



# HOME SWEET HOME NEWS

## COMPUTER SAVVY

www.home-sweet-home-news.com

homesweethomenews@g-mail.com

A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO HELPING SENIORS STAY IN THEIR OWN HOMES

Copyright © January 11, 2010, 1:00 pm

Senior Edition, No. 20

### EDITORS' NOTE

The mission of this newsletter is to help seniors live longer and more enjoyably in their own home or apartment. Larry and Anne Alexander are co-editors of Home Sweet Home News. Some 41 churches, senior centers, libraries, retailers, etc. get this free newsletter, plus an unknown number of people from our free web page ([www.home-sweet-home-news.com](http://www.home-sweet-home-news.com)) for present and past issues.

Thanks to Pastor Gary Schroeder of Luther Memorial Lutheran Church who suggested this important topic.

First author Molly McClintock is shown in the picture to the right. She received a B.S. degree in communications from Cornell University. Her professional work experience has been primarily in industrial safety consulting. Since 2004, in semi-retirement, she has been teaching and tutoring new and intermediate computer users through the Christiansburg, Virginia Sen-

ior Center. Editor Larry Alexander is second author.

This issue is designed to motivate seniors to learn to use a personal computer to do common electronic activities such as banking, purchasing food and household items, looking up information via the Internet, entertainment, and communicating with other people.



First author Molly McClintock enjoys teaching seniors how to use computers.

### THE TECHNOLOGICAL WHIRLWIND

Cell phones, digital cameras, GPSs, iPods, and computers with email, Facebook, Twitter, and You Tube. Does it make your head spin

and leave you feeling left behind in the technology juggernaut of the last decade?

You're not alone! Technology is moving so quickly it's hard for most of us to keep up. You can live without many of these gadgets, but don't miss out on some really helpful and inexpensive computer applications.

### DO YOU USE COMPUTERS?

If you already use a personal computer (PC), maybe you can think of a senior who doesn't know how to use a computer and be their coach to get them started.

### FREE DISC AVAILABLE TO YOUR GROUP

If your organization would like a free CD of all our first 20 issues on stairs, safety, driving, nutrition, exercise, delivery, hearing, mortgages, after surgery, depression, cooking, hobbies, a sweet home, home health, pets, cutting costs, exercise, senior safety, volunteering, and computers, call Larry Alexander at 1-540-951-8172.

---



---

## FOUR REASONS TO LEARN TO USE A COMPUTER

---

### 1. **Computers help you stay in touch with family and friends.**

Using e-mail, web pages, and web cameras with your computer's aid can help you communicate with friends and family members locally and across the globe, usually very inexpensively.

You'll impress your children, grandkids, find old friends, and keep up with family members everywhere.

Staying connected with others wards off loneliness and increases your sense of being connected.

### 2. **Computers keep you on top of news, weather, and almost any information.**

The Internet (or world wide web) offers you the latest information on any topic. You can read news from around the U.S. and the world, not like a daily newspaper, but whenever you want to. Many news sources you know of (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal) are constantly updated on the Internet.

Do you have a new medication that you want to read about its side effects? Want to check on the performance of your stock and mutual fund portfolio? Or how about finding out what hours your

local swimming pool is open? All this and millions of other bits of information are available in minutes by just turning on your computer.

### 3. **Computers can provide hours of entertainment.**

You've probably heard that doing crossword puzzles helps keep your brain sharp. The same is true about Sudoku, other puzzles, or your favorite game on the Internet, for just a monthly fee. You can even play a game of chess with your grandson online from another state.

One local senior put it, "I think games like Tetris and Mahjong help with hand-eye coordination." This same senior particularly enjoys the challenge of beating her previous best scores.

### 4. **Computers can keep your mind mentally alert.**

Whether you're interested in researching your genealogy, reserving a new book at your local library, or playing games, computers challenge you. They offer unending opportunities to stay mentally active and alert.

As Paul Duncan, resident of Pulaski County, Virginia, in his 80s put it, "I think using my computer has helped keep my mind reasonably sharp by keeping up with sports, current events and the weather."

In addition, learning and using various computer commands to perform various functions is good mental exercise in and of itself.

---



---

## HOW DO I GET STARTED

---

Several ways to get started on a computer include:

### 1. **Get a computer, plug it in, and do it by yourself.**

Not a good idea. If you try to use a personal computer without any outside help, it will be like trying to fly an airplane completely by your self. In both instances you will crash, to use adverse aerospace and computer terms.

### 2. **Take a formal class from a high school, community college, recreation center, library or senior center.**

In just one local senior center near where the authors live, computer classes are regularly offered for beginners in eight subjects. They are:

- Introduction to computers
- Internet/e-mail
- Holiday newsletter
- Mail merge
- Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- eBay buying

Molly McClintock teaches some of these classes which are also offered throughout the United States.

Formal classes offer a good, systematic way to learn how to use computers. A drawback is that there is just one teacher for a class of 10, 20 or more students. When you need help or your computer locks up, you may have to wait a while for help.

**3. Read a book about computers.** How about one of the following books:

- "PCs for Dummies" by Dan Gookin, 2009.
- "Computers for Seniors for Dummies" by Nancy Muir, 2010 (2nd edition).
- "Computing for Seniors in Easy Steps for the over 50s", by Sue Price, 2008.

