

Not Your Grandfather's Retirement by Editors

Think changing the world is for the young? Meet 10 people over 60 who are proving you wrong.

Golfing, knitting, and rocking chairs? Not exactly.

The Purpose Prize honors people over 60 who combine their experience and passion for social good. This year's winners are standing up to coal companies, helping their neighbors fight foreclosure, and keeping polluting industries out of their communities.

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Inez Killingsworth

Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People
Cleveland

Inez Killingsworth's neighbors didn't answer knocks at the door. Phone numbers were disconnected. People were being forced out, victims of predatory lending.

Mortgage lenders were socking low-income borrowers with abnormally high interest rates and hidden fees they couldn't pay. Killingsworth thought her fellow Clevelanders deserved better, so she founded the East Side Organizing Project in 1993.

The project helps homeowners keep their homes by negotiating with banks for more favorable terms on mortgages, including lower interest rates, fee waivers, and tailored payment plans. Its services are now more necessary than ever. Cuyahoga County (which includes Cleveland) has experienced nearly 67,000 foreclosures in the past five years.

In 2008, Killingsworth, 72, took her organization statewide, changing the name to Empowering and Strengthening Ohio's People. The organization has become a powerhouse foreclosure counseling agency, with 8,000 Ohio families receiving help in 2009 alone. More than 80 percent of those clients received successful loan modifications.

“We develop leadership,” Killingsworth says. “You can fight the powers that be, working together for change.”

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Barry Childs

Africa Bridge
Marylhurst, Ore.

Barry Childs left Tanzania, his childhood home, as a college-bound teenager, eager to prepare for a comfortable corporate career. When he returned 35 years later, the African country was vastly different.

It was 1998. AIDS had orphaned an overwhelming number of children. Villagers were desperately poor. And for many, prospects for a better life were virtually nonexistent. During that visit, Childs decided he would leave his corporate career to help. In 2000, he created Africa Bridge.

“The poverty in Tanzania is of an entirely different scale from what we know here,” explains Childs, 66. “Someone in the U.S. earning the minimum wage makes roughly \$70 a day, but the average income in rural Tanzania is 70 cents a day. There are well over 2 million orphaned children in a country of just 40 million people.”

Childs’ nonprofit, whose U.S. headquarters are based just outside Portland, Ore., has set up 28 income-generating farming cooperatives for caregivers in 16 villages and built classrooms and clinics for thousands of children. In 2009 alone, Africa Bridge implemented comprehensive care plans—covering housing, clothing and food, social and legal support and schooling—for 3,557 children.

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Margaret Gordon

West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project
Oakland, Calif.

Children living near the congested freeways in urban Oakland, Calif., are hospitalized for asthma at 12 times the rate of youths in the city’s more affluent—and greener—suburb of Lafayette.

Margaret Gordon, a former cook and maid, didn't know how serious the situation was in her Oakland neighborhood. She just knew she and her family were sick. When she finally put the pieces together, connecting the massive, industrial Port of Oakland to the high rate of asthma in her neighborhood, she got involved.

Gordon became an activist and eventually a commissioner of the country's fourth busiest container port. And she co-founded a nonprofit: the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project.

As co-director of that organization, Gordon worked alongside other residents to reroute diesel trucks away from residential areas; persuade officials to renegotiate a local manufacturer's permit to pollute; pressure Oakland to do a better job to stop illegal dumping; and develop a Port of Oakland plan to improve air quality.

Once an unseen, unheard resident of a poor, black neighborhood, Gordon—now 63—has become a visible insider, someone who wields influence in the quest to improve the area's environmental health and, ultimately, the health of its residents.

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Allan Barsema

Community Collaborations Inc.
Rockford, Ill.

Allan Barsema's alcoholism cost him his marriage, house and real estate business. With his parents' support, he sobered up, started a new construction company and remarried. But, over time, Barsema found that he wanted to do more for others who were down on their luck.

In the summer of 2000, Barsema set aside a room at his Rockford, Ill., company as a meeting place for the area's homeless. At the end of the year, he closed his business and devoted himself to what had become an outreach center. He called it Carpenter's Place.

"I couldn't go back to just construction," says Barsema, 62. "It was nothing of real, lasting value. If I could help someone, that is of lasting value."

In the past 10 years, Barsema estimates that 10,000 people have sought haven at Carpenter's Place. To ensure guests get the help they need, Barsema developed an online system to coordinate the efforts of more than two dozen area agencies providing services—from health care to housing—for Rockford's homeless.

In 2006, Barsema founded Community Collaboration Inc. to share his online system with others. More than 140 social service agencies in seven states have adopted Barsema's methodologies and database tools, serving more than 90,000 people nationally.

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Judith B. Van Ginkel

Every Child Succeeds
Cincinnati

Judith Van Ginkel has seen so many health crises—so much emotional trauma that might have been prevented with early intervention, counseling, and education for new, often unprepared families.

Drawing from decades of experience in various health care roles, Van Ginkel co-founded and now leads Every Child Succeeds, a Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center program that provides in-home services and support for first-time, at-risk mothers.

Since launching in 1999, the program has helped more than 16,500 families and amassed solid evidence that organized home visits by a social worker during a woman's pregnancy through her child's third birthday can improve the lives of both mother and child.

Thanks to Every Child Succeeds' work, all children seen by the program have primary care physicians. Plus, 95 percent of homes have learning materials to stimulate child development; 95 percent of parents are actively involved in their child's learning; and 95 percent of children exhibit normal social and emotional development.

