

They're counting on you to not show up to vote

BY HOWARD PEARRE

"They are powerful and they are COUNTING ON YOU!"

This is what I told the class of high school students. Some actually began paying attention.

"They're counting on you being too busy. Or not getting off work. Or not having a ride. Or not being sure who you like, so you'll let somebody else decide."

A few more looked up.
"They're counting on you thinking the system is rigged, so what's the use? Or thinking it doesn't matter anyway. Or thinking you need a picture ID even though you actually don't this time.

"They're counting on you being overwhelmed by so many candidates. Or not knowing what the down-ballot races are all about. Or not having time to research the candidates to make a good choice. Or being disgusted by all the partisanship and negativity. Or getting mad that somebody said something mean about somebody. Or thinking your vote won't count anyway."

By now I had almost everyone's attention.
"It doesn't matter to them. Any excuse will do, just as long as it KEEPS YOU FROM SHOWING UP."

Now, everybody was tuned in.
"They are powerful and they DO NOT WANT YOU TO VOTE! They want you to NOT SHOW UP! They are counting on you NOT VOTING! They are going to throw up every roadblock you can think of."

This is what I said to those high school students we were helping to pre-register so they would be fully registered as soon as they turned eighteen.

But my message may also apply to some other "seniors" (senior citizens, that is) you may know.

On Tuesday, March 3, and next fall on Tuesday, Nov. 3, North Carolinians will have the awesome responsibility of determining the political futures of our cities, counties, state, and nation by choosing the leaders who will shape these futures.

"If you do not vote, you forfeit your right and neglect your responsibility to stand up and decide."

This is what I said.
"If you allow one of hundreds of excuses to keep you from the voting booth, you will NOT BE DISENFRANCHISED. You will DISENFRANCHISE YOURSELF. And not only that, you will disenfranchise your family, your neighbors, your community."

But for us senior citizens, there's more.
We not only have the responsibility of casting our ballots. We seniors also have the responsibility of rolling up our sleeves and using our authority and influence as leaders.

Here's how:
*Volunteer for voter registration drives through the League of Women Voters, the YouCanVote program, or even by yourself. If you need training on how to register voters, sign up with YouCanVote or other organizations that offer this. According to the NC State Board of Elections, any organization, group, or individual may conduct voter registration drives. Basic, common sense rules must be followed (see <https://www.ncsbe.gov/Voters/ Registering-to-Vote#VoterRegistrationDrives>); however, no special training or permission is required.
*Volunteer to work with a local party or candidate

by canvassing your neighborhood. Canvassing means knocking on doors to politely encourage voters to vote for a candidate or party's candidates, provide information about polling places, use a smart phone on the spot to check to see if the voter is "active," and assist others in the household to register if they need to do this. The first step is usually simply to show up at a candidate's or party's office to get a talking-points script and a list of registered voters of the candidate's party. Then, you head to the neighborhood.

*Volunteer with the Forsyth County Board of Elections to serve as a precinct judge or assistant at a precinct polling place on Election Day. Judges and assistants go through Board of Elections' training and receive pay. The day is long and the work is exacting, but this is where democracy's rubber meets the road.

*Volunteer with a party or candidate to greet voters and hand out literature at a polling place or early voting site.

*Volunteer with a party to be an observer. Observers monitor how judges manage voters inside the polls and report inappropriate behaviors (intimidation, attempts to influence voters, errors on the part of judges) to the chief judge or party officials.

Whether we're still in high school or are a senior citizen, we can't let those powerful forces be successful in their efforts to SUPPRESS OUR VOTES!

Howard Pearre is a member of Winston-Salem Writers, a past participant in SilverArts, and a judge for the 2020 SilverArts literary competition. He is also a volunteer coordinator with his political party.

March Senior Events Calendar:

*"Artists' Spotlight" by Associated Artists features the work of nine member artists at Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts, 251 N. Spruce St., through March 23.

*Artworks Gallery, 564 Trade St. in the heart of the Arts District, will feature local artists Barbara Mellin, Owens Daniels and Wiley Akres, through March 31.

*"Invitational 2020" exhibit featuring the works of a dozen African-American artists from across the state in a wide variety of media styles and themes, by a mix of both established and emerging artists. Exhibit runs through May 30 at Delta Arts Center, 2611 New Walkertown Road. For more information, visit www.deltaartscenter.org.

*Senior Stretch class, every Monday, 11 a.m., at LaDeara Crest Resources Center, 2531 LaDeara Crest Lane. The chair-based class is designed to increase balance, flexibility, range of motion and endurance. Free. Sponsored by the Salvation Army Senior Center.

