

Feeling Older? Puleeze.

by Amy Epstein

You are reading my inaugural column in The Caring Times, which I was asked to write and illustrate with topics that draw on my own narrative of transitions. They have included the transition trifecta of becoming a widow 7 years ago after a marriage of 41 years, moving from a brownstone in Brooklyn to an apartment on the Upper West Side and selling a company around the time of my husband's death which I had started 25 years before.

So, as far as transitions go, I get to wear the gold hat with a rhinestone "T".



My hope with this diary is to share some of my experiences, which may resonate with many of us trying to figure out how to age gracefully, not break a bone, keep our brains active, enjoy a rich social life, experience the delights of continuing to learn and challenge ourselves, discover new places and people, and, most importantly, keep finding things to make us happy and fulfilled.

For my maiden column I'm going to narrate a current endeavor which is really about the pleasure of volunteering and giving.

Last year I joined the JCC on Amsterdam Avenue and W. 76th Street, primarily to have access to a gym without having to fight the testosterone-fueled-20-something-men for the weight machines at the Equinox on Broadway and W. 92nd Street. A few weeks after I joined the JCC, I learned about the JCC's fledgling 'Women's Engage Group'. Engage is a Jewish Volunteer Service Corps for people entering into retirement that exists in several Jewish Community Centers and synagogues in the New York area to offer options for doing volunteer projects to help disadvantaged individuals.



The Transition Network

TTN-NYC Newsletter December 2016



Toward that end, I proposed that our Women's Engage Group undertake a handbag drive for the Bottomless Closet in New York City, a not-for-profit that helps disadvantaged women obtain donated business clothes for job interviews. They also do resume-building and interview coaching. Helping women get jobs seemed an elegant goal for our new Women's Engage Group.

Our drive actually started 9/25/16 and continued until 10/31/16 with a bin in the JCC lobby for handbag donations. We also staffed a table in the lobby for 3 days to promote visibility.

This column is being written before the drive ends but indications point to it being a great success, with estimates of 75-100 new, or gently used, and business-appropriate, handbags being donated.

The Executive Director of Bottomless Closet was so excited about receiving our first shipment of bags, which she said were greatly needed by her clients. Personally, I donated 4 (which included one brand new Coach bag, complete with tag and silica gel, a gently used Calvin Klein and a YSL tote) which I haven't used in years. I get a tax deduction and enormous satisfaction that the bags hibernating on a shelf at the top of my closet will have another life, perhaps helping women get a bolus of confidence from walking into an office interview with a nice bag on her arm. A win-win all around.

I would call this whole experience an easy fix of happiness.