These encyclopedic books have good information on basic computer topics. Larry, who knows far less about computers, than Molly, was really impressed with the Sue Price book which is shorter, colorful, cheaper, and easy to use as a reference book.

**4. Get a free CD from the Video Professor whose ads appear on television.** Call him at 1-800-680-1983 or another of his numbers seen on TV. You will pay for postage, but the introductory CD is free. Video Professor has over 60 lessons to choose from. Ask them to suggest just one free CD that is appropriate for your level of computer understanding.

**5. Ask a family member to help you get started.** Before getting help from your spouse, daughter, or grandson, remember how challenging driving lessons were that you either tried to give someone else or you received. Thus, you might not be able to learn from some family members you love dearly.

**6. Get started from a neighbor, an adult or an adolescent.** Some criteria for asking someone to help you for pay or free for home computer lessons include the following. They are:

- Close to your house to help with problems.
- Available on the phone for help.
- Patient personality.
- Able to explain ideas simply and clearly.
- Often home when you are.
- Uses a similar computer.

**7. Get someone who teaches computer classes to help you at home, or at least one on one.** This is what lead author Molly McClintock does because she and the Christiansburg Recreation/Senior Center believe it works. Seniors and just about anyone benefit from having help right then and there when they need it and have computer problems.

**8. Use a combination of**

**the above.** Maybe you get a basic book on computers and start reading it (number 3), sign up for a basic class from your high school or senior center (#2), send away for a free CD from Video Professor (#4), and look over a family member or neighbor's shoulder while they use their computer (#5 or #6). If you feel comfortable, maybe you'll ask them if you can sit down and have them watch you. If this combination is not enough, try getting a home teacher (#7) which does cost some money.

---



---

#### **WHICH TYPE OF COMPUTER TO BUY**

---



---

One decision to make is the choice of a desktop or a laptop computer. Desktop models are larger but generally less expensive. Their advantages include a bigger keyboard and keys, a larger monitor, and more computer memory.

The big advantage of owning a laptop is portability. Laptop computers can easily travel with you anywhere, even on vacation. Their disadvantages are that they can break, you can misplace them or they can get stolen.

Another decision to make is whether to buy a Mac (also called a Macintosh by Apple)

or a PC (personal computer).

PCs have several advantages. They are far more common both in the business world and at home. They tend to be less expensive, and lots of books have been written about using these computers.

Macs can trace their genealogical roots to the first PC ever developed by Steven Jobs. They have fewer problems like computer viruses and their users seem to be fanatical supporters of Macs.

Do a little research. Ask friends and family members who use computers what they recommend. Compare them at the store and ask the salesperson to give you the pros and cons. Be prepared to spend between \$500 and \$1,000 for a reliable name-brand computer system.

---

---

### **OTHER COMPUTER COSTS**

---

---

You should get a printer. For \$100 to \$150, you can buy a good quality combination printer, scanner, and copier. That lets you print things from your computer, scan documents, and make copies from the photocopier.

You can set up your printer and computer or ask a friend to help you. For a fee, a store employee like someone from the Geek Squad at Best

Buy, will set up your computer at home.

All computers will need periodic updating because software programs change. You'll need someone who can help you keep your computer in good working order.

Other computer related costs are ink and the monthly charge to access the Internet. Surprisingly, paper to print copies on is relatively cheap. Finally, you'll need to get an anti-virus program to protect against computer viruses.

Internet access can be made through telephones, TV cable, and satellite. Different areas have different options.

---

---

### **KEEP ON LEARNING HOW TO USE YOUR COMPUTER**

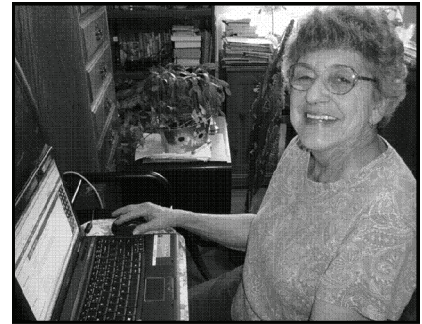
---

---

When you gain some computer skills, you may look like Chris King, 71, in the following photo. She has a big smile knowing she is making a long-distance call using her Skype program, web cam, and her computer for free! Plus she is able to see the person she is calling on her computer screen if they have similar equipment.

Editor Anne just got three web cams for Christmas presents and gave one to her son's family in Memphis. The other one went to her daugh-

ter's family in Montana. Now when Larry and Anne call their children, they can see them and do it for free.



Chris King, age 71, uses her Skype program and web cam on her personal computer to make free phone calls.

### **DISCLAIMER**

Before relying on information presented in this newsletter, consult with family and friends, especially those who use personal computers. Listen to their experiences getting started with computers and what advice they would offer you about becoming computer savvy.

### **HERE'S HOME SWEET HOME TO YOU**

*Larry & Anne Alexander*

This 20th issue of Home Sweet Home News, like others, is dedicated to Larry and Anne's mothers -- Evelyn Hill and Maxine Hermanson, -- and to our readers who have lost one or both parents.