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John Morris

John Morris of Eugene worked as a designer most of his life. Today he's working as a nursing assistant and considering continuing his education to become a physical or occupational therapy aide or even a therapist.

It's an ambitious goal for someone who describes himself as "not a spring chicken." But a career in health care offers the kind of job security that Morris, at age 59, is looking for. And he's found a surprising congruence between design and therapy, along with a high degree of job satisfaction.

After many years working in design at the same sporting goods company, Morris found himself out of a job when the company reorganized and outsourced all of its manufacturing and most of its design work. He found work as a carpenter with a

high-end design-and-build construction company that did residential, commercial and public buildings. They emphasized green design. But after three-and-a-half years, that company did not withstand the housing recession, and Morris was again unemployed.

Aware of the continuing growth in health care employment, Morris signed up for the entry-level certified nursing assistant course at Lane Community College. Upon completion of the course in June 2010, he immediately took and passed his state certification exam and was working at a skilled nursing facility within weeks. He will receive health care benefits after three months' employment.

"I enjoy it a lot," Morris says. "I care a lot for the residents. As a newcomer to care-giving I feel best about my ability to engage



residents whose social interactions may have declined since entering a facility. As a 'mature' aide I naturally share more life experiences and points of reference with residents compared to the more typical young, entry-level health-care worker." He says many of the students in his CNA class were older students.

He plans to take the next level of CNA training. "And I may not stop there," he says.



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