

Lin Schreiber takes the gray out of retirement

By Nichole Dupont

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STOCKBRIDGE — Berkshire County is not getting any younger, it's getting grayer. To help the county's burgeoning population on the verge of ending their careers, Lin Schreiber is helping workers plan for retirement.

"There's a lot of fear when people think about retirement," Schreiber said last Tuesday. "Just look it up in the dictionary! To withdraw, to recede, to go to bed, nobody wants to do that."

According to the 2000 Census, 18 percent of the county's residents were over the age of 65 and nearly 10 percent of residents were between the ages of 55 and 64. With these numbers looming and the Baby Boomer wave rolling in, the time is right to talk retirement. Schreiber has built her business, Revolutionize Retirement, by helping people prepare for retirement before the act of "retiring" begins. She said her drive to help retirees have fulfilling lives after work comes from her personal experience with her parents.

"My dad had big dreams for his retirement," Schreiber said. "But he died suddenly at 63, and he never made it. My mother is 83. She was excited about her retirement, but for the last 20 years I've watched her recede, still not sure about what she wants to do. It doesn't have to be like that."

In addition to watching her parents' experiences sadly unfold, Schreiber used her own life-lessons as an inspiration for her business.

"I've had to reinvent myself many times," she said. "And that's what my clients do when they retire."

Raised just outside of Hollywood, Calif., Schreiber left the West Coast in her early 20s and spent six years in Cleveland working in retail. She then moved to Manhattan and headed up her own sales and marketing company for 10 years. From there, she made yet another trek, this time to Boston.

"I was in my 40s, and I decided to go back to school," she said. "Of course, I was basically twice the age of everyone around me. It was a little scary."

Schreiber attended Emerson College, hoping to get a job in television broadcasting. She had a short-lived internship with the Channel 5 "Good Day Show" and then worked for Hurst Broadcasting for five years.

Finally, she said, "I hired a life coach."

She recalled, "I didn't have time to quiet myself. I wanted to create work that fit into my life, not fit my life into my work."

Schreiber and her husband, Richard, bought a summer home in Stockbridge in June 1998 and moved in full-time in September. With the city life behind her, Schreiber began to sort out what exactly she wanted to do with her life and her career.

"Suddenly, with the help of my coach, I realized that I'd been coaching people my whole life! That's what I loved doing."

After her revelation, Schreiber began a rigorous certification program through Coach U and the International Coach Federation.

"When I started coaching, it was just anyone," she said. "Then I realized I had to narrow my client base down. I decided to coach women only. You'd be surprised how many women in transition there are around here."

But it wasn't until a revelation in Great Barrington's Triplex Theater that she knew, finally, what and who she wanted to focus on.

"We were in the theater, and my husband turned to me and said, 'Look at all these salt and pepper heads.' Then I reminded him that we were salt and pepper heads, too."

That was three years ago. Since then, Schreiber has been working non-stop with clients in Seattle, Louisiana, Los Angeles, Illinois and the Berkshires, presenting to companies all over the Northeast with an "aging staff population."

She presents advice on such issues as "Too Much Leisure Can Be Dangerous To Your Health," "Run For Your Life From This Well Meaning Retirement Advice," "This Is Not Your Father's Retirement: Why Boomers Aren't Buying The Old Retirement Model" and "What's So Sunny About Sun City?"

"I'm so passionate about this topic, I want to share all of it at once," Schreiber said. "So, if I get 15 minutes to talk about it, I try to say everything."

Whether presenting to a group or working with an individual client, Schreiber's approach is the same.

"I ask people what do they think they want," she said. "I ask them what their dreams were before they started working. I help them start clarifying their lives."

Often when working with clients, Schreiber has found that many have had a "creative vision" when viewing their retirement.

"You wouldn't believe how many writers and artists I attract," Schreiber said. "They are people who are finally pursuing their 'heartwork' after years of being in a job they're not crazy about."

Taking time to explore retirement options before one retires is crucial, Schreiber said. Otherwise, many retirees experience the pitfalls of having too much leisure time.

"Some people are bored to tears," she said. "I had a client who would nap most of the day before I started working with him. Then there are the workaholics who, after retiring, become playoholics, running the same risks. It's all about balancing out."

As part of her balancing formula, Schreiber will present "What the Bleep Do You Know About Retirement?" at Canyon Ranch in Lenox on Wednesday, April 19, at noon. She will also speak to the Great Barrington Rotary Club at the Egremont Country Club on April 26 at 12:15 p.m., and to the Human Resource Association of Berkshire County at the Pittsfield Country Club on May 10 at 7:30 a.m.

In November, she will hold a "Retirement Bootcamp" at the Interlaken Inn. She has high hopes for the workshop, which will run all day.

"I'm going to present a series of options so people can start exploring their transitions before they make them."

For more information on Schreiber and Revolutionize Retirement, call 413-298-3994 or visit [www.revolutionizeretirement.com](http://www.revolutionizeretirement.com).