

BEYOND THE LIVING ROOM IN SECONDS

A Message To The Elderly

By Eleni Fakotakis, Director of SSHQ

Is it difficult to keep up with the modern world? Do you feel that the world is strange and too fast-paced? Yes, it is true, people are capable of doing a lot more than they did 30 years ago or during the time you were growing up. Business is conducted on-line, marketing is done on-line, people socialize on-line, they purchase on-line, they watch their favorite movies and listen to their favorite music on-line, they read books on-line without even setting foot in a library, they store their photos and personal information on-line and do not use photo albums, they basically have any and all information on their finger tips without looking at an encyclopedia or even leaving their living room. Most people around you are always connected to social media sites and communicating often with many people at once and not only one person at a time anymore. They find out what their friends are doing without picking up the phone.

You may remember people arguing with you, they used to say, **“We will do things much faster, accomplish more, thereby reducing the work-week to four days instead of five! We will be able to spend more quality time with our families!”** Everyone today knows that this is not what actually happened. In fact quite the opposite became true. People are expected to produce more, communicate more to stay on top of things. They end up working all the time (if they wish to) because they no longer are confined to an office, your children seem to be much busier than you were, they can work almost as effectively at home, in a plane, in a café, etc. Or they socialize all the time (if they do not fight the temptation). You have no doubt seen your grand-children clicking away at their iphone, when they come to visit you. Let’s face it, this seems crazy, right? Computers, the internet, it seems to be an addiction!

Although it may be an addiction and/or a love-hate relationship, some people have realized that they cannot do without it, that the pluses far out-way the negative and is now an important part of life, as long as it is controlled to one’s benefit, to the extent where quality of life is still considered important and are focusing on what matters most and do not allow technology to control or distract them. As long as one figures out what this ideal balance is, so that they live in their techno-crazy-world and still reserve quality time with their significant other, family and close friends and for themselves and their well-being. It is after all up to the adults to teach children the proper usage of technology. You at least would agree, that this could be alright, if this technological craziness was used with some sort of measure.

Life isn’t what it used to be. As one ages, physical abilities, autonomy and energy decrease. When it is snowy and slippery outside, you do not feel like leaving your house but you still need your groceries or to go to the bank. Perhaps you have relied on your family members to help out on really cold days. The percentage of seniors is expanding relatively rapidly, according to recent statistics, elderly aged 65 and older, make up 16 % of the Canadian population. This percentage is equal to the rate of children aged 15 years or less. It is difficult for some seniors to keep up with technology and communication advances over time, as a result, many seniors find it difficult to keep up to date with current events, personal business, family matters, family members (especially the young members of the family), as a result, some become increasingly more isolated in time. Is this slowly happening to you? Are you feeling out of touch with your family?

In an attempt to curb this isolation and bridge this gap between seniors and their families, it is important to learn at least the basics about information technology. If you are a senior and value keeping in touch with community and family, you may want to learn the basics about how a lap top or Tablet functions, or even the cell phone a family member gave you. This will help you keep considerably more in contact with your family members all over the world, your friends, community and with what is happening around the world.

With all the different devices on the market today, we know that choosing the right one for you can be very confusing at first, as you do not know how to start or what gadget you may want to buy exactly. The best way around this after asking your grand-children or children, is to take a computer basics program, where you have the opportunity to try out different devices and then choose what you feel more comfortable with.

Many good computer programs for the elderly today, encourage learning in a social setting, in a group at interesting locations, such as in a library or in a variety of different community centers, with other seniors of different origins. This way, you not only learn about computers, you will also make friends with other seniors in a similar situation as you.

A good computer program will show you and encourage you to navigate very useful sites on the internet that can help you with your everyday concerns, such as:

- opening your own email account
- how to purchase items on-line
- how to read and view world and local news
- visiting other parts of the world without leaving your living-room
- visiting sites that explain how to avoid elder abuse
- how to avoid financial fraud
- how to save your family photos and to view them whenever you want and wherever you want
- learning about Alzheimer's
- finding local community based clinics
- finding a doctor's telephone number or address that you have misplaced and cannot find
- how to get food delivered at home or to do your banking on-line in order to save time or to avoid going out when it is cold or slippery outside
- Watching your favorite movies
- how to purchase or listen to your favorite music
- finding the answer to any question you may have
- speak with friends in other parts of the world or in Montreal
- registering on a dating siteand the list is truly endless.

At SSHQ, with our Computer and Tablet training program that we call, "BEYOND THE LIVING ROOM IN SECONDS", we encourage you to empower yourselves, as much as possible and to continue to stay in touch with the world around you. We encourage you to be more independent and to stay connected to your community, friends and family. We have the expertise to help you make this progress. We have been offering computer classes for seniors for at least eleven years. Our computer classes are very popular, five years ago we only had one class at a time, now they are so much in demand that we have a selection of levels, offered at different times during the week. We are operating our classes with very new lap top computers and Tablets. This project is funded in part by the **Government of Canada under the New Horizons for Seniors**. The courses are offered in our offices and in other community-at-large spaces. Our computer and Tablet classes will keep you socially active as you will meet other seniors who are also in the class. With the variety of levels we offer, you will learn about how to effectively

communicate by email, you will learn to use Skype and social media and this exposure will open new worlds for you and provide you with experiences that you never imagined that you would have in your life-time. This will change the way you view yourself, you will feel in control, more independent, you will feel great about your new found skills and accomplishments and in time, you will be able to have increased contacts with family members and friends, you will not feel left out anymore.

This year, we had 55 elderly graduates finishing our computer classes, this is an increase over last year! Of these, 35 were female and 20 were male. Congratulations to all, students and instructors! Most of our graduates want to take the subsequent levels as well. Just read what one of our graduates said, when we originally approached her to register for a computer course, she said, **“Me? I will learn computers at my age?”** When we asked her to evaluate the program on the last day of classes, this is what she wrote,

“Thank you so much for this course! I feel more free. If I want to know something, I just look it up. I communicate more regularly with family and friends in Greece, I do not feel so alone anymore! I really liked our teacher, she explained everything with a smile and patience and made the course fun.”

A male participant in the class, stated,

“I know what is happening around the world and in my neighborhood, I made new friends, I am happier, this experience has changed my life, I cannot believe how I lived without using a computer and the internet before, when my grand-children come over we watch things together that we discover on the internet, I am a new person!”

If you have already learned how to use computers or to use a Tablet, we need you to help us teach other elders who are just starting. This is a great way to practice and to always remember what you have learned. If you have never been exposed to computers and would like to try and see how you do and if you will like it, remember it is never too late to start or to learn!

We offer our courses in Laval or Montreal. Our classes are ongoing. Contact us for additional information or to register. Contact Mary at 514-738-2421 local 121 or Vassiliki at 450-688-2091.