



## Planning For Financial Independence

When you're in your 20s, 30s and even 40s, retirement seems a long way off. But tomorrow eventually arrives. And the more you plan for retirement, the more likely you will be able to maintain the lifestyle and financial freedom you want.

"One of the most important steps you can take in planning retirement is to be realistic about expenses," says Deb Gertsen, senior VP/trust and investments with Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust and chair of Meth-Wick's board of directors. "When people retire, they stop working, they don't stop living."

### First Steps

Retirement planning can seem like an overwhelming mountain of information and decisions, which is why it's advisable to work with a financial advisor. They have the expertise to help you conquer that mountain by breaking it into manageable tasks. That said, if you are the energetic and independent sort, you can also pull the plan together on your own, then consult with a financial expert to review what you've compiled.

According to Deb, the first step is to gather information on your IRAs, retirement plans, other



Deb Gertsen helps customers plan for financial independence, a.k.a. retirement.

assets and retirement income sources (social security, rental property income, etc.) Also review anticipated changes in

finances, such as the sale of your home or business or relocation.

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### Dates to Remember

**Oct. 6** — "How the Foundation Works," with Christine Casey, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

**Oct. 10** — Bingo with our sponsor, Hills Bank, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

**Oct. 26** — Piano music with Mark Pence, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

**Oct. 27** — State of the Campus Address by Deb Gertsen, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

**Oct. 28** — Potpourri of Piano Music with Betty Debban, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

**Oct. 31** — Halloween Social, 2:00 p.m., Live, Laugh, Learn Center.

# Robin's Nest

Things were jumping this summer. Whoever coined the phrase "lazy days of summer" wasn't talking about Meth-Wick!

Highland Park, our new life-style option for active seniors, continues to grow — four families now reside in two single-family homes and a duplex. Construction on another duplex will begin this fall for spring 2012 occupancy. Our duplex model is available for touring and can also be purchased. This ability for potential residents to tour a fully furnished model helps them envision themselves in the living space — something that can be difficult when you are limited to looking at floor plans. For more information or a personal tour, contact Chris Madsen at 365-9171, x638.

On August 11 we hosted our annual Neighborhood Event, bringing our neighbors and Meth-Wick residents together for two things that are always popular —

ice cream and tasty conversation. (See Neighborhood Event photos, this page.) An August 17 Open House gave over 100 visitors the chance to tour two of our independent living choices, Highland Park and Brendelwood Village.

It's hard to believe, but our 50th anniversary year will soon be coming to a close.

We look forward to celebrating this landmark year with a special event on November 13, the date on which our first resident moved in 50 years ago.

Last but certainly not least, we welcome our new fitness specialist, Kristin Van Dyke. You'll have the chance to meet her in the next issue of LifeStyles.



Robin Mixdorf,  
President & CEO

## Meth-Wick's Neighborhood Event

It was a beautiful, sunny day on August 11—the perfect backdrop for Meth-Wick's Neighborhood Event. We invited residents and neighbors as a thank you for their gracious patience during our Manor renovation project, completed last spring.



It's hard to beat ice cream on a summer day! Choices included vanilla, chocolate and strawberry on a cone or in a cup with toppings.



The Manor's new beautifully landscaped patio area, Grandon Court, offered residents a comfortable place to rest while enjoying ice cream and Calypso music by Pandelirium, a steel drum quartet.

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Next you'll want to develop your retirement income plan:

- Compare needed living expenses with anticipated income (keeping in mind life expectancies, inflation and emergency expenses such as new appliances, roof, car, repair bills, medical expenses, etc.)
- Determine optimum order for withdrawal of retirement assets to maximize income and minimize taxes.
- Determine best time to begin taking social security benefits.
- Plan how required minimum distributions (RMDs) will fit into your situation.
- Determine a retirement date based on personal finances.

### The Right Questions

Deb prefers "financial independence" to "retirement" because

it implies a time when you have built the financial freedom to do as you please. A financial independence plan is built around the answers to four questions:

#### Where will I live?

An important consideration since the cost of living and tax consequences for each city and state will vary.

#### What will I do?

Plan the steps you need to take to reach financial independence. Some people plan more for a two-week vacation than they do for 30 years of retirement.

#### When will this happen?

The date of retirement is determined by the amount of assets accumulated.

#### How much do I need each month?

This is determined by a cash flow analysis, described by Deb as the primary planning tool.

Keep track of money coming in and going out over days, months, years and decades. Determine how much of your income covers basic living expenses. This will help target savings, budget for the future and identify wasteful spending.

#### Early Retirement

Deb counsels clients who want to retire early to consider working until age 63½. At that time they can pay for medical coverage through COBRA, if they have employer coverage. "It isn't cheap, but it enables them to take early retirement and have a plan for health coverage until Medicare kicks in at age 65," she says.

Deb also cites choosing a retirement community as part of the planning process and offers the following suggestions:

- Visit the facilities you are considering.
- Talk to residents as well as staff.
- Check out the assisted living and nursing facilities.
- Review the contract (cost, size and location of apartment, meals, maid service, etc.)
- Ask how medical care is provided (on site or off site).
- Find out if entry fees are refundable.
- Learn what happens if you can no longer pay for your care.

Deb believes a continuing care retirement community offers the ideal situation because services are tailored to the changing health needs of each resident. "Meth-Wick is a continuing care retirement community. All the care you need is provided on campus. You never again have to shop for services."