

SeniorNet®

Puget Sound Computer Learning Center

Where skilled volunteer seniors teach seniors to use, enjoy computers

May 1, 2005, Vol. 6; Issue #5; Mail: PMB 705, 15600 NE 8th, Suite B-1, Bellevue, WA 98008-3958

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By PHIL SCHEIER, Editor

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Openings still available for May 24th class series MAYBE NOT A BEST SELLER, BUT WRITING LIFE STORY A LEGACY TO YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS

Her interest in writing life stories started for SENIORNET VICE PRES. DELORES DAVIS many years ago. It was when her then four-year-old son asked her about his father, who had long battled illness and then passed away. "This son didn't know or remember about his father's life and struggles and I wrote the first book to tell him." Davis then went on to write other books on various aspects of her life and family. These came full circle when -in addition to her many other SeniorNet activities--she launched her popular life writing classes at SeniorNet.

"I heard so much from others about my stories that I thought others might like to do the same for their families," she recalled. "There were classes on doing this in the community but none that combined using computer skills and techniques along with writing their stories. We had classes on genealogy or family history but none of writing about your life-so I created the class, Next Steps"

Openings are still available for the classes starting May 24th, she said. All that is needed is a working knowledge of computers and the Microsoft Word program.

A casual visit to the final class of the earlier seven-week course reaffirmed how typically active seniors just keep pushing along with their enthusiasms. Each of the students was actively in varying degrees, getting the words down on paper in one form or another. Davis reviewed the various approaches. In many cases the students wanted to leave the memories of their childhood and later years for their kids and grandkids. For others, it was the satisfaction of creating a story, or a book, to read and re-read for their own satisfaction.

One of the students, BETTY MIKEL, in explaining her delight in taking the writing class, said "I have five children, and they're now all scattered and out of the house. They think I'm sitting at home doing nothing. But with this writing project, I'm keeping very busy and enjoying it all, thanks to these classes." Another student, DAVID DANCE, described his written outline for his life story, distributing copies of the outline to the others. The outline briefly listed the many key

points in his life, such as high school and college before WWII, dating his wife JEAN, also a student, graduation from college, marriage and starting his business career.

He had served in WWII and written home regularly. His mother had saved all those letters. Dance was recalled for service in Korea. Lots of letters to use as a resource in his writing, he said. Other tips on collecting material for life stories were offered by other students, with Davis noting with pleasure, "This is a very interactive class." And since this was the final of the seven sessions, Dance distributed chocolates to instructor Davis and his fellow students. A great finish for this particular class session. MOLLY BRACKETT, who with PAT BRAUN, were assisting the instructor, commented: "I always get a charge out of being in our classroom with all these other active seniors."

EXPANDING CLASSES SPUR NEED FOR INSTRUCTORS: BALSLEY, OTHERS CITE FUN OF TEACHING SENIORS

With a sharp registration upsurge by seniors determined to master beginners' computers basic-basics, or polish and expand their computer skills, SeniorNet has put up the Welcome sign for computer-savvy senior volunteers to expand its pool of teachers and assistants. This includes current members, non-members, or retirees with businesses-experienced computer backgrounds.

Featured speaker at the monthly meeting, BOB BALSLEY, himself a long-time instructor, warmed up to the subject with the rhetorical question: "So you want to be an instructor?"

He spelled out the key roles of instructors and assistants, with each assigned a specific role to help students learn:

"Teachers teach. Students learn!"

The major focus is to have teachers teach the basic subjects to the entire class, Balsley said. "Teacher's can't focus on only one student who may need additional one-on-one help. That's what assistants do." Thus in fairness to all students and to make sure the entire class isn't held up by one or two students, the assistants are there in the classroom to go to the side of the student needing just that little bit of additional help. Assistants remain in the rear of the classroom, ready to go to the side of a student who signals for fast immediate help. Students only have to look to the rear, or raise a hand.

Balsley stressed the instructors and assistants are the key persons in what he described as "a fun job, a hard job."

