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## Creativity Is Key to Better Retirement

Retirement is so often defined negatively and individualistically, as the end of a career and the cessation of work. However, an American specialist on the subject said that retirement can also be a creative time — a period of renewal and rejuvenation.

"Most people never fully prepare for this abrupt change. Organizations do not help them. Employees and employers generally do not consider retirement life-planning as an extension of career development, Steve Dahlberg, general manager for the Creative Education Foundation in the United States, said in an interview with The Korea Times.

"But as baby boomers approach retirement age, one way to improve their well-being and productivity is to help them become new elders. Corporations could provide work-life programs that teach employees how to discover meaning and purpose in both their work and non-work lives, he added.

The specialist, who came to Korea to take part in the 6th World Knowledge Forum in Seoul, has a particular interest in creative communities and cities, as well as in applying creativity to aging, purpose, work and retirement. He has more than 14 years of professional experience promoting and teaching creative thinking and problem solving.

He pointed out the importance of a fundamental shift about retirement, saying that more and more people are living longer, up to 20 to 25 years beyond retirement age.

"There are about 77 million U.S. baby boomers, described by some as "a demographic time bomb, one turning 50 every 7.7 seconds according to statistics. Learning to apply creative thinking strategies impacts peoples positive well-being while still employed in their professional career — as they plan for retirement as well as after their retirement, the American said.

Defining the creative as an ability to bring something new into existence purposefully, he advised that Korean society should prepare well for the aging society.

South Korea, which once leaped from rags to riches over a very short time thanks to an abundant and highly skilled labor force, is now faced with one of the worlds fastest aging populations.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) calculates that by 2018, Korea will become an "aged society, meaning people over the age of 65 will account for 14.3 percent of the total population. By 2050, one out of five Koreans will be over 65, the NSO said, turning the nation into a "super-aged society.

"Over 8 million South Koreans born between 1955 and 1963 will begin to leave the workforce in seven or eight years, setting off a wide range of economic and social changes of magnitude. If you dont prepare for the aging society, there would be negative consequences, he said.

He mentioned one the negative effects has begun to show in Korean society already — the suicide rate among the countrys elder population.

According to government statistics, over the last five years, from 2000 to 2004, 16,416, or 26 percent of the total of 63,424 suicides, were committed by those over 60, topping the suicide rank by age group.

"After retirement, most people dont find a meaningful way to engage with the society. So you see the results now, he added.

He finally said that setting clear goals for retirement is important.

"Having clear goals for retirement is a critical determinant of life satisfaction and adjustment during the post-retirement transition period, he said.