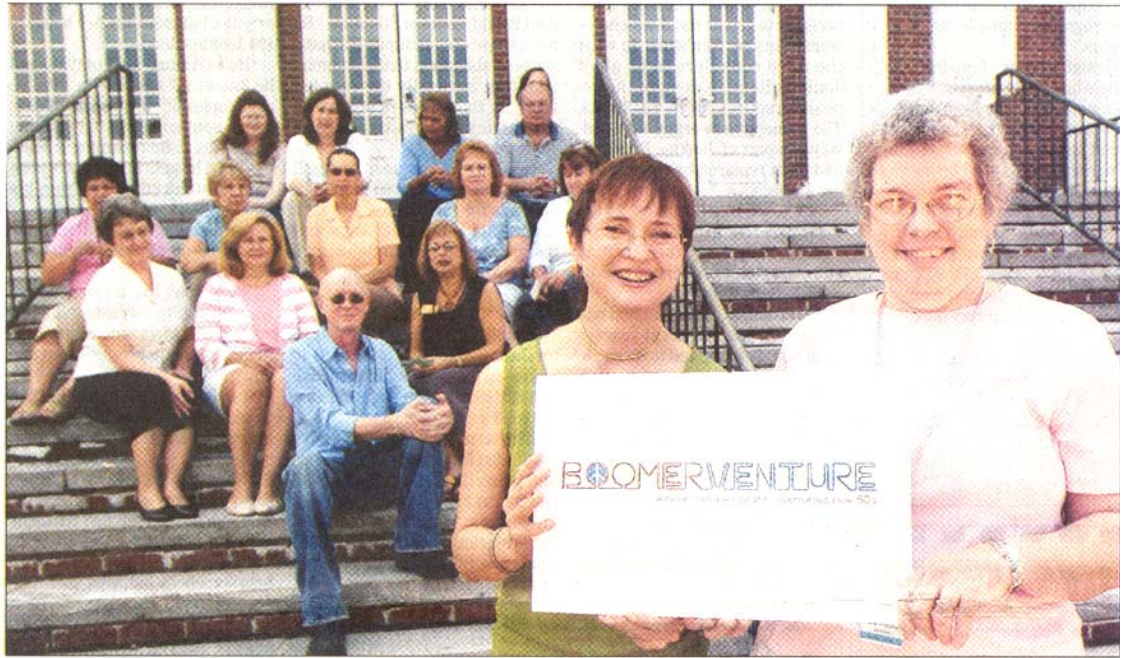


## Just talkin' 'bout their generation



PAUL BILODEAU/Staff photo

Kathy Urquhart (right), director of the Andover Senior Center, and Karen Payne-Taylor, Assistant Program Coordinator, herald the arrival of the center's BoomerVenture program.

BY BRIAN MESSENGER  
STAFF WRITER

When it comes to Andover's baby boomers and their relationship with the Andover Senior Center, Kathy Urquhart is trying to cause a big sensation.

"We do have one rocking chair and I never see people fighting to use it," said Urquhart. "It's not your grandmother's senior center."

### Senior center reaches out to boomers

In a new, concerted effort to attract Andover's many residents born between 1946 and 1964, Urquhart, the center's director, has helped spearhead a series of programs starting this fall that are geared toward attracting the town's younger seniors.

Called BoomerVenture, Urquhart and senior center Assistant Program Coordinator Karen

Payne-Taylor hope to attract an age group they don't often see at the center.

With evening sessions beginning in October that range from financial planning to gourmet cooking, the boomers behind BoomerVenture hope to give those residents something to do as well as a sense of community. But they also know it won't be an

easy task.

"Obviously we've got a big PR job ahead of us," said Payne-Taylor. "All of us are boomers. We feel passionate that this is a group that's under-served."

Reluctance to visit the senior center is not unique to baby boomers, said Urquhart.

"There's a challenge to reach people (even) in their 80s because

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everybody says, 'Oh, I'm not old.' The senior center isn't just for people who are old," she said. "The senior center is a resource and a lot of people feel the need to be with their peers."

Just like the programs already held at the center, ideas for BoomerVenture programming will be derived from the patrons themselves as much as possible.

"Our real purpose is to uncover and serve the needs for this group with activities, events and resources," said Payne-Taylor. "We look to broaden their involvement not only with each other, but with Andover as a whole."

According to Urquhart, there are 78 million baby boomers in America. In Andover, between 5,500 and 5,600 residents are older than 60; another 9,000 are at least 50 years old.

"Boomers started turning 60 two years ago," said Urquhart.

*"I know people who rip up their AARP invitations as soon as it comes through their door."*

Karen Payne-Taylor

"It was a group that was never going to get old."

Payne-Taylor, who will be responsible for reaching out to residents for their programming ideas, said she is familiar with her generation's animosity toward aging.

"I think this is an aging group that refuses to see itself as aging," she said. "I know people who rip up their AARP invitations as soon as it comes through their door."

But the town — including taxpayers of all ages — can't afford to lose such a large demographic, said Urquhart.

An exodus of baby boomers as they reach retirement age would likely mean more families — and more demands on town services — moving in to take their place in town, she said.

"Imagine if even 100 people (young seniors) sold their homes (to people with children)," said Urquhart. "You're talking about a new school. And we know the people come to Andover for the schools. We'd like to have it that the people stay in Andover for the programs available for the 50-plus."

Though a litany of programming won't likely prevent a retirement-age couple from moving out of town, what's important is that an active approach be taken to reach out to baby boomers, Payne-Taylor said.

"We're just going to get the word out locally as much as we can," she said. "We want to make sure Andover is one of the places that people consider and really make their plans to stay here."

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