

Seniors in the City: Fit, Fun, and Fabulous!

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Brace yourself! The senior demographic is growing, as Baby Boomers age. Approximately 78 million people were born between 1946 (just after the end of World War II) and 1964. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an American turns 65 every 13 seconds, and approximately 10,000 Baby Boomers retire every day.

In 2012, the American Association of Retired Persons named Philadelphia one of the ten great places to retire for city life, and one of the ten great cities for older singles. AARP highlighted restaurants; cultural attractions such as art museums and musical events; historical sites; neighborhood gathering places, like the Reading Terminal; and outdoor spaces, including parks, trails, arboreta and gardens.

For older Philadelphians looking for ways to connect to all the action, there are lots of options. We offer suggestions for the following points of entry.

Friends in the City (FitC) has an array of programs comprising lunches, dinners, happy hours, coffee hours, tours, hikes, information sessions, book clubs, play readings and exercise sessions, all geared to seniors, for a \$60 membership fee. FitC members and guests have strolled through the gardens at the Philadelphia Zoo, taken a van trip to a vineyard, cruised on the Schuylkill River, toured the Shoe Museum and PECO's green roof, donated supplies and volunteered at the Andrew Jackson School, and attended a Camden Riversharks baseball game. www.friendscentercity.org/

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a branch of Temple University, located at 1515 Market Street, geared to seniors, offers unlimited classes to members. Your student ID card gets you student discounts at museums and concerts. www.temple.edu/tucc/persenrichment/olli/

Seniors mix with people of all ages enjoying neighborhood activities including fairs in *Rittenhouse Square*, *Fitler Square*, *Schuylkill River Park*, and the *Benjamin*

Franklin Parkway; and the *Center City House Tour* and *Philadelphia Open Studio Tour*. In addition to religious services, churches and synagogues offer social events, cultural arts programming and volunteer opportunities.

Residential high-rise buildings with large concentrations of seniors have come to be known as "NORCs" (naturally occurring retirement communities), and many provide social activities for residents. Happy hour is the new early-bird special: starting at 5 p.m. at many local bars, it's a fun way to enjoy discounted drinks and appetizers and possibly an impromptu conversation with some friendly people.

Getting around Center City is easy. And when you reach age 65, you can ride the bus or subway for free. For short car trips, joining *ZipCar* or *Enterprise CarShare* (formerly Philly CarShare) entitles you to reserve conveniently located cars for a few hours or more at prices that are far cheaper than the costs of car ownership, when factoring in expenses such as parking, maintenance, fuel, and insurance. Here's the best part -- each car has its own parking spot, so when you return you are spared the typical car-owner's headache of driving around for an hour looking for parking.

Travelers can avoid the hassles of arranging their own trips by signing up for group tours with *Excursions from the Square*, run by the capable and congenial Ellen Kay Coleman, offering trips to a variety of destinations, far and near. Once you register, you just pack your bag, show up at the bus on Rittenhouse Square, and you're all set. *Excursions from the Square* has traveled to New York; Chicago; Asheville, North Carolina; Pittsburgh and Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater; New England art museums; Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont; and Bard Music Festival in New York State's Hudson River Valley. A trip to Paris is planned for this Spring.

Seniors worry about health issues, and they are known to have the "organ recital" when they gather. Those who plan ahead can



FitCers go behind the scenes at Hedgerow Theatre with the actor playing the role of Banquo in Shakespeare's "Macbeth."



Each Tuesday, from 9 to 11 a.m., FitC members meet at Reading Terminal Market for coffee and conversation.

be sure they will get help at home in the future if they are recovering from surgery, or a short- or long-term illness or injury, by joining *Friends Life Care*, a continuing-care retirement-community-without-walls that provides experienced professional care managers, nursing aides, and other help at home. For more information, go to <http://members.friendslifecare.org/page/home/>. Another group, *Penn's Village*, provides assistance and referrals through volunteers. www.pennsvillage.org/

Active seniors, whether singles or couples, retired or semi-retired, find it's easy to keep busy, have fun, and make friends in Center City Philadelphia, a place that offers a kaleidoscope of education, entertainment, and support services.