

50+Living our best lives now and in the future!

Service, Passion, and Good Health



Seventy-seven-year-old Tony Rosa is a veteran, a retired LAPD officer, a former international police advisor, and a long-time volunteer. He continues to live a life of service, has a passion for ongoing volunteer work, and

maintains good health.

Military Service, Ongoing Education, and the LAPD

After graduating high school, Rosa attended college for two years before volunteering to join the U.S. Army. "I was a military police K-9 officer for three years" and then volunteered for a "tour in Vietnam" (1966-67).

"After mustering out" of the service, Rosa joined the Los Angeles Police Department. While working full-time for the department, he earned a bachelor's degree "in English from Cal State Dominquez Hills and an M.A. in Public



Communications from Pepperdine University." He pursued these degrees as a pathway to promotions. "But later, I declined promotional opportunities beyond" earning the rank of sergeant "because I enjoyed being a field supervisor more than the managerial role. No regrets with that decision." In 2000, after serving "just short of 32 years," Rosa retired.

Serving as an International Police Advisor

"Almost immediately after retirement, I worked as an international police advisor for the U.S. State Department" and for the U.N. on peacekeeping missions. I served two years in Kosovo, two years in Liberia, and three years in Sudan. I traveled all over Europe and Africa during these deployments."

Each of the U.N. missions had "differently negotiated mandates for the countries involved. While in western Kosovo, Rosa "directed a large international police contingent and many Kosovo police recruits. One of the truly satisfying aspects of that tour was my ability to obtain asylum status for a Kosovo family who has since become very successful U.S. citizens."



While in Liberia, Rosa's role was "strictly advisory to the Liberian Police force. I was the Executive Officer to the U.N. Police Commissioner." His three-year mission to Sudan was also advisory. "I held various assignments there, including a six-month role as Acting Deputy Police Commissioner for South Sudan. I finally retired completely in 2009."

Volunteer Service as a Passion

I lived in the Paradise, California area when the 2018 Camp Fire destroyed my home. In early 2019, I moved to Sutherlin, Oregon, to be closer to family living in Roseburg.



One day, while walking near his home at Ford's Pond, Rosa met Jim Houseman, President of the Friends of Ford's Pond, a local nonprofit that manages the 202-acre community recreation area. Rosa was recruited as a volunteer. On average, he volunteers about 1,000 hours each year, picking up trash,

mowing trails, and removing hawthorn trees, scotch broom, and berry vines. "As for blackberry eradication, there is no secret weapon. Use all available tools and chemicals with great persistence! That is the key to eventual success."

As part of his volunteer work at Ford's Pond, Rosa has also participated in planting an Oak Savana. Future Farmers of America students from the local high school were also "an integral part of the planting experience, and it was truly inspiring to see the high school students' excitement in this effort."

"It was not a big leap into volunteer work for me because I was doing much the same thing in my homeowner's association in the Paradise, California area. As volunteers, we had "managed a 500- acre,

heavily forested green belt. The exercise, camaraderie, and service to my community were very important motivators.

The chance to continue this type of activity in Sutherlin was most welcome indeed. As a result, I have enjoyed joining another great group of people dedicated to improving the community and county."

Rosa recommends volunteering for Friends of Ford's Pond for those living in the Sutherlin, Oregon area. "You can work at your own speed and on whatever project is available. Without volunteers, this park would never have happened."

Back to Volunteering after an Unexpected 'Break'

While volunteering at Ford's Pond is Rosa's passion, "I occasionally find time to help my brother on his farm in Northern California. Unfortunately, a couple of months ago, during a task felling trees, we had an accident, and a tree fell on me. I sustained a back injury and a fractured ankle; this made it impossible to work on the pond for a month, but I am back at it, although at a slower pace."

For Relaxation

"While not doing volunteer work, I like to do a lot of reading, mostly history. Also, I enjoy emailing friends daily."

Advice

As he continues to do, Rosa suggests staying focused on being physically and mentally active. "In life, I have accomplished many things; to do so, I have maintained acceptable fitness, have eaten properly, never smoked, and used alcohol very sparingly." At seventy-seven, Rosa also takes no medications, "which is rare for my age."

"And never forget to have a sense of humor. Anyone can handle the good times; it is what you are and do when the going gets tough that defines you."

