

# Bill Gray helps retirees find their passion with This Point Forward

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More by Kathi Edwards

May 3, 2022

You spend a lifetime working a job, perfecting your skills, and gaining valuable incites and experiences, and finally comes retirement. Then what? Bill Gray, of Columbia, found himself in exactly that position, upon retiring from his job with the Social Security Administration in 2010. He recalls, “I had goals such as wanting to continue using my knowledge and skills in the private sector and also wanting to volunteer and give back to my community. I really didn’t know how to go about it so I spent a lot of time meeting with friends and colleagues who had retired, to get advice about how to proceed. They provided practical advice about establishing my own business, leads for opportunities and personal advice about adjusting to this new situation.”



Bill Gray is president of This Point Forward. (Courtesy Bill Gray)

Bill had an interesting and challenging 37-year career with Social Security. After his first job with a branch office in Sandusky, Ohio, his computer skills soon led to a transfer to the agency’s headquarters just outside Baltimore. He served his last 10 years there as Deputy Commissioner of Systems. In this position he was in charge of all the agency’s technology and data centers. He and his team automated the agency’s disability claims and appeals process allowing Americans to file online, built the highest-rated internet business applications in government, and implemented the world’s largest deployment of voice over internet protocol telephone services. All of this innovation became especially relevant during the pandemic, as it enabled employees to work from home and still provide excellent public service.

Armed with all this knowledge and experience, and the advice and mentorship of other retirees, Bill was able to launch his own business providing information technology consulting services to government agencies and also private sector companies such as Lockheed Martin and AT&T. One organization he worked with was the International Social Security Association in Geneva, Switzerland. In the six years that he worked with them, he developed and taught an international course on Information Communications Technology held in Turin, Italy for one week each summer. IT executives from around the world attended to learn about executive leadership and implementation of IT solutions to help their countries address the challenges they were facing.

The company also facilitated workshops in Geneva, Switzerland, Seoul, Korea and Barbados, where regional government IT experts would gather to discuss local issues and solutions. Interestingly, the workshop for Caribbean nations in Barbados in 2017 included discussions of IT support for disaster recovery. During that conference, Hurricane Irma hit the islands and caused massive destruction. Bill was safe since Barbados wasn't hit, but the executives had to hurry back to their countries to implement the strategies they had just discussed.

Bill found all these overseas experiences to be fascinating opportunities to collaborate with experts from around the world. There were also side benefits. He and his wife were able to enjoy travel, another one of his passions. In all he has visited 58 countries. In addition, he has formed relationships with international executives with whom he keeps in touch. He loves hearing about their progress.

Then, after successfully navigating this rewarding career, Bill retired a second time. Now he is president of This Point Forward, a nonprofit that helps retirees find ways to use their skills and experience in the next phase of their lives. This organization was the dream of executive directors Pat Sasse and Mary Thompson who wanted to help future and current retirees with transitions strategies beyond the usual advice about financial planning. They approached Bill for assistance in starting the nonprofit. He now serves as president and chairman of the board which sets policies, deals with legal issues, and oversees planning, and implementation.

The original plan was to meet with individuals and groups to assist them in identifying skills and interests, setting goals, connecting them with training in new skills needed, and helping them find work or volunteer activities that would be a good fit and/or advising them about launching their own businesses. However, the paperwork for establishing This Point Forward was completed in early 2020 just as the pandemic hit. They had to go to plan B which has involved online workshops which have been well received. They hope to soon transition to in-person mentoring and connecting individuals with appropriate organizations in their database. Most of these services are free. Some workshops require a nominal fee to cover costs. Information about upcoming events can be found at [this-point-forward.org](http://this-point-forward.org). Of his work in this organization, Bill says, "I am helping folks who are facing the journey I had to traverse find their passions, opportunities, and practical skills, in achieving their goals."

Volunteerism has also been a part of Bill's retirement. He has served his local community by chairing and advising local community associations. In addition, he has shared his time and expertise with Howard County Public Schools. He sees this as payback for what he describes as the terrific education his children received there. Through his career, post retirement businesses, and volunteerism. Bill Gray has led and continues to lead a productive, rewarding, and very interesting life.

*Kathi Edwards is a retired elementary school science lab teacher. She spends her time volunteering at a pregnancy center, teaching Sunday school, playing handbells and singing in her church choir.*