

Experts discuss attracting retirees

by Steve Reagan, Big Spring Herald

A couple of self-confessed “geeks in suits” want to help attract more retirees to live in this area.

Gene Warren and Alan Church of the Phoenix consulting firm of Thomas, Warren and Associates, were in town Tuesday to help civic leaders get the best “bang for their buck” when trying to sell people on the idea of Big Spring as a retirement destination.

Warren and Church held a seminar, “Attracting Retirees to Big Spring,” at the ALON Refinery training building Tuesday afternoon.

“We help communities find out exactly what they have that will attract retirees,” said Warren. “Plus, we do market research for an advertising campaign to attract retirees.”

With 76 million members of the “baby boomer” generation set to retire during the next decade or so, retirees are set to become more and more attractive to communities.

For starters, retirees have more disposable income than their younger counterparts, Warren said.

“Retiree households spend more, on average, than non-retiree households,” Warren said. “But they don’t work, so they need people to provide goods and services they need — and that creates jobs.”

Warren estimated that 2.5 jobs are created for every retiree who relocates to a community.

“In other words, 100 retirees moving to Big Spring would be like getting a new ALON refinery (worth of jobs),” he said.

Warren said his firm estimates that 75 percent of retirees moving to a new community will buy a house, pumping even more money into the local economy.

And retirees bring other factors to a community as well.

“They tend to volunteer a lot,” Warren said. “That’s another benefit to the community.”

Although the goal — attracting new members of the community — is laudable, Warren and Church also realize that most small communities don't have a large advertising budget to recruit new residents.

"We also explain how to do this in a cost-efficient way ... so the city makes a profit," receiving more in benefits from new residents than it spends in recruitment efforts, Warren said.

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