



AARP Vital Aging conference comes to Medford

By Ellen Waldman

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Who are we talking about when we mention older adults? Many studies include anyone over 50 years old. In the United States, the average retirement age is 65-67. The World Health Organization divides this group into two categories: older adults are 65-79, and the elderly are 80 years plus. By 2030, one-fifth of the US population will be over 65. Wherever you find yourself or your loved ones along this age-range, there is a conference this week that might appeal to you.

This event, "Vital Aging in Southern Oregon 2014" will be presented at the Smullin Center, 2825 E. Barnett Road, Medford, on Friday, Nov. 14, and Saturday, Nov. 15. Here's a sampling of what's in store for us locally. It's all free, but you have to register to attend.

On Friday, from 5 to 7:30 p.m., there will be a special screening of the documentary film, "Running Wild, The Life of Dayton O. Hyde." At 62 years old, Hyde single-handedly launched an effort to preserve the American West's wild horses, landscapes and historical traditions. It's clear from this film that no matter what our age might be, we can make positive changes in our own lives and in the world around us.

On Saturday, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., there will be a full day of exploring issues that matter to older adults, with many local speakers. This day's event offers workshops and activities, plus lunch is included (always a crowd-pleaser). Take a look at some of the presentations:

- Medford's own Dr. Robin Miller speaks on healing for the 21st century;
- Leigh Anne Jaseway presents on how laughter can lighten your life; and there are
- Eight break-out sessions, ranging from info on Medicare; traveling single; LGBT issues in the Rogue Valley; saving money at home, from a local energy company; Sharon Johnson speaking on conflicts in family relationships; and several others to choose from.

Here's how to sign up today. To register online for Friday night's special screening go to <http://tinyurl.com/RunningWildMedford> or call toll free 877-926-8300.

For Saturday's conference, register online at <http://tinyurl.com/VitalAgingMedford> or call toll free 877-926-8300.

To me, Vital Aging, the name of this conference, implies vitality, a by-product of developing what has meaning to you in your life. Getting informed is the first step to finding those nuggets of wisdom, fitting them into your life and re-inspiring yourself. I think this week's AARP conference might be perfect for many of you. The face of aging is changing and so is AARP, which has been around for decades. It's a real gift that AARP offers these quality events regularly to our local community. Check out their website (AARP.org) for upcoming events as well.

I'll do my best to bring this sort of relevant local information to your attention when it crosses my path. On your own, you can look at the Asante website: <http://www.asante.org/classes-events> and sign up on their emailing list. They'll send you info on upcoming topics of interest in Medford and Ashland.

This next link gets you to Providence Medford Medical Center's offerings as well:
<http://oregon.providence.org/news-and-events/events>.

Information and education are the best ways I know to support yourself and your family, no matter what your age or phase of life. Keep your eyes and minds open. There is a lot to be gained by being aware and curious about these "older" years of life, regardless of how you define the term.