

## **The Alliance for Holistic Aging An Open Letter of Intention and Progress: One Year Hence**

On October 27<sup>th</sup> 2004 at the Heart Light Foundation in Denver, Colorado two local members of the boomer generation announced their intention to launch a socially responsive national initiative that would focus on the issues they and others of their generation were facing. What has followed is an emerging alliance of individuals, families, business, and community dedicated to changing the way we envision and address the issues associated with aging in America.

The decision to move forward was based upon some rather telling observations. Most of their generation appeared to be in denial about their own aging and reactive when it came to caring for anyone who is. They discovered too, the sobering fact that more people working today believe in the existence of extraterrestrials than believe that social security will be around by the time they or their friends are ready to retire. And lastly, they recognized that if individuals didn't muster the courage to act on their own behalf then nothing would change for the better.

The vision in creating the Alliance for Holistic Aging (AHA) is three fold. First and foremost it is intended to provide individuals and families dealing from crisis, with the information necessary to educate one another, consider their options and place themselves in a better position to make informed choices.

Second, AHA is dedicated to creating a collaborative environment for forward thinking and like minded professionals. It is an environment where reciprocity is cultivated, practical, affordable products and services are promoted and innovative thinking is encouraged and advanced.

The third objective is one of inclusion. It is based upon the simple premise that everyone, regardless of age or (dis)ability, has something to contribute. It is predicated too upon a belief that when it comes to addressing the impending age crisis in this country no one has a monopoly on ideas and all of us are entitled to take part in helping to create a positive change in our future.

The mission of the Alliance is simple: "to create person center, practical and sustainable solutions for self-directed holistic aging." Starting with that basic premise and very little more, two local boomers set out on a fool's journey to make a change for the better.

One year hence . . . here is a report on their progress.

A pro-active, culturally diverse Board has taken shape to advance the Alliance's mission. Joining in their efforts is a growing membership of concerned citizens, holistic professionals and caring

community partners who've chosen to lend their voice to the vision of AHA. These members represent a variety of backgrounds, disciplines, and interests and are beginning to take part in what can be accomplished through an inclusive approach to problem solving at the local and national level.

Embracing the talents and skill sets of like minded thinkers, AHA has developed an interactive web site where individuals from across the country (and elsewhere) are encouraged to voice their concerns, state their opinions, and become further engaged in the type of dialogue and discussion that leads to problem resolution.

The web site too will be home to a variety of professional and consumer publications, as well as, a place to link to a continuum of professional services and opportunities based upon the talents and interests of our members.

Our model for collaboration, reciprocity and self directed aging has already led to the development and launch of:

- **“Peace of Mind”** a synergistic program of services spotlighting and cross promoting national companies dedicated to helping people age in place.
- **“Gift of Health”** a non-medical health benefits assistance program being offered to organizations and businesses as a combined fund raiser and socially responsive campaign. It is intended to provide some level of assistance for any one of the 47 million plus working class Americans and their families with little or no health care coverage.
- **Circles of Conversation** informal community gatherings encouraging individuals (of any age) to voice, listen, and learn from one another about the issues impacting them the most. In 2005, the Alliance conducted Circles of Conversation on such issues as: Dealing with Your Aging Parents, Women as Caregivers: The Impact and the Toll; From Crisis Care to Preventative Care; and How to Make Sense of the Rest of Your Life. Many more Circles of Conversation are planned for 2006.
- **Regional Business and Professional Roundtables** Issues learned through simple conversation are setting the tone for more in depth discussions to follow. The Alliance is positioning itself to promote a number of age specific and industry specific roundtables in 2006. These roundtables are planned with two thoughts in mind. First, to bring innovative thinkers in contact with industry professionals. And second, to promote interactive and on-going dialogue between professionals and consumers on what they can expect when it comes to each other's perception of aging.
- **Presentations at National and State Conferences** member affiliations in Associations, Universities, and other areas of influence around the country have afforded the Alliance

multiple opportunities to move its message and its mission forward. In 2006 the Alliance is intending to present at two national conferences.

- **Incubator for New Ideas and Initiatives** As an entity that encourages innovative thinking and collaboration AHA has attracted encouraged and is in the process of co-promoting two exciting new initiatives. The first is an intergenerational learning company and the second is an interactive educational theatre production focused on the continuum of aging. While funding is not in place at the current time to bring these projects to fruition AHA is encouraged as it moves forward that those who believe in its mission will support these initiatives as well.

Ultimately the power of the Alliance lies not in a few individuals but in the collective strength of all of our visions to make aging in this country not something to be feared but one to be embraced. In short, we want to create an environment where every person feels welcomed, honored, valued and encouraged.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Two local boomers have taken the first steps. Today, we invite you to join with us [www.holisticaging.org](http://www.holisticaging.org) in helping to take the next.

Sincerely,

Jeff Rubin, Chair  
Alliance for Holistic Aging