

# Fountain of Youth Discovered!

*by Patrick Springer*

What if I told you that we don't have to grow old? What if I told you that there was way to hang onto that feeling of discovery and amazement that many of us have experienced at some point in our lives? What if I told you that this could be done by anyone, regardless of age, and for next to nothing? What if I told you that this has been around for decades?

I'm not talking about any type of hormone injection here, I'm simply talking about the ability to feel young all the time! I'm simply talking about the never ending quest for knowledge that stimulates the brain in a way that makes the body feel alive and invigorates the soul, much like the wonder of a young child.

It turns out, that this was thought of long ago by some people that you may have heard of: the imaginative industrialist Henry Ford and the famous physicist Albert Einstein. It goes without saying that these two pioneers of their respective fields certainly left their marks on our culture.

Henry Ford was quoted as once saying "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young." It's that simple. Get that feeling of youth by continuing to acquire knowledge or learn new skills. With all we now know about the brain and how it needs exercise to remain sharp, it would seem that he was ahead of his time with this claim.

Einstein thought along the same lines, and said "Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death." As a teacher, I make every attempt to drive home to my students that a person's learning should never cease. Today's world changes quickly, so you must be flexible and knowledgeable in many areas to be successful. In other words, you must be a lifelong learner.

I would be willing to bet that most teachers share the unique characteristic of considering themselves to be lifelong learners. I know I consider myself to be one. Whether it's figuring out how to troubleshoot my old garden tiller or experimenting with new technologies in the classroom, I find that I am always learning something new. In fact, as the 2013-2014 school year approaches, I am already exploring ways to incorporate social media into my biology classes. In addition to posting my usual classroom calendar in the front of my room, I am going to add that to my class website, and then make use of Twitter. I envision posting tweets about important upcoming dates for quizzes and tests, as well as being able to summarize a lesson or important concept to help students focus on the day's learning objective(s).

Adding more content to my website and posting biology related tweets will be additional ways to communicate with my students outside the traditional school day, and help keep my subject matter on the forefront of their minds. Twitter is going to be brand new for me, but I think it could

be a great tool to help keep a few more students on track.

As I venture into incorporating social media into my daily educational routine, I am sure that I'll have a few bugs to work out along the way. One of my first challenges is going to be figuring out a creative way to condense detailed science concepts into short, 140 character tweets. At the same time, this could be a cool assignment for my students, creating summative tweets about specific terms or concepts within a unit or chapter. I'll have to come up with a system or schedule for sending out these tweets as well. As an example, I might use the end of the school day for reminders about studying for a test or quiz, whereas just about any time would work for messages that are not necessarily time sensitive. After all, when school is out and students arrive at their lockers before heading home, the first thing that gets checked is the cell phone.

This upcoming school year, I plan on learning to effectively use Twitter to connect with this generation of upcoming learners. This is going to keep me young, according to Henry Ford anyway. If social media fades into the technological graveyard, then it will be on to learning the next latest and greatest communicative technology tools. I will never stop learning. I have already accomplished many chores around the house (and saved some cash) because I was able to teach myself via the world wide web. I've repaired automobiles, computers, a dryer, and a garbage disposal. My wife and I even created a vibrant vegetable garden, which says a lot for two people who have had a real hard time keeping houseplants alive. As a homeowner, the web has been a great investment!

The next step is to continue moving forward. It's going to remain important to stay flexible and possess the ability to adapt quickly in an ever changing world. The best way to do that....keep visiting that fountain of youth that is intellectual growth. Let the learning continue!