The history of SeniorNet shows that many former students with developed computer skills have gone on to become instructors. The first step, to get a future teacher up to speed and get the feel of the job, is to become an assistant.

What's a first move in deciding to step forward and share in the fun of helping other seniors master and enjoy computers?

"Pick a topic in which you are interested," Balsley said, such as word processing, Windows XP operating system, keeping in contact with the world via email, such as Outlook Express etc., surfing the world-wide Internet, among just a few subjects.

"Then become an assistant, and in time start off with teaching part of a class." Most important, he said, is to have "the willingness to try." The enthusiasm and willingness to eventually help the class-in effect-- teach itself.

Other key points for future instructors and assistants: "Keep it simple. Stress practice" of what is being taught.

Another veteran instructor, HARVEY SHEDD, added: "Teaching is really fun. Not like a paid teacher.' As a volunteer instructor or assistant, there is much enthusiasm in helping other seniors wanting to learn, learn, he said. "It's a fun project, and it is really fun."

The coordinator for Instructors and Assistants Training program, GORDON YOUNG, told the April 19 membership meeting "We need more volunteers for the basic computer classes, both instructors and assistants." He reiterated the joy of achievement for teachers as students learn and progress. Also needed are instructors in Windows XP, he said. He also urged instructors to put their class material in the computer for future reference by others. "This is a great resource for all instructors." For details on joining the teaching team, send an email to: senior@seniornetps.org.

SELECT, THEN DO? This large terse sign placed in a conspicuous place high atop the front of the SeniorNet classroom at the Phantom Lake Elementary School, carries a compelling reminder to students: It reminds and reminds yet again those taking the various computer courses, to remember what the volunteer instructors keep telling them: And that is the need to select, or highlight text and other material before changing, copying or moving text. Otherwise, nothing will happen. Like trying to drive a car without first starting the engine.

For example, if you want to change the look, size or color of the type (font), you first have to select (background is black with type appearing white) it by sweeping the cursor over the specific area, while holding down the left mouse button. INSTRUCTOR GORDON YOUNG, who is also committee Coordinator for Instructors and Assistants, is among those constantly pushing the slogan on students as part of their training.

Next lab Tuesday, May 10th 9:30-Noon
POPULAR FREE COMPUTER LAB SESSIONS
SET A NEW RECORD FOR ATTENDANCE

SeniorNet's free computer lab sessions here set a new attendance record at the April 26th open house, according to PRES. ADELLA GRANGER. By 11 am that morning, some 28 visitors, members and non-members, had signed in with questions. They came seeking-and got-- help on a computer problem, whether trying to smooth out their email operation, travel the internet, get rid of a virus problem, polish up an operating technique, how to add memory-whatever. Two

came in with their computers. One walked in carrying his laptop. The other wheeled in a shopping cart which held his desktop computer. He wanted to know what would be needed to upgrade the computer to handle newer, faster programs. It was his wife's computer and she really, really liked the way it handled, and wanted to keep that particular computer, he said.

One of the great innovations by SeniorNet of Puget Sound are the specially scheduled free computer lab sessions, open to all, members and non-members. Computer-wise instructors are there for one-on-one consults with those seeking help or guidance on some aspect of computer operations. Bring in your questions and then sit down at the computer to try out the answer. Reminder: Upcoming lab sessions this month are scheduled for Tuesdays, May 10, 24 and 31, with all lab sessions 9:30 am-Noon. At the final April lab session, Granger welcomed the arrivals, had them sign in, and then introduced them to one of the instructors expert on that particular problem. Sometimes the visitor might have to wait a few minutes until that instructor was finished with an earlier arrival. During very busy sessions, in order to properly serve all attending the lab session, instructors may be limited in time spent with one person.

The laptop owner in short order was sitting down with INSTRUCTOR RAY FRENCH, at one of the rear tables, the computer open, going over some problems. A short time later, INSTRUCTOR BOB BALSLEY was sitting down at the table with the desktop computer and its owner. Some discussion, then Balsley opened up the computer and began checking the interior equipment.

