

METROPOLITAN

Speak Out

What are some of the problems that the senior citizens in our community face today?

Arnold Pitre, 41, native Oregonian and local businessman, seeks to present important, pertinent, community issue questions, to randomly picked citizens, and report the responses.



by Arnold Pitre



Dewey Taylor II
Painting Contractor

There are a lot of inconsiderate youth that cause a lot of problems for our seniors. There have been violent attacks against our senior citizens. How would you like it if your mother or father was attacked? Transportation is a big problem for the elderly. A good transit program for the elderly would be helpful, so they can go shopping, get to medical facilities, etc.

In our country and our community, we don't give our elderly the respect that we used to. In other countries, people look to the elders for wisdom and knowledge.

The elderly in our community lose their identity and are disposed of.



Mardell Taylor
Information & Referral Specialist
Urban League of Portland

Seniors are afraid in our community. They are very vulnerable to crime. With the various programs that are in existence, seniors still have many needs that are not being met. We need volunteer programs in the community to address the needs of our senior citizens.

Many seniors are reluctant to ask their families or relatives for help, because they feel they are burdening them. This feeling adds to the stress of being in a helpless situation. Many seniors are proud people and are reluctant to seek help because of it. They need a sense of belonging; they feel isolated.

We have made some progress, but a lot needs to be done.



Wilma Pitre
Retired Nurse

Loneliness. Emotional stress due to loneliness often leads to medical problems, both physical and mental. Some seniors are malnourished, because they have no one to help them acquire the necessary food to sustain them properly.

Our senior citizens need to be involved; more physical outreach is needed; they need someone to share time with them, to talk to them, go fishing, or just go for a walk. Senior citizens need to be remembered . . . they need love.



Laf Keaton
Senior Citizen Program Coordinator
Urban League of Portland

Most of the seniors are on a fixed income and become part of a callous system in terms of governmental resources. Reaganomics has not helped the seniors but, in fact, has hurt them. There are some private programs that attempt to fill the void, such as the Salvation Army, Neighbor Care, etc., but they are not enough.

Seniors are targets to young anti-social types (thugs) who do bodily harm to them or rip them off. Our tax system is not as equitable to seniors as it could be. Social Security does not take into account that often times seniors need special diets which actually cost more, and they are on fixed or poverty level incomes. Seniors are fragile and suffer medical problems such as diabetes, cataracts, broken bones, etc.

One of the most hidden abuses there is senior citizen abuse.

Step Aboard the Citizen's Train, Ltd.

On March 19, 1988 the Citizens' Train, Ltd., will leave Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles and start its whistle-stopping trip to Washington, D.C., where citizens will ask members of Congress to reorder the priorities of the U.S. budget.

The idea, conceived of over a year ago in Portland, Oregon, around a dining room table, is as simple as it is appealing. A citizens' train whistle-stops across the country during the Constitutional Bicentennial Celebration and focuses the attention of the nation on a budget that truly reflects the ideals of the Constitution. Once on board, passengers attend classes on the Constitution, the budget, and citizen advocacy. After arriving at the Capitol, they present members of Congress with a citizens' budget and local resolutions supporting a civilian economy. This idea is now a reality.

The Citizens' Train (via Amtrak) will travel across country, hook up in Chicago, and then proceed to Philadelphia, where passengers will "tip their hats to the Constitution" before arriving in the Capitol on Tuesday, March 22, 1988. Along the way citizens will have the opportunity to enjoy the hoopla of whistle-stops, celebrate the Constitution, and attend classes, all aimed at preparing them for three days of congressional meetings.

Citizens will meet members of Congress and present the document, Principles of a National Citizens' Budget, mandating a civilian economy. In addition, local organizations in communities across the country will sponsor resolutions which support the Citizens' Budget and reflect the specific needs of their communities.

Senator Mark O. Hatfield, a strong supporter of the project says, "Because the money in the federal budget is our money, we all should have a say in how it is spent. To have that say, we must come together for a truly national dialogue, . . . and I can think of no more constructive effort to do that than the Citizens' Train."

Representative Les AuCoin adds, "I believe the Citizens' Train can help focus the goals and ideals of the American people into a united show of strength."

Catherine Glass, novelist, scriptwriter, and one of the original people who developed the idea, says, "The Citizens' Train gives Americans the chance to say 'yes' to a citizens' budget that reflects these ideals."

Embodying democratic principles, the Citizens' Train is organized with

each whistle-stop city being responsible for its own efforts including fundraising, publicity, local citizen budget resolutions, and entertainment at the whistle-stops.

Richard Mehrer, a private consultant for small businesses in Seattle, says, "The Citizens' Train is a great concept. Small business owners are the largest employers in the country and the Citizens' Train is a great way for these people to get involved in the social structure of their country and to act on their ideals, which for many got them into business in the first place."

Many national and local peace, justice and environmental organizations have already become involved. The Citizens' Train Project, a non-profit corporation, operates under the auspices of the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO). EMO has endorsed the train along with SANE, Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND), the National Congress of American Indians, the Grey Panthers, Unitarian/Universalist Service Committee, and the National and Oregon Associations of Church Women United. Local sponsors include the Sierra Club (Columbia Gorge Group), Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Association of Railroad Passengers, Rainbow Coalition, Generations for Peace — and the list is growing daily.

Elizabeth Furse, executive director of the Oregon Peace Institute and national board member of SANE, says "The Citizens' Train is catching fire across the country. What a lovely opportunity for citizen participation in the American spirit."

There are many ways you can participate. Round trip train tickets start at \$275.00. A limited number of seats are available — so call soon if you are interested. All travel arrangements can be made through Wide Travel International, 1001 SW Fifth, Portland, Oregon, 97204 (503-224-0242 or 1-800-634-6090.) Additional information concerning town meetings, upcoming events, sponsorships, and how you can become involved can be obtained from Citizens' Train, LTD., P.O. Box 10765, Portland, Oregon 97210 (503) 281-8361.

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