Older Workers: Re-imagining Retirement

You might be surprised to know that 54 percent of workers age 65 and over work because they want to work.

BY LINDA MARLING CHURCH

By now we have all heard dramatic stories about older workers who can no longer retire, or who have been forced back into the workforce because they need the income. For some, that is true. For others, who have chosen to stay in or re-enter the workforce for a variety of reasons, it is not true.

In a recent study by the Pew Research Center, it was found that 54 percent of workers age 65 and older say they work because they want to, 27 percent because they want and need to, and 17 percent because they have to. Surprised? In that same study, it was found that 54 percent of workers 65 and older were “completely satisfied” with their jobs compared with 29 percent of workers ages 16 to 64. That satisfaction may come from the fact that they are working by choice, not necessity.

Myths exist in the workplace that it costs more to employ an older worker, that they are technologically inept, and that they are less adaptable to change—all of which have been repudiated more than once by demographic studies.

Who said that we work to 65 and then retire and start riding around in a golf cart?