Beat: Technology

Seniors and Technology

Older citizens are getting connected.

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USPA NEWS - At the age of 53, I am realizing that I am not as up on technology as I thought I was. The number of older citizens browsing the Internet is increasing and they are becoming savvy with smartphones.

In a recent visit to the doctor, while in the waiting area, I observed several senior citizens using smartphones. I was surprised, because I do not have a cellphone quite that fancy and I am 53. I am not old enough to be categorized a senior yet, but I am a baby boomer. Don´t get me wrong, I am up on technology or I think I am. I have been on the Internet since it was developed back in the early 1980´s. My computer back then, a TRS80 Model 3, had a modem and I had service through Compuserve for $20 a month; a lot of money back then. Currently I use a HP mini laptop and have wireless Internet from a cable provider. The only thing I really need a cellphone for is to make and receive calls and to text. Some older seniors are advancing with technology and it is doing more than keeping them in touch with their families.

The numbers of seniors using the Internet and having cellphones are increasing. A Pew Research Center study shows that 59% of seniors get online and use the Internet. Additionally, the study reported 77% of elderly adults have cellphones. This was an increase of eight percent between the years of 2012 and 2014. In an article from Shield My Senior, they mention that “technology and seniors can be a major recipe for maintaining independent living well into the golden years.“ Elders describe having a smartphone as “freeing“ and it supplies a way for them to connect with their loved ones and friends. They are now using e-mail, Facebook, and even Skype. These technological advances have become easy to use and operate, providing seniors numerous benefits.

Using social media allows older individuals a way to find news and information they normally would not have access to through television or radio. The Internet alone opens up a vast world of knowledge that can stimulate a seniors´ mind, ever encouraging learning of new subjects or topics they could have otherwise not been made aware of. Pew Research Center states 34% of Americans ages 65 and up say they use Facebook and Twitter, with younger seniors (65-69 years old) also owning tablets and e-readers, in addition to smartphones. The Center started tracking Internet use in early 2000, when only 14% of seniors said they went online. As of 2016, 67% of older individuals are getting connected.

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