and beyond as they try to recover financial losses from the stock market and housing crashes in the late 2000s.

But a big reason older Mainers are staying in the workforce is that they find it an important and satisfying aspect of their lives.

"People dream about retirement their whole lives, and as it gets closer, suddenly it's terrifying," said Lannie Moffatt, chief employee experience officer for Bangor Savings Bank. "It's very hard to imagine waking up and not having a job to go to."

In response to the availability and needs of an aging workforce, Bangor Savings Bank — along with several other large employers in Maine, including retailer L.L. Bean and the engineering and construction firm

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'Seasoned souls' grapple with spiritual issues

BY MEG HASKELL
BDN STAFF

BELFAST — What does it mean to grow older? What gives our lives meaning and purpose? How are we to understand the presence of evil and suffering in the world?

These are just some of the questions being discussed by Belfast-area seniors participating in a weekly forum of big-picture issues viewed through the compound lens of faith and advancing age. The group, "Seasoned Souls," was formed last November with an expected enrollment of half a dozen church members age 65 and older, according to Rev. Deane Perkins, the minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast.

"It was only going to run for six or eight weeks, but [the members] just kept wanting to go on," he said.

Now, 24 weeks later, the Tuesday morning gathering regularly draws 12 to 15 members of the congregation — men and women, singles and couples — and Perkins is preparing to launch a second group, and possibly a third.

Perkins said he was inspired to create the group after he learned last year of a similar group meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Augusta, based on the book "The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older" by Eliza Blanchard.

"UUs tend to be kind of cerebral, humanistic and intellectual," Perkins said. "But this is a chance to feel

as well as to think about what it all really means. At 65 and older, we are all facing our own mortality in one way or another."

On a recent Tuesday morning, Perkins asked a group member to read the words of the song "Dreams Never Die" by the Canadian rock band The Cooper Brothers. The song speaks to the importance of dreams and desires in guiding our paths through life. Participants then broke into small discussion groups with two questions to consider: What are your dreams? And what gives you a sense of meaning and purpose?

In one small group, the personal discussion ranged broadly, from the deep contentment of a second marriage to the satisfaction of having time to serve the

community in retirement.

Other recent sessions have included a reading from Albert Camus' "The Plague," with a discussion about the death of children.

"We talk about some heavy-duty subjects," said group member Margie Shannon, 79, of Belfast, who attends the sessions with her husband, Mike. "As a group, we have grown quite close in these weekly meetings."

At the Maine Council of Churches, Executive Director Rev. Jean Field said Maine seniors — "elders" in the parlance of many faith traditions — are hungry for the opportunity to think and talk seriously about issues of faith, mortality, unfinished business and social responsibility.

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AED is a lifesaving device
you should know how to use

I think I was the oldest person in the room last Tuesday when about a dozen of my Bangor

Daily News colleagues gathered to get certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of automatic external defibrillators, or CPR/AED. It pleased me to see how many of my younger co-workers take seriously the responsibility of dealing with an emergency in the newsroom and were willing to devote a half-day of their valuable time to learn how. I also appreciate



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that the BDN values our safety enough to bring Red Cross trainers on site and pay us to earn our certification.

I covered health and health care for the BDN from 2002 to 2011. It was in 2008 that I first wrote about automatic external defibrillators, or AEDs. These portable, battery-operated devices, smaller than a child's school lunchbox, pack enough of a voltage punch to shock an arrested heart back to life, right at the scene of the incident. And they are so simple and self-explanatory to use that even an untrained bystander can effectively deliver that lifesaving charge, often long before professional

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