

## SMALL BUSINESS

◆ **Entreprise** / By Kelly Greene

# Tapping Talent, Experience of Those Age 60-Plus

*New Prize to Encourage Use of Skills, Knowledge In Social Entrepreneurship*

**WITH ONLY THREE** employees and a \$175,000 annual budget, the International Senior Lawyers Project, a nonprofit group that matches experienced U.S. attorneys with needs in developing countries, has dispatched 200 U.S. lawyers across the world in the past four years.

They have helped an Indian human-rights law network litigate domestic violence and disability cases. In South Africa, they are teaching black attorneys how to practice business law. And in Bulgaria, they are bolstering public defenders.

"The needs to be filled have been much more than we contemplated," says Anthony Essaye, a 71-year-old retired international lawyer in Washington, who is the group's co-president. "With more funding, we could do a lot more."

It's a common frustration among older businesspeople, professionals and entrepreneurs who want to use their talents, knowledge and experience for the social good, says Marc Freedman, president of Civic Ventures, a San Francisco nonprofit that seeks to tap that energy. Philanthropists and venture capitalists alike are used to pouring their dollars into young start-ups with young leaders.

In a bid to change that thinking, Civic Ventures is launching a program centered on what it calls the "Purpose Prize," akin to the MacArthur "genius" awards. Starting in June, the organization will award \$100,000 each to five "social entrepreneurs." Individuals age 60 or older who are trying to improve their communities through their work. Civic Ventures will start taking applications Thursday; nominations can be submitted at [www.LeadWithExperience.org](http://www.LeadWithExperience.org).

The money comes from \$9 million donated by the Atlantic Philanthropies and the John Templeton Foundation for the prize's first three years.

At the same time, Civic Ventures is negotiating with several business schools to help the competition's 15 to 20 finalists develop their business plans. It also plans a larger networking conference for its 60 semifinalists, to help them share ways to deal with obstacles they encounter.

The annual awards will provide a boost to a handful of social entrepreneurs, but Civic Ventures' larger aim is to highlight the growing prevalence of innovation and altruism among older people. In a survey of 1,000 adults age 50 to 70 that the group commissioned last spring, nearly three in five adults in their 50s said that they want to use the next stage of their lives to improve the quality of life in their communities.

The oldest of the country's 76 million baby boomers start turning 60 in a month. They are arguably the healthiest,

best-educated population of Americans ever to reach that milestone. Civic Ventures describes them as "pioneers" in a new stage between middle and late life, neither young nor old.

"We've already invested so much in their education and development—we couldn't build higher-ed institutions fast enough when they were starting out in the '60s," Mr. Freedman says. "Why write all that talent off prematurely?"

Jack McConnell, a retired doctor in Hilton Head Island, S.C., is finding just how difficult the search for funding can be—even with a stellar track record. In 1993, he recruited 55 retired doctors and opened a clinic on the island for people who couldn't afford medical care. As part of that effort, he had to get a state law changed that would have required doctors licensed elsewhere to get re-tested in South Carolina, and he had to whittle malpractice insurance premiums, partly by getting the clinic staff covered under a "good Samaritan" law.

Dr. McConnell estimates that two-thirds of the country's 160,000 retired doctors would come out of retirement to work free of charge. "The retirees could provide much, if not most, of the care for the uninsured in America if they were properly organized," he says.

Although the Purpose Prize is focused on social entrepreneurs, the awards won't be limited to nonprofit enterprises that require grants and donations to survive. Mr. Freedman offers the actor Paul

Newman as an example of a social entrepreneur with a self-sustaining enterprise. Mr. Newman has donated \$175 million made from his Newman's Own Inc. products to hundreds of charities.

Another celebrity example: Lee Iacocca's post-Chrysler work developing electric bicycles as a way to cut emissions and take better care of the environment.

"Our hope is that more people will realize that you don't have to be a celebrity to think big and in an entrepreneurial way about social contribution after midlife," Mr. Freedman says. In the for-profit arena, candidates may be doing micro-lending in low-income areas, or have found a way to make essential health-care products such as hearing aids available to people with low incomes. "We're less interested in the means than in the ends and the aspirations," he says.

So far, the award jury includes Sherry Lansing, former chairman of Viacom Inc.'s Paramount Pictures' Motion Picture Group, and Harris Wofford, who has served as a U.S. senator, president of Bryn Mawr College, and chief executive of the Corporation of National and Community Service. Civic Ventures expects to name additional members by year end.

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