Another interesting sight at Tuesday's free lab class was HAL MOZER, long-time instructor and one of the team which created and maintains our SeniorNet web site. Just returned from a lengthy journey through Greece and other countries, with his wife, SUE, there was Hal busy working with someone needing help, as he always does at these sessions. And sitting two rows behind him was a newcomer also working with a lab visitor. Except this person who appeared too young to easily qualify as a senior, although he certainly knew computers. This writer checked him out. It seems when Hal works, everyone in his family works, including his visiting son-in-law from New Jersey. Especially when the visiting son-in-law, MARTY BLOOMENTHAL, an architect in Princeton, N.J., is also a computer guru.

At his firm, Hiller Associates, he is head of specifications and has been a national leader in computerizing building materials and construction specifications. He also has become a self-trained expert in PowerPoint presentations in connection with his work. Marty is married to Hal's oldest daughter, ANNE. The couple has two children in college, one of whom is graduating from Williams College is June. A reminder: These Free Computer Lab Classes are open to all, members and non-members!

OUR ALWAYS BUSY MEMBERS: Take the husband-and-wife team of JOE AND VI PONTECORVO, members also of Friends of the Library in Kirkland helping the library prepare for its big fund-raising book and software sale at the library, Saturday, May 7th from 10-3. There will be a large variety of old and new books, along with some donated software programs available. Joe stressed those who are members of the Friends, will be eligible to get first crack at the sale the previous evening, Friday, May 6, from 6-8 pm. Joe also conducts

occasional computer classes at the library which recently underwent renovations. As a result, the bank of available computers for library users was greatly increased.

YET ANOTHER REMINDER AGAINST SCAMMERS! Amazingly, despite the many warnings against giving out personal information, including bank account numbers, Social Security numbers etc. because they received a request via email from what they thought was a legitimate source, many gullible people are still being victimized. The warning is simple: Don't ever give out personal information either via email, or on the phone, to anyone claiming to be a legitimate source, such as a bank, or credit organization, wanting to allegedly clear your credit rating, or whatever. Most folks just hang up. Period. Just phone your bank to report the call.

SENIORNET WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS, UNITING COUSINS

For the third time in the past year, the national SeniorNet organization has again featured local news stories based either on an article originally published in the Puget Sound SeniorNet newsletters, both print and online, or having one written specifically for it. The recent National SeniorNet Online Newsletter includes a special article written by our own HELEN HESKETH, public relations director here, and our immediate past president.

Hesketh wrote the article at the invitation of the national online newsletter editor. She detailed the highly successful public relations program which resulted in several large news stories, including photos of our classroom activities, programs and students in all area leading papers, and local radio coverage. Also used in the PR were a number of ads, spelling out learning opportunities for seniors wishing to master computers. The link to the article in the first page of the current national online newsletter, under "Learning Centers" reads: " Learning Centers: Learn about the great publicity efforts that have paid off for our [Puget Sound WA Learning Center](#)." Other publicity moves include participating in senior fairs with computers and instructors. Another highly successful tool are the many free Lab Sessions on certain Tuesday mornings, open to all, members and non-members, with instructors on hand to answer questions, using computers to drive the lessons home.

But word-of-mouth recommendations also play a big role in public relations. Explained Hesketh in her article: "The other wonderful source of Public Relations is each of our members talking with others, telling them how great we are and what they have learned by taking classes and being involved, recruiting them for classes and to volunteer in our center."

The first national mention came when the national newsletter picked up an article from our newsletter about veteran member and volunteer, HARRY SULLY, written by PHIL SCHEIER. The second article in the national online newsletter was based on a true story in our Puget Sound newsletter, also by Scheier. And here is the rewrite by the national staff of the original local article, illustrating the long reach of the national and world-wide reach of SeniorNet:

THE LONG REACH OF SENIORNET

"By way of SeniorNet's print newsletter, Newline, our web site and Learning Centers, SeniorNet facilitates, sometimes with unexpected results, the formation of connections that support older adults' use of digital technologies for continuing lifelong learning, personal development and sharing of experience.

