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Sebastian de Assis hopes to tap into a rapidly growing market for aging services with his new business, Elder Empowerment Edge.

You're only as old as you feel

New business aims to change attitudes about aging

By **BENNETT HALL**
CORVALLIS GAZETTE-TIMES

On the wall of his office, Sebastian de Assis has a poster of a well-muscled man with his shirt off, looking fit, self-confident and ready for life's challenges.

The man in the photo is 67 years old.

That's the sort of image de Assis wants to project with his new business, Elder Empowerment Edge.

"People have this misconception of the elderly as frail and fragile, and it's not true at all," he said.

"I like to say 'my elders' instead of 'the elderly,'" he added. "To me, 'elderly' has a connotation of frailty whereas 'elders' has a connotation

AT A GLANCE

WHAT: Elder Empowerment Edge
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of wisdom, of power."

De Assis is a longtime educator and former executive director of the Grace Center for Adult Day Services who serves on the boards of the Senior Citizens Foundation of Benton County and the Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties as well as the Senior Services Advisory Council of the Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments.

He describes his new venture as an aging services agency. Elder Empowerment Edge offers a variety of consulting, educational and support services aimed at helping people make the most of

their lives as they age and helping society do a better job of accommodating a rapidly expanding senior population.

"It's such a critical social issue, and people are not paying attention to it for some reason," he said. "In our utilitarian society, as we get older and become less productive, don't consume as much, we're kind of forgotten."

De Assis aims to change some of those attitudes, both by helping individuals plan for their own needs as they grow older and by doing group presentations for businesses, organizations and

government agencies.

He acknowledges that he's taking a leap of faith by launching a business in an emerging field, but he's convinced that the demographics of an aging population will drive demand for his services.

For inspiration, he looks back on his first job, working in his father's geriatric nursing home in Brazil, where he developed personal relationships with many of the residents.

"They used to come to me and say, 'Sebastian, life goes by so quickly! When I got to be 40-something, I suddenly understood what they meant,'" said de Assis, now 56.

"I'm not only working in terms of the elderly, I'm working for all of us who are heading in that direction. I want to empower them as well!"