Van Ginkel, 71, says those children will have "lifetime trajectories that are much different than they would have been if we hadn't been here. When I get up in the morning that is something I think about. The older you get, the more important that becomes."

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Barbara Chandler Allen

Fresh Artists
Lafayette Hill, Pa.

Barbara Chandler Allen's creativity is on display. She's come up with a new way to provide funding for art supplies in urban public schools, promote the importance of art education for all kids, and beautify office buildings at the same time.

Here's how it works: Allen's organization, Fresh Artists, invites students in grades K-12 to donate the use of their artwork for large-scale reproduction. Businesses and organizations that make donations to Fresh Artists receive images of the artwork for their offices. In turn, Fresh Artists uses the donations to buy art supplies for Philadelphia's most

under-resourced schools.

Allen calls it “lateral philanthropy”—kids contributing their time and talent for other kids.

Since Allen founded Fresh Artists in 2008, the nonprofit has installed 587 reproductions and donated art supplies worth more than \$100,000 to 272 Philadelphia public schools, reaching more than 53,400 children.

“If the bar is set low for poor children, they will trip over it,” says Allen, 62, a former administrator at major art museums, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art. “If you raise the bar high, they will sail over it. At Fresh Artists, we believe art is a lifeline for children in the inner city.”

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Dana Freyer

Global Partnership for Afghanistan
New York

From her corner office on the 48th floor of a Times Square skyscraper, Dana Freyer has a sweeping view of some of the world’s most famous landmarks, from the Empire State Building to the Statue of Liberty.

What Freyer can’t see are trees. And yet for the past seven years, in one way or another, all she’s seen are trees.

She is a co-founder of the Global Partnership for Afghanistan, a nonprofit organization that since 2003 has helped 12,000 rural Afghans plant 8 million trees in 12 provinces. The farmers’ revitalized woodlots, vineyards, orchards and other farm businesses are bringing financial stability to nearly 84,000 people in one of the poorest countries in the world.

The partnership provides trees, training, and other support. In one of its first programs, the organization helped farmers plant poplar trees. Around 2012, when the poplars mature, those initial woodlots will be worth about \$60,000 each, an astonishing sum for people living on \$2 a day.

“To succeed in this kind of work, you have to be on the ground and really get to know the communities,” says Freyer, 66, a former corporate lawyer. “You have to listen to them and respect them. And that’s what we did.”

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Hubert Jones

Boston Children's Chorus
Boston

Hubert Jones didn't need another project.

For five decades, Jones built and nourished nonprofit organizations that spoke to one of this country's most enduring struggles: race. He had served as dean of the Boston University School of Social Work for 16 years, the first African American in that role. He was already a hero to many in Boston, a city with a history of racial tension.

But during a trip to Chicago, Jones found unexpected inspiration. He was moved by a children's choir performance, realizing that the kids represented diversity in a beautiful way. Jones felt driven to create the Boston Children's Chorus, uniting young people across race, religion, and economic status. Now children age 7 to 18 who might not otherwise interact come together—literally—in harmony.

The chorus has grown from 30 students in 2003 to about 400 today; thousands have been involved over the years. Its Martin Luther King Day concerts are televised nationally. The chorus has traveled across the country and internationally.

Jones, 76, says that when chorus members take the stage, "Boston sees and feels what it could become—a community that celebrates diversity and the accomplishments of its youth."

Photo by Ed Kashi/Copyright Civic Ventures

Donald Stedman

New Voices Foundation
Raleigh, N.C.

From his early days as a psychologist-in-training, Donald Stedman saw that few wanted to "waste their time" on children with serious disabilities. Sadly, says Stedman, who has a 15-year-old grandson with autism, that's essentially still true.

In 2005, Stedman launched New Voices to help young people with extreme mobility and communicative disabilities get good educations in public schools. The organization aims to properly serve this complex student population, one that—in Stedman's view—most schools don't.

Some of these children have active minds, even though they cannot speak or move, says Stedman, 79. New Voices' mostly volunteer staff counsels schools on the best strategies to engage disabled students, then helps to assess technological and teacher training

needs. The organization has trained more than 50 teachers in five school districts and plans to open its own school within the next two years.

“I want to make this subject less taboo and create a model that could be a beacon for others trying to help similar children,” Stedman says.

Photo by Travis Dove/ Copyright Civic Ventures

Bo Webb

Coal River Mountain Watch
Whitesville, W.Va.

A former small businessman, Bo Webb retired to his ancestral home in the West Virginia mountains for the area’s stunning beauty. But he found that the majestic landscape was being blown to bits.

Using government and industry statistics, Webb estimates that 3.5 million pounds of explosives are detonated daily in West Virginia for coal. Across Appalachia, he says, mountaintop removal—blasting mountaintops to expose coal—has destroyed at least 500 mountains and buried nearly 2,000 miles of streams.

The state’s economic dependency on coal is not lost on Webb, 61, but he says the people are paying dearly for it, sacrificing their air and water quality. So in 2004, Webb co-founded Mountain Justice, which uses grassroots organizing, public education, and nonviolent civil disobedience to abolish surface mining.

As Webb puts it: “People need to realize there are other ways to make a living than blowing up your backyard.”

Webb has drawn such notables as actress Daryl Hannah and environmental activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to protests. He has brokered meetings between West Virginia’s governor and coalfield residents. He was instrumental in a successful effort to move an elementary school away from a coal processing plant. Without a background in community organizing, he has helped build a movement.

The Purpose Prize is a project of Civic Ventures, a think tank on boomers, work, and social purpose.

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