

Introduction

Previous research shows that older adults have an increased likelihood of becoming socially isolated or experiencing loneliness. Also, many older adults do not have experience with the technical literacy skills that are all but required in today's society. The Senior Social Networking (SSN) initiative was designed to combat social isolation and loneliness in older adults exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and uses a two-pronged approach: building the level of competency in navigating and mastering technology platforms, such as Zoom, and facilitating opportunities and events for participants to safely interact with others.

Logic Model

Outcomes

- Quantitative improvement in both computer proficiency and social interaction scores using the Luben Social Network.

Outputs

- 85% of participants will reliably perform 5/6 learning objectives.
- Participants will express qualitative improvements in quality of life and social interactions.

Activities

- Created personalized "*One-Pagers*"
- Created a shared resource folder for FAQs on everyday technologies
- Hosted weekly virtual learning sessions

Inputs

- Margaret and I accumulate more than 500 combined hours of volunteering
- Enrolled two cohorts of participants and recently recruited volunteers

Impact

Participants have improved their technical literacy as measured through pre-and post-computer proficiency surveys. In addition, they have increased the quantity and degree of close relationships, using their improved technical skills. Our participants are now able to communicate with their loved ones as they desire and have regained a sense of autonomy.



Margaret and Shirly



Weekly virtual learning session with Cohort 1



Marsha orders her first Uber

Critical Assessment

Malik and Margaret started with separate projects but recognized that they could better support the SSN project by combining their strengths. One initial challenge was finding participants, but Malik and Margaret found willing participants by partnering with CJFS (Collat