"Two long-lost cousins, 3,000 miles apart, who had not seen each other for almost 45 years, were reunited -by email-thanks to the far reach of SeniorNet, their shared passion for computers and the closely read SeniorNet newsletter, Newline. Cousin One, a Ph.D. clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst, became interested in the possibilities of the computer for helping seniors develop new enthusiasms and skills and a greater sense of achievement and growth. (Because of her clinical work, her name is not being used.) The doctor started working on her theory as a SeniorNet volunteer and later received a private \$2.3 million grant to expand her work.

"Cousin Two, Philip R. Scheier, long-time member of the Puget Sound SeniorNet Learning Center, wrote a profile (about veteran member HARRY SULLY, now deceased) that was picked up and printed in Newline. In New York City, while reading her new issue of Newline, Cousin One saw the name Scheier. Unsure if this was the cousin she had briefly met so long ago on the East Coast, she contacted him and the email reunion was on, thanks to SeniorNet," the national article stressed.

SO YOU'RE A SENIOR? SO WHAT? Just in case you are planning to interview for a day job, or launch a new career, there is a website with lots of tips on preparing for the event, including what to wear and other employment tips. Featured in the About website, is an URL which provides lots of needed facts to help land that job. In addition, there is an onscreen video with lots more tips. The gateway to a hopefully promising future career, if you just can't stand being a happy, relaxed retiree, is <http://home.about.com/style/video/dressingjobinterview.htm?ap=1>. Of course, if this new day job interferes with your daytime learning, teaching and other always important and stimulating SeniorNet activities, Fah-Get It!

IS MICROSOFT LOOKING FOR YOUR HELP? You'll never know if you qualify unless you submit your application for its ongoing usability study of current and future products. No, no pay, but Microsoft does promise that those who are accepted and take part in a session will be offered a gift from a variety of the company's computer products. You are asked to fill out a lengthy quiz online relating to your current interest and operation of computers, programs, and skill levels. Interested? Just click on the following URL:
<http://www.microsoft.com/usability/jump1.htm>.

WEB SITES WITH SPECIAL HELP FOR SENIORS. A comprehensive assortment of special information for seniors ranging from facts on health, food, activities, fun through legal help, estate planning, facts on Medicare and Medicaid are included in the following senior web sites: www.thirdage.com; www.aarp.org; www.seniorlaw.org; www.elderweb.org; www.elderhostel.org; www.matureconnection.com. Please note different extensions.

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YOUR SENIORNET DATE BOOK FOR MAY:

Tuesday May 3rd at 11:30 am

**No-Host Kaffee Klatch, Meet, Make New Friends
Crossroads-Bellevue Mall Food Circus, 156th Ave. NE, at NE 8th, Bellevue**

Tuesday May 17th, at 10 am

**Monthly Membership Meeting
New Hope Ministries Church
15760 NE 4th St., Bellevue
(Just south of Crossroads Mall)**

Tuesday, May 10, 24 and 31, at 9:30 am-Noon

**Free May SeniorNet Lab Session
Open to all: Members, Non-Members and the Just Curious
SeniorNet Classroom, Phantom Lake Elementary School, Bellevue
1050 160th Ave. NE, Bellevue
Computer questions? Sit down with a volunteer expert
For a hands-on computer solution**

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NOTE: While all computer-operating tips come from usually reliable sources, readers are reminded you use them at YOUR OWN RISK. Again, in case you have friends who are online, and may be interested in taking classes to expand their skills, please forward this newsletter to them by clicking Forward when this message is displayed. Then enter their address in the To box, and click Send. We welcome your brief personal news items and article items, suggestions, sent to the editor at b26flyer@comcast.net. If you wish to receive this free monthly newsletter, update your email address or unsubscribe, rush your full name, phone and email address to pugetsnet6@qwest.net.

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