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## Lived Experience in Poverty Led to Her Life's Work

*"I hope everyone fails retirement and continues to contribute their wisdom and talents with our neighbors."*

When Donna Beegle met a retired engineer preparing to buy a retirement home in Phoenix, she asked him what he was going to do with all his wisdom. He said, "I guess I'll use it on the golf course."

Dr. Beegle responded, "No! Do you realize how much it would mean for a kid or adult in poverty to get to talk to an engineer?"



Now in her 30<sup>th</sup> year as the president of Communication Across Barriers, Donna Beegle, Ed.D., is an internationally recognized authority on poverty-related issues. She and her team have worked in all fifty states and in other countries to help tackle poverty. She is also the author of [See](#)

[Poverty...Be the Difference](#) and is a sought-after speaker.

## Defying Myths and Stereotypes

Beegle's background prepared her with a much-needed perspective for addressing poverty. "I bring the lived experience of 28 years pretty much homeless. I dropped out of school at 15 to marry and had my honeymoon in a cherry field."

When she was 26, Dr. Beegle said she could not read a newspaper or write a complete sentence until she returned to school and earned her GED. Then she began studying the history of poverty in the United States as well as studying evidence-based best practices for communicating with and assisting people out of poverty.

## A Call to Educate Others about Poverty

Beegle learned that the primary way most people learned about poverty (along with associated myths and stereotypes) was through the media; she realized that education was needed if people were going to understand "the real causes and barriers" people in poverty were facing. Ten years after starting her GED, Beegle earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership.

## **Helping Others Rebuild Hope and Remove Shame**

“I know too much to be quiet.” At first, Donna began speaking to women’s groups, book clubs, and anyone who would listen to her about the real causes and barriers associated with poverty. “I have now presented in all 50 states and eight countries.



I train an average of 90,000 people every year. I also have a curriculum for rebuilding hope, removing shame, and connecting people currently in poverty to the people, resources, and opportunities they need.”

Her organization, Communication Across Barriers, offers “many opportunities for people to gain poverty competencies and make a difference.” For example, some of their programs allow participants to pair up with someone in poverty for a year. “In Davenport, Iowa, for every neighbor in poverty, we had four people from the over 55 retirement community sign up to serve as Navigators for their neighbors. Navigators use their wisdom, expertise, networks, and our resource backpack to assist people in moving forward.”

“We also certify people as Beegle Poverty Coaches.” The certification process equips participants with the skills/materials needed

to provide poverty competency training; certified coaches can also “assist their organizations in being more inclusive and responsive to people in poverty.”

Adapting to the COVID-19-related social distancing mandates, Beegle and her organization have been busy developing several online opportunities, including a two-day Beegle Poverty Immersion Institute. A ten-week online Poverty 101 course will soon be open for registration. Participants can receive graduate or undergraduate credit or certificates of completion for this “powerful learning opportunity.” Other online opportunities planned include a series of trainings from “If not me, then who” curriculum.

## **It Is Never Too Late**

“I am privileged to do my work. I am not better than anyone else in poverty.” Donna felt like it was a fluke that she “happened into a pilot program,” where she got much-needed assistance. Four women mentored her so that she could learn how to navigate housing, transportation, and other basic needs. She also got support rebuilding the confidence “that poverty had stolen.”

“I am living proof that it is never too late to follow a passion and achieve meaning in your life.”

## **Finding time to Relax and to Keep Centered**

When she is not busy helping to improve the lives of others, Donna likes to relax and spend time with her husband of 25 years, Chuck. She also enjoys spending time with her two sons, Daniel and Austin, and with her daughter, Juliette, who has autism.

“We always have a houseful of friends and relatives.” Relaxation also means dinners,



karaoke, backyard fires, candles, and a glass of wine. She finds that

seeking lakes, ponds, rivers, and oceans are valuable for centering.

### Advice for Others

“There is nothing that can match the feeling of making a difference for our fellow human beings. No piece of jewelry, no car, no trip, no piece of furniture will give you the magic you get from connecting and making a difference. I would highly encourage people to use their wisdom they have gained to give back.”

*For more information about Dr. Donna Beegle’s work and upcoming opportunities, visit the [Communication Across Barriers website](#).*

## Stay Safe, Keep Others Safe



COVID-19: Other than when walking the dog or jogging, I wear a mask a friend made for me when I’m out and about. I recently wore my “highly fashionable” mask

when grocery shopping. We’re all in this together. Stay safe and help keep others safe too!

## Create a Single Binder for All Household Financial Information

*By Ben James, CFA, CFP  
Founder, Elevate Wealth Advisors*



Regardless of household income, we all need to focus on what’s important, eliminate the clutter, and be able to communicate vital information to the right people at the right time.

While so many of us are inside finding new ways to organize and arrange our things, why not turn to your financial files and make some progress?

For our team at Elevate Wealth Advisors, that means having everything that’s important accessible and in one spot. We call that spot the Playbook.

The Playbook is designed to:

- Give you a process to make sure the i’s are dotted, and the t’s are crossed with your planning
- Reduce clutter and help you focus on what is important - you might even eliminate your filing cabinets!
- Get everything in one spot for a holistic view of your household finances
- Have everything in place and ready for someone else when they need to take over

Please join us to view our short, free [Playbook Process videos](#) on how to build your own Playbook, along with free resources you may need. We’ll also be adding new videos each week, so check back often!

## Support Local News



*By Melinda Benton, Associate Professor of Journalism, Umpqua Community College*

Half of the nearly 2,600 U.S. counties with COVID-19 are in news deserts, according to the American Press Institute. This endangers the public. In fact, "Over 65 million Americans live in counties with only one local newspaper—or none at all," according to the Brookings Institution.

The public needs local, neutral, science-based, trained public communicators to share information they can trust, especially during emergencies when the public relies more on the media.

We need more than Facebook groups led by people who take and aggregate other journalists' work, publishing their work in a way that reduces income for the writers and their publications.

We need public support of local, trained journalists. You're never going to find a publication that you agree with all of the time, and that is actually a good thing—exposure to multiple viewpoints and perspectives also keeps us healthy as a community.

Support of local news producers helps keep our information workers hired so that they are here when we most need them.

## Time to Think about the Future?

*By Reed Dewey  
Certified Retirement Coach*

Maybe the key these days is to think more about the future. Here the world is, caught up in the horror of COVID-19. It's hard to get away from all the chatter from friends, media, social media, and even in our homes.

But research suggests that it's a good idea to think about the future. We all know this pandemic, eventually, shall pass. Allowing us to step back at what's coming up after we get through this time could give a much-needed perspective.

There's actually a word for it—prospersion—which means the ability to consider the future. Humans, I believe, are the only ones who have this talent—for better or worse... [click [here](#) to read the full article]



*As a certified retirement coach, Reed specializes in nonfinancial aspects and serves clients worldwide through phone and video conferencing. <https://whats-next.org/>*

## When Envisioning Your Best Life, Be True to Yourself

*By Paula Marie Usrey, M.S., CPRC  
Founder of BoomerBestU.com*

Visualization can help you 'see' possibilities for your best life. But first, it is essential to connect with your authentic self. Otherwise, it is like trying to imagine yourself as a racehorse when you were born a swan. Be true to yourself!

I've worked with different individuals and groups and have studied and researched the transition process after fifty. I can tell you that the period of rediscovering your true self and your best life after fifty can take a lot of work but can be one of the most exciting periods of your life. [Read more...](#)



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