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Know your Madisonian: John Vardallas, staying vital as Boomers age

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JEFF SCHORFHEIDE - State Journal

John Vardallas, 60, talks with his hands and get his points across like a man on fire. And that is why he's paid to go on cruise ships and other settings to get members of the Baby Boom generation excited about life.

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In 1998 Vardallas founded the Madison-based TheAmericanBoomer Group, a speaking and consulting enterprise aimed at helping members of his generation reach their potential.

His work has taken him to more than 90 countries, but he says Madison will always be his home base since it's full of interesting, tolerant people and diverse activities. And because of that, he says he never expects to feel old.

Q: How did TheAmericanBoomer get started?

A: I channeled 30 years of teaching and training passion, education, work experiences and the desire to help people and organizations reach their potential into a purpose for my business. I love inspiring people to do better. People can do more than they think. I like making a difference.

Q: How do Baby Boomers differ from other generations?

A: I think Baby Boomers differ from other generations in that we were born during a prosperous time, we were the first generation of Americans to have a recognized childhood and we grew up questioning authority. We are the largest generation and we are redefining aging.

Q: It's often said that Boomers are, as a group, narcissistic and self-indulgent. How do you respond to that?

A: I think this is true for a portion of the Boomer generation. This can be seen in the small percentage of Boomers who have adequately planned for their retirement. Many Boomers who have existed by the "live for today" mantra are now waking up to a new economic reality.

Q: How do you envision a world full of geriatric Boomers?

We will bring a senior renaissance to the process of aging. We will have a good amount of political and social muscle. Growing old will be cool. I think Boomers will channel and use their creative 'sage' juices to reinvent aging as we know it. Expect more communing, nip/tuck spending to attempt to capture and maintain our vanity, wellness activity, cohabitation, memory care centers to feature Age of Aquarius wings, senior rock groups, and continuous engaging in life interests and causes among us Boomers.

Q: What will the legacy of the Boomer generation be?

We were the generation that fought for change in America. We engaged in causes, protested social intolerance and political injustices. Our legacy is that we did make a difference. — Interview by Chris Martell

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