

# The RETROSPECT

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## Bezich Has a Message for Men Over 50

by Bethany Mitros

Lifelong Haddon Township resident Lou Bezich made a name for himself locally as the founder of Public Solutions in Haddonfield, the administrator for Camden County and as a VP of Camden County College, but the public policy veteran is now making a name for himself in a new way – as the author of *Crack the Code: 10 Proven Secrets that Motivate Healthy Behavior and Inspire Fulfillment in Men Over 50*.

Though the unflattering stereotype of older men is that they are often lounging in an easy chair with a beer next to them, Bezich said it does not have to be that way. He hopes his book will encourage older men to make healthier lifestyle choices.

"Through my own personal experience, I found that social and emotional relationships can be great inspiration for a healthy lifestyle," he explained. Bezich was a single dad and used exercise as a coping mechanism to balance the stress of raising children while working as an active professional.

"I used exercise as a way to cope throughout my 30s, 40s, 50s and now into my 60s. What started as a coping mechanism is now a passion and something I look forward to and enjoy," he said.

However, Bezich is the exception, not the rule. Statistics show that men typically die younger than women and visit the doctor less often; however, he saw in his own life that men who have strong



**ANOTHER HAT:** *Haddon Township resident Lou Bezich has worn many hats over his career. Now as an author he is focused on helping men over 50 live healthy, fulfilling lives.*

social and emotional connections take better care of themselves.

He began researching the motivation of other men who maintain a healthy lifestyle over 50 and found a similar strong correlation between healthy behaviors and strong social connections. "Social and emotional factors are a tremendous source of inspiration for men and anyone looking to sustain a healthy lifestyle," he said.

From his research, which included surveying 1,000 older men with healthy lifestyles, Bezich developed ten strategies to help those who might need a little inspiration to get started with healthier living that are based on devel-

oping a strong social agenda and strong emotional ties. They form the basis for his book.

"It's the second half of the game of life," explained Bezich. He asks his readers to consider what is important to them in the coming years and connect them to their health. Some men are looking forward to starting a second or third career, others may want to dance at their daughter's wedding or play an active role in their grandchildren's life.

"The quantitative and qualitative data show the strongest factors are relationships with a spouse or grandchildren," he said. That then provides the "intrinsic motivation" for improving lifestyle.

His book also discusses how men can sustain healthy choices – "tactics and strategies to use day in and day out." Bezich recommends that men take the time to assess their personal values and make cognitive connections between their goals and how their behavior can help them achieve those goals.

"Healthy behavior is a means to an end. You can't reach your aspirations if you aren't healthy enough to enjoy them," he said.

In addition to being able to accomplish more, Bezich said healthy lifestyles answer a lot of current health challenges in society – type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, obesity. "The number one factor influencing our health is not genetics, it's access to healthcare and our own behavior.

We control our destiny and we're failing miserably if you look at outcomes. Incidences of chronic diseases are largely behavior based."

The idea for his book evolved through his career in health care and *Crack the Code* includes a chapter on public policy issues. "Health is a personal situation, but we can create a new culture where health and healthy behavior is the norm." In addition to improving individual outcomes, healthier lifestyles for more people would reduce the overall cost of healthcare. "There is a strong movement in healthcare today that focuses on social factors."

Currently, Bezich is the senior vice president of strategic alliances at Cooper University Hospital, but for many years, he was a major player in local redevelopment projects, including the DyDee Wash project in Haddon Township, the White Horse Pike revival in Barrington and the formation of the business improvement district in Haddonfield.

"I love driving down Haddon Ave. I'm still in Haddon Township and I'm proud of the DyDee project. It added a lot of vibrancy to the downtown," he said. Another of his bigger projects was the CooperTowne Center in Somerdale. "It's nice to see the projects now. They have done a lot of good stuff for the community."

Public Solutions was largely based on the real estate market, however, when the market crashed in 2008 and work dwindled, one of his remaining

clients was Camden County College. He landed there as a vice president shortly after. Bezich served CCC for three years before he got his current position at Cooper.

"The book is a call to action for men over 50 and the people who love them. Healthy behavior is a team sport. The key is social relationships. There are many resources to leverage in a positive way to find purpose and meaning so they want to be healthy," he explained.

Bezich practices what he preaches. He is up at 4 a.m. Monday through Friday to go to Planet Fitness in Haddon Township, where he does cardio three times a week and strength training three days a week. "I watch my diet and live a healthy lifestyle as much as possible. ... It started as a coping mechanism, but now it helped me connect the dots. I have a grandson now and he is a lot of my inspiration."

*Crack the Code* is available at major book retailers. Anyone interested in a signed copy of *Crack the Code* can attend one of Bezich's upcoming book meet and greets: 1 to 4 p.m. on March 10 at Barnes and Noble Moorestown East Local Author Day, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on March 16 at the Moorestown Library Annual Book Sale Meet and Greet and Book Signing and 7 to 8:30 p.m. on May 8 at the Cherry Hill Library.

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