

Staying busy

Anne Levine and Sandra Vogel aren't big on relaxing. They have stayed busy well past retirement age

MARLENE EISNER
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Her days as a stay-at-home mom seem like a lifetime ago.

Now in her mid-80s, Anne Levine was content to look after her three boys when she lived in the newly minted Dollard-des-Ormeaux in the 1960s. But by the late-1970s, her children were off in their own direction and she began her foray into the workforce, starting one day a week until it turned into full time.

Today, more than 40 years later, the vibrant, youthful grandmother of seven still clocks in a full week of work as a travel agent for Vision Travel.

"I'm not big on relaxing," she said with a smile.

"Sure, I'm just like everyone else — there are days when I say 'Just another 10 minutes; I don't want to get out of bed,' but the thought of staying home all day? Absolutely not."

Levine admits she's not one to play bridge, join a gym or take up golf, and said she is happy to spend her so-called retirement years involved in a business that she loves and knows very well. Over

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Gillian Leithman

the years, she's travelled to many countries, including Japan, Russia, France and Italy, and cities such as Hong Kong, Paris, Rome and Amsterdam. And she still loves to travel with her boyfriend, Jackie, although not as often as she used to.

"We end up going to New York at least three times a year because his daughter lives there, and four years ago, we took a cruise. We've been to Santa Fe, Seattle,

and every summer we go to Niagara-on-the-Lake for the wine tasting and theatre."

She said earning an income is certainly a factor that keeps her going to the office from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., four days a week (she works from home one day a week), but it isn't the only reason.

"I very much like what I do," Levine said. "I like being with the people around me; you become almost like a family (and) it keeps me busy."

Levine's niece, Sandra Vogel, is 13 years her junior, and has been retired since 2002. Now in her mid-70s, Vogel's career as an elementary-school teacher spanned 32 years before she put her chalk and ruler away for good.

"I had a deadline that I wanted to retire in 2002, so I was gearing up to it, but not with any trepidation," Vogel said. "I didn't think I was burned out and I continued to substitute teach in the school for two years."

Once that was over, Vogel didn't waste a moment. She immediately enrolled in art, yoga and Zumba classes at the Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors in the Côte-des-Neiges area.

She also tutors students on Sundays, plays mah-jong, and sings in a seniors' choir — but what has really made her retirement years sparkle, is her volunteer work.

"I'm feeling good because I feel like I'm in a second career," she explained. "I'm volunteering at the Jewish General Hospital twice a week in the cardiology department, helping several secretaries. I feel like I'm reborn in a career that involves stuff I didn't do in my teaching life, but I have a multitude of jobs that I enjoy."

"I have a whole new perspective on my usefulness at my age and being helpful. I never really thought I would feel this at my age."

A survey released by Statistics Canada showed that between 2006 and 2011, the number of Canadians over the age of 65 increased 14.1 per cent to nearly five million.

It was also shown to be the fastest growing demographic in the country,



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Octogenarian Anne Levine works full-time as a travel agent, but spends one day a week working from home.

which means an increasing number of people will be leaving the workforce.

Gillian Leithman is neither retired nor thinking about it in the near future, but the thirtysomething does consider herself somewhat of an expert on the subject.

"I've been researching this area for 10

"If you love what you do and you have somewhere to go and you feel great about your contribution, you shouldn't retire. If you volunteer and are excited about it, and it gives you a purpose, it is good for you."

The key, Leithman said, is for people to think of what they are retiring to,

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Sandra Vogel, retired from teaching but now a busy volunteer

years," said Leithman, a PhD candidate at Concordia University who is studying retirement from an emotional, not financial, perspective. For the last nine years, she has been conducting seminars and workshops in Canadian companies to help workers prepare for retirement.

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instead of what they are retiring from. And for some, that can be a real challenge, especially after a lifetime of work.

"The people that fare best in retirement, the ones that are happiest, are those that have spent time thinking about what they are going to retire to," she explained.

"Sadly, most people spend more time planning a two-week vacation than they do thinking about what's next."