Benefits of Volunteering

[Vantage Aging](#), an Ohio nonprofit supporting successful aging, reports several benefits for becoming a volunteer. Some of those benefits include a sense of purpose, meeting new people, avoiding loneliness and isolation, and increasing physical activity. To learn more, read the full article, [“9 Benefits of Volunteering for Older Adults.”](#)

Engagement in Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

When people near retirement age are drawn to certain areas for common reasons such as recreational opportunities or community qualities, their location choice may help contribute to a naturally occurring retirement community (NORC). These communities are not specifically designed for retirees; younger families may also live in these same areas. However, the majority of people living in NORCs are either retired or older adults.

Neighborhood Connections

According to a [Harvard report](#), one of the strengths of NORCs tends to be a higher level of neighborhood engagement where people enjoy the company of their peers.



With a higher degree of neighborhood engagement, it is more likely that those neighbors will get to know each other and watch out for each other.

Closer Ties May Mean Increased Safety

As summarized in a [Study Finds article](#), an Ohio State Research Team revealed that in communities where neighbors have close ties, there are typically "lower levels of homicide, robbery, and aggravated assaults." The researchers suggest connections that

lead to lower crime rates are related to "surveillance among neighbors." In such neighborhoods, community members are more likely to watch out for each other and notice when "things are not right."

Dog Walking Neighbors Can Help

According to the same Study Finds article, neighbors who own and walk their dogs in the neighborhood may provide additional protection. People walking around the community with their pets are more likely to know what is happening.



"When people are out walking their dogs, they have conversations as they pet each other's dogs. They learn what's going on and can spot potential problems."

Passion and Purpose

"If you can't figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. For your passion will lead you right into your purpose." – *T.D.Jakes*

Empowered Aging, Empowered Living

Paul Irving, a Senior Fellow at the Milken Institute, argues in a [2019 article](#) that we must recognize how some assumptions about older individuals can affect our sense of personal empowerment.

When we fail to challenge stereotypical views that suggest older individuals are less capable of learning, contributing to society, or being burdens to others, we tend to internalize these attitudes and limit our own potential.

Irving further argues that older adults can "push back against the loss of identity, connection, and purpose" by embracing self-empowered aging.



"Self-empowered aging means taking control of one's life, learning, updating and improving skills, taking risks, building confidence, assuming power over personal circumstances, and developing the resilience to overcome inevitable challenges."

Volunteering and Other Paths to Self-Empowerment

Volunteering is one of the many ways that Irving suggests we can feel self-empowered. "Purposeful work is not just good for others; it's good for those who do it." Volunteering has been associated with "delayed cognitive decline" and healthier living.

Irving offers other suggestions for empowered aging, such as maintaining good health, working if needed for financial security or other reasons, starting a business, and making lifelong learning a priority.

Empowerment: A Widow's Perspective

Paula Marie Usrey



As a recent widow, I appreciate how essential it is to feel empowered when facing significant transitions and new challenges. Part of feeling empowered means recognizing when we need to

ask for help and when we need to push ourselves to keep learning.

Knowing that others are often more than willing to help can be a great comfort. At the same time, each of us has the power to keep growing, learning, and challenging ourselves in ways that can increase our resilience and confidence.

Learning New Skills

Learning something new can increase our sense of empowerment. With persistence, most of us can figure out things that might be outside our comfort zones. For example, I discovered that my sprinkler system and drip hoses needed repairs. At first, I wondered if I should hire someone to fix all the problems; I had never worked on sprinklers. Then I realized that a couple of my neighbors had repaired their own systems; I asked what I needed to do and got helpful answers. I also watched a few YouTube videos and then talked with someone at Lowes about the parts I needed. Replacing a faulty sprinkler head was as easy as changing a light bulb. Repairing a section of damaged sprinkler hose that had burst was a bit more frustrating—but, on my fourth try, I figured it out, and the repair held!

Living with Purpose is Empowering

Years ago, I wrote a mission statement for myself: *To encourage and help others feel empowered to live their best lives.* As a former educator, this mission expressed my passion for teaching and my sense of purpose. After I retired, I started a newsletter to encourage others to live their best lives after fifty.

A couple of weeks ago, I was asked to co-facilitate an online group for widows. This natural volunteer opportunity allows me to encourage and support other women as they rediscover a sense of empowerment.

Even when life feels especially challenging, knowing that we can keep growing, learning, and living with purpose can be empowering.

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