



## Experience Wave Iowa: Lifelong Learning for Mature Iowans

Experience Wave Iowa is an initiative that works to raise awareness about the opportunities that mature Iowans provide to the workforce and community. Currently, traditional thinking and societal barriers are slowing progress in changing the opinions and understanding of what our state stands to gain from mature Iowans that are engaged in work, the community, and education. Iowa is expected to experience a workforce shortage in the next few years, and mature Iowans are ready and willing to fill that gap. Experience Wave Iowa believes that mature Iowans need meaningful volunteer opportunities, workplace flexibility, and opportunities for lifelong learning to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

### Did You Know?

#### **435,220**

The estimated number of people age 65 and over who were living in Iowa on July 1, 2005. This age group accounted for 14.7 percent of the total population.

#### **663,186**

The projected population age 65 and older in Iowa in the year 2030. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this age group will constitute 22.4 percent of the state's total population at that time.

#### **84**

The number of Iowa counties, (out of 99 total counties) in 2030 in which at least 20 percent of the residents will be age 65 and over according to Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. In 2000 that number was 30.

### Iowa's Mature Population

According to the State Data Center of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, it is estimated that 435,220 people age 65 and over live in Iowa as of July 1, 2005. That is 14.7 percent of the state's total population. By the year 2030, individuals age 65 and older in Iowa will surpass 660,000. By 2030, the state's population age 65 and older will represent 22.4 percent of the population. In 2005, just 30 of Iowa's 99 counties had at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older. By 2030, it is projected that 84 Iowa counties will consist of at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older.

Mature Iowans are educated: 79 percent of individuals age 65 and older have at least a high school diploma. This population is civically engaged. Eight-three percent of Iowans age 65 and older were registered to vote in the 2004 presidential election. This population works. More than 68,000 Iowans age 65 and older were in the labor force in 2005, and just 3.2 percent of Iowans age 65 and older were unemployed.

### Mature Iowans Embrace Lifelong Learning

Education for young people has always been important to Iowans. However, the education system is responding to the demand by mature learners with institutions throughout the state increasingly offering educational opportunities to mature Iowans. Technology has proven to be one of the greatest challenges facing mature Iowans in terms of learning new skills, but through the expansion of lifelong learning in Iowa, they are quickly overcoming that barrier.

Programs aimed at providing continuing education to mature Iowans can be found throughout the state at various colleges and universities as well as gathering spots for mature Iowans. The educational opportunities offered through these programs provide the chance to learn about topics ranging from health issues, technology, recreation, and even Shakespeare.

Mature Americans throughout the nation have shown dedication to learning, which is clear from the drastically increasing population of mature Americans who have completed high school. Between 1970 and 2005, the number of mature Americans who had received



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their diplomas rose from 28 percent to 74 percent. In addition, many more mature Iowans expanded their expertise through educational opportunities provided by community learning, public school systems, art and science centers and other educational venues. The dedication to learning by mature Iowans and throughout the nation show that they will continue to be a valuable asset not only in academic arenas, but also in workplace and volunteer settings. Most importantly, however, mature Iowans are demonstrating that learning is a lifelong commitment.

### **What Is Still Needed?**

Despite the increased interest by mature Iowans in educational opportunities, Iowa can make improvements in lifelong learning access and opportunities. Mature people in Iowa are often looking for new careers, additional training, and other unique learning opportunities such as travel education and master gardening certifications. The educational programs offered to mature Iowans must match the growing interest displayed by mature Iowans to immerse themselves in new opportunities and experiences. This goal can be accomplished by utilizing resources throughout Iowa such as community colleges, colleges, and universities as well as other learning venues to provide opportunities allowing mature Iowans to continue their commitment to lifelong learning.

### **Keeping Mature Iowans Engaged**

As baby boomers move into retirement age, it is clear that these individuals will play vital roles in strengthening America's communities. Throughout the country, mature Americans will reshape the thinking about mature citizens by making themselves an irrefutable asset. Many seniors are seeking opportunities to stay engaged in their communities. Research has proven that adults who are active and engaged are healthier longer and less reliant on federal programs. It is important to continue mature Iowans the chance to stay involved in their communities which is why Experience Wave promotes flexible workplaces, volunteer positions, and educational opportunities aimed at maturing Americans.