

# The State

Saturday, September 20, 2003

COLUMBIA, S.C.

## Retirees bring economic benefits with them

Recently some press reports called into question whether attracting retirees is a good thing for a state's economy. In other words, if more retirees move to the Carolinas from a Northern or Midwestern state, is that good for business or the government?

Virtually all research done in this area suggests that the average 55-plus-aged retiree who moves to the Carolinas is healthier, more affluent and better educated than the "natives" in most towns where they settle. These 55-plus-aged retirees typically spend more in purchases and taxes, according to the research firm Thomas, Warren & Associates of Arizona.

Thomas, Warren & Associates has completed statewide studies on the impact of retirement-age residents of Arizona, Florida and Louisiana. The results of each of these studies suggest that the 55-plus-aged residents who come into these states offer a net benefit. In fact, Thomas, Warren & Associates' recent report in Florida led Gov. Jeb Bush to announce a government-sponsored organization, Destination Florida, to make sure Florida continues to attract its historically sizable percentage of retirees in future years.

In each study, individuals in this age group had significantly higher annual per capita incomes than the 18-55 age group. Because they are more affluent, they buy higher-priced property and more expensive consumer goods. This leads to higher property and sales tax payments to local and state governments.

Thomas, Warren & Associates points out that because retirees boost local spending, they also attract and support service industries such as restaurants, medical clinics and home and car repair services. Towns with high concentrations of retirees also have attracted a strong group of medical specialists to treat them. Conversely, older adults do not typically commit crimes, use government services, have school-aged children or clog up traffic in rush hour.

Retirees become active in the community by volunteering in



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Guest Columnists

church, cultural, civic and religious organizations. They become the stable backbone of a community. Representatives from towns such as Beaufort, Hilton Head, Seneca and Lake Keowee, Myrtle Beach and Greenwood report at conferences of the Carolinas Active Retirement Association about the positive contributions that retirees make to their areas.

Because they generally have more resources, they can afford to pay for medical care and nursing care should they eventually need it. But often, when this type of care is needed or a spouse dies, these transplants return home to be near family.

However, there continues to be a general misconception that Carolina towns are attracting "elderly" residents just one fall away from a nursing home, where they will need government support. This simply is not the case. Most of the retirees choosing to relocate to the Carolinas are between 55 and 70 and quite active.

In the Carolinas, they seek a moderate climate with four seasons, boating, great golf, scenic beauty, lower taxes and friendly people. In fact, many Florida retirees are moving to the Carolinas because they are unhappy with the hot weather and overcrowding in that state. Experts call them the "half-backs," because they move from Northern states to Florida and then "halfway back" to the Carolinas.

Most of the 60-plus-aged retirees who move to the Carolinas bring dramatic accumulated wealth and are extremely active.

They travel, eat out, attend cultural events and buy luxury items. Researcher Mark Fagan of Jacksonville State University in Alabama reports in his recent book, *Retirement Development: A How-To Guide*, that a typical retiree couple has the same economic impact to a town as the attraction of 3.4 manufacturing jobs.

Without any organized effort, North Carolina already ranks fifth among all states in attracting out-of-state 60-plus-aged active retirees, and South Carolina ranks 12th, according to national retiree migration expert Charles Longino of Wake Forest University. Interestingly, South Carolina rose from 18th nationally to 12th nationally from the 1990 census to the 2000 census.

Seneca recently voted to spend some hospitality tax money on a new "Greater Seneca Retirement & Relocation Guide" to promote its area to retirees and families. While this town has not ceased at-

tempting to attract visitors and bring in new industry, it also views retirees as a valid economic shot in the arm for its community. Other towns and cities — as well as state officials — should recognize that attracting 55-plus-aged residents is indeed an economic development that helps an area prosper.

*Mr. Owens is publisher of Retirement Lifestyles in the Carolinas magazine and president of the Carolinas Active Retirement Association. Dr. DeCenzo is dean of the E. Craig Wall College of Business Administration at Coastal Carolina University.*

**JOHN FRIERSON SOD FIELD**  
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Field is next to Hope Ferry Public Boat Ramp on Saluda River (Off Corley Mill Rd. in Lexington Co.)  
Sod cost: \$1<sup>00</sup> for 1-ft. x 6 ft. roll.  
**356-2588**

**CORRECTION:**  
The Trenholm Road United Methodist Church ad that ran in the 9/19/03 edition of The State Newspaper did not include the address, the address is 3401 Trenholm Rd. and the phone is 254-6696

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