



BLOOMFIELD HILLS

February 19, 2013

Local leaders lend advice to men in ‘Embrace of Aging’ documentary

By Robin Ruehlen C & G Staff Writer

As a large portion of America’s population shifts from the workforce into retirement, many are finding that embracing the “golden years” isn’t always as easy as they imagined — especially for men.

On Feb. 24, award-winning Michigan producer and director Keith Famie will present the first of a new three-part documentary series titled “The Embrace of Aging: The Male Perspective of Growing Old” at the Shriners Silver Garden Event Center in Southfield.

The dinner and film screening features the advice of local health experts, spiritual leaders, psychologists and men of various ages who share their stories of grappling with the aging process, as well as primary health issues facing senior men — from prostate cancer and heart disease to diabetes and Alzheimer’s.

Rev. Norman Pritchard, senior pastor at Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield Hills, appears in documentary to lend his expertise on spirituality in the senior years.

“Men are known as the driven doers, and they sometimes find retirement very difficult. They don’t know what to do with themselves or how to spend their time,” he said.

“As age increases and abilities diminish, it raises profound questions about who they are, and what they’ve done with their lives. A great many people work very hard and find their identities in their occupations. When that is taken away, it can be quite destabilizing, and it leads to questions of identity and purpose, which have a very spiritual dimension.”

At the same time, Pritchard noted, others are “delighted” to be off of the treadmill of occupation, and see retirement as a time to blossom in the avenues of community service and a commitment to other causes that add a deeper dimension to their lives.

As a pastor, Pritchard said he often sees men struggling with the fact that they cannot do as much as they used to, especially when health issues begin to arise — what he calls a “chastening and sobering experience” for many men. Dealing with the loss of a spouse is also a profoundly important time for men, he said, as it forces them to confront the very real issues of death and loneliness.

“I encourage men to acknowledge their humanity, and the dependence that is a part of our makeup as humans,” he said.

“The sad thing about the way occupations drive men is that we sometimes feel we are in charge and we are responsible and we can do everything. If that feeling is suddenly either reduced or taken away, it becomes very difficult for guys to cope with. I encourage them to see none of us are Superman. We have frailties, vulnerabilities, and at some stage, we are all going to join the same journey out of this life, and we need to be more realistic about our lives and the onset of aging.”

“Embrace of Aging” also includes some celebrity viewpoints. Drew Nieporent, business partner of Robert DeNiro for the famed Tribeca Grill in New York, hosts a comically candid discussion on getting older with Steve Schirripa, (Bobby “Bacala” Baccalieri of HBO TV’s “The Sopranos”) during a “guys’ dinner.”

Detroit musician Stewart Francke (also featured in the film) will perform at the event, and comedian Bill Mihalic will share his thoughts on the aging man.

The film also pays tribute to the work of the Bo Schembechler: Heart of a Champion Research Fund and Alzheimer’s Association of Michigan.

Dr. Kim Eagle, director of the University of Michigan Cardiovascular Center, said in a statement that the film is a “must see.”

“Since heart disease kills more men in the world than any other single disorder, and since it becomes more and more of a possibility as we age, it is fitting that the film provides a remarkable look at this critical issue; from prevention, to symptoms, to best treatment,” she said.

Pritchard said he hopes the documentary will give men a realization that the aging process is not something that must be encountered alone.

“It is not only permissible, but also helpful to seek support and guidance as these significant life changes kick in,” he said.

“Through things such as small group ministries we have opportunity to support one another and help one another face the particular challenges that occur. In a large congregation, it’s very easy to be anonymous, but if you’re part of a small group it can be quite an amazing resource to help when those challenges are presented.”

Tickets for the Feb. 24 dinner premiere of “The Embrace of Aging: The Male Perspective of Growing Old” are available for \$75 each. Contact Visionalist Entertainment Productions at (248) 869-0096. The event begins at 6 p.m., and doors open at 5 p.m. at the Shriners Silver Gardens Event Center, 24350 Southfield Road in Southfield.

For more information on “The Embrace of Aging” series, including trailers and photos, visit www.embraceofaging.com.

<http://www.candgnews.com/news/local-leaders-lend-advice-men-‘embrace-aging’-documentary>