

COOKEVILLE TIMES

UCHRA and White County Library Offer Generations on Line Program

By RANDY WILDER

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Years ago, when one entered a public library, all they expected to hear was the occasional rustle of a turning page. If the noise level got too high, they might get to hear the commanding 'shush' from an often misconceived, stern librarian. Today the sounds of a clicking mouse or taps on the keys of a computer keyboard are quite the norm. It is common for public libraries to have access to computers for public use and the White County Public Library is no exception. Any day of the week, a person can find someone using these computers. Some days they may get to witness the merging of two generations.

Digital Inclusion, a free program offered through the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency in conjunction with Senior Service America, Inc. uses computer software from Generations on Line to promote training for seniors in the use of basic computer skills.

"Our agency and Career Centers are always trying to find ways to help." said Phyllis Bennett, Executive Director of the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, "We are happy to announce this program, which provides an opportunity for people to enter into the Information Age with more confidence, has been funded for an additional year."

Charles West, UCHRA'S Older Worker Program Manager stated, "We appreciate our partnership with the White County Public Library and I am particularly thankful for Library Director, Cathy Farley's interest in assisting the seniors in White County."

Even though participation is targeted for senior citizens, there is no set age limit. The program designed to decrease the intimidation factor of using the internet, while teaching basic skills including web searches and email. It has no set course and instructions are given to students as they progress at their own pace. The use of games and searching for a student's interest are primarily the first steps used. After that, it's a whole new world.

Instructors, referred to as peer coaches, part of the Employment and Training's Title V program at UCHRA, work with students in a one-on-one setting.

Mr. Ken Smith of Sparta recently completed the Generations on Line computer skills program and had a Q and A session with UCHRA's Laura Spiecker, Coach Coordinator.

Q: How much computer experience did you have before taking this course?

A: I tried to take a course about 4 years ago, but because there were so many students (about 40), I was unable to learn anything useful.

Q: How did you learn about the Generations on Line Program?

A: From an article in the Sparta Expositor.

Q: What made you decide to try learning the computer again?

A: My six year old grandson has a computer. He came to me with a question and I had to admit that I didn't know anything about it.

Q: Can you tell me about your Generation on Line experience?

A: When I came to the library, I still wasn't sure that learning about the computer was a good idea. I had heard so much about identity theft and computer crashes, I was afraid to even touch the thing. I was about to leave and forget the whole thing, when Kris, the peer coach, sat down and showed me a few things assuring me I wouldn't hurt the computer. Then she explained how to surf the internet safely and showed me all the places I could visit. **Had it not been for the Generation on Line program with its easy to follow instruction and guides, I would most likely still be computer illiterate. I now enjoy using the computer for e-mails and especially searches. I have encouraged all my friends to sign up for the program.**

If you or someone you know could benefit from taking this course, please call the UCHRA office at 931-528-1127, extension 252, and ask to be signed up. Instructions are given on a one-on-one basis with two or three students at a time and are also available in Cumberland and Putnam Counties.

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