

Gudelia Vaden

Blaze a Trail

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In 2002, retirement felt like an explosion of fireworks in my head. Now that I am separated from my job, what can I do to keep from getting bored? Then, a friend told me about the Janet Goeske Center.

That beautiful day, when the sun was shining, the birds were singing and Riverside smelled of orange blossoms, I put on my "Trail Blazing Coat of Honor" and headed directly to the Janet Goeske Center. Upon setting foot in the doorway, the lump in my throat disappeared. I was instantly mesmerized by the paintings on the wall. They spoke to me in a way that nothing else had. There were roosters, flowers and everything else that could be painted with oil, pastels, ink, and water color. I felt a connection. The roosters reminded me of my happy childhood and the flowers of my lovely garden. Guess what? I enrolled in a water color painting class. I knew that I wanted to paint rainbows and hummingbirds in the spring. Soon after, I was very touched when someone at the center invited me to add a painting to the wall. When my out of town relatives came to visit, I brought them to the center and bragged about my painting.

Now, that I knew I could paint, I decided to take soul and country line dancing classes, as my daughter was getting married and I wanted to learn how to dance. Not only did I learn a few dances, but it was fun. Then I moved on to take an exercise class using bar bells, stretch bands and small rubber balls. When this instructor went on vacation, I filled in for her. Giving of my time was so rewarding.

I always wanted to write and now was the time. I took a class where the emphasis was on writing your life story. The class meets once a week and we write to prompts and read our stories aloud to each other. It is exhilarating to share stories that celebrate our life. Another writing class that I take is the one that emphasizes poetry and fiction and non-fiction writing. In these classes we have been encouraged to write and to bring out our creativity.

At 71 years of age, I will be able to share my accomplishments with others. There are no present age limits for achievement. My husband Tom and I submitted poems and stories that were published in the Inlandia Anthology of 2015. Not only does this make my heart swell with pride, but it is our way of giving back to the community. Future generations will see how our lives have evolved. We were here before the Pill, disposable diapers, computers, dishwashers, etc., and before we were called "senior citizens."

Blazing a trail was more fun than I had anticipated. Hopefully others will benefit from the trail that has been paved, their lives enriched for the better and their well-being improved.