*Senior Tai Chi, every Tuesday, 10 a.m., The Salvation Army Senior Center, 2850 New Walkertown Rd. Tai Chi is shown to prevent falls, improve balance and overall health, and reduce pain. It consists of a series of gentle movements that can be done standing or sitting. Free.

*Friday Social Club every Friday, 2-3:30 p.m., at the Shepherd's Center, 1700 Ebert St. Free, but registration is required due to limited space. Call 336-748-0217 for more information.

*Open Mic, hosted by Winston-Salem Writers, (first Tuesday of each month), March 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Coffee Park Cafe inside the Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts, 251 N. Spruce St. Free event that offers beginning and experienced writers an opportunity to read five minutes of their work to a friendly audience.

For information, visit www.wswriters.org.

"Will Paint for Food" art show and sale on March 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. to benefit Meals on Wheels at Senior Services, 2895 Shorefair Drive. Lots of beautiful art priced to sell!

*AARP meeting (second Tuesday except July and August), March 10, 12:00 p.m., Senior Services, 2895 Shorefair Dr. Open to all seniors age 50 and above with an AARP membership.

*Aging Well series presented by Wake Forest Baptist Health, March 10, 6:00 p.m., Central Public Library auditorium. The topic is "Exploring Effective Drug-free Options for Treating Depression and Anxiety" presented by Gretchen A. Brenes, Ph.D., Wake Forest Baptist Sticht Center for Healthy Aging & Alzheimer's Prevention. The seminar is free but registration is suggested. Call 336-713-2378 to RSVP.

"Calamity Jane," free movie at Aperture Cinema, 311 W. Fourth St., March 11 and 18 at 10 a.m. A one-of-a-kind film experience designed specifically for persons with dementia and their care partners. The film will be followed by audience discussion and reminiscence, guided by a moderator from Wake Forest Baptist Health Memory Counseling Program. Free parking at First Presbyterian Church across from Sawtooth School - just a short walk to the theatre.

*Second Thursday Seniors Writers Group, (second Thursday), March 12, 11 a.m., Carver School Branch Library, 4915 Lansing Drive. All writers, whether just starting out or experienced, are invited to attend, discuss the craft of writing and share their work. Call Charlene Edwards at 336-703-2910 for information.

*Lunch & Learn for Caregivers, March 12, 10:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Senior Services, 2895 Shorefair Drive.

Dr. Edward Shaw will speak on "The Eight Central Needs of Dementia Care.Partners." Lunch is free but registration is required. Call 336-721-6918 to reserve a spot.

*Winston-Salem Community Band concert, March 15, 3 p.m., Spring Concert, South Fork Community Center, 4403 Country Club Road. The concert is free.

Adult Children of Aging Parents meeting, (third Tuesday), March 17, 5:30-7:00 p.m., Knollwood Baptist Church, 330 Knollwood St. All are welcome, but the focus will be on the needs of adult children who are caring for their aging parents. For more information, visit <http://acapwinston-salem.org/>.

*Clemmons Cookin' Book Club, (third Wednesday), March 18, 12:15 p.m., Clemmons Public Library, 3554 Clemmons Road. Choose a recipe from the cookbook selected for the month and bring in the finished dish on meeting day to share and discuss the recipes. Call 336-703-2921 for details.

*Vets Coffee, (third Thursday), March 19, 9 a.m., PDQ, 285 Harvey St. All veterans and friends are invited to attend. For more information, call Don Timmons at 336-331-1309 or email don.timmons@hospicecarecenter.org.

*Third Thursday Adult Coloring Club, March 19, 11:00 a.m., Carver School Road Branch Library, 4915 Lansing Dr. Call 336-703-2910 for information.

*Newcomers and Neighbors of Greater Winston-Salem, (fourth Tuesday except December), March 24, 9:45 a.m., Trinity Presbyterian Church, 1416 Bolton St. Coffee and monthly meeting. Visitors welcome. Open to women who are new or established residents of the greater Winston-Salem area. For more information, email wsnewcomers@gmail.com.



Beauty Flourishes Here

Arbor Acres
United Methodist Retirement Community

IN OUR FULLY EQUIPPED STUDIO, artist Steven loves to share his experience and guidance with fellow residents as they tap into their creative spirits. At Arbor Acres, our residents celebrate the endless variations and possibilities of beauty. *What is beautiful to you?*

www.arboracres.org

1240 Arbor Road, Winston-Salem, NC 27104
336-724-7921