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## County is aging, like nation

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Ron Crouch is the kind of speaker who talks as quickly as he thinks, and he even warns listeners: "That's the way you'll feel when I get done — overwhelmed."

The data expert can spit out numbers and demographics as quickly as maintenance trucks spew salt before a winter storm. And that's why listening to him at the Oldham County Chamber of Commerce's Business and Biscuits meeting on Thursday, Feb. 12, was so interesting.

"I think we've got some big issues out there as a country we have to address," Crouch, who oversees the Kentucky State Data center, told the group of around 40 business professionals.

They had gathered to hear him discuss the demographics of the area, the effects of the economy and the future of the state's workforce during the Chamber's first Biscuits meeting of the year.

He handed out information sheets backing up his thoughts:

In Oldham, there aren't many 20-somethings, and a reason is "they can't afford to live here," Crouch said.

The population of residents 50 and older is growing in Oldham, like in the rest of the country. In 1990, Oldham had 1,616 residents age 50 to 54. In 2015, that number is expected to be 5,760.

On the other hand, the number of people age 30 to 34 in Oldham has stayed about the same, with 3,260 in 1990 and 3,442 expected in 2015.

Crouch has an even bigger vision of the nation, which he says needs to rethink how it works because while baby boomers are aging, not as many children are being born. That means the work force will be changing, he said.

"The only thing that will drive population growth is longevity, not fertility," he said. "We're going through a major revolution demographically."

Eight out of 10 people today live beyond age 65, which is a leap from years ago, when the majority of people did not live that long, Crouch said.

And while people are living into their 80s now, many are still retiring in their 40s and 50s.

"We've got a lot of people in this state, in this nation, who are retiring before half-time" in their 40s, he said.

One of the many community impacts involves development, Crouch said. That aging group is going to

be looking for homes that can accommodate them, with bedrooms and bathrooms on the first floor.

We also need to rethink the concept of what "old" is, Crouch said.

As I see it, that means we could all be younger than we realize. And that's an idea I can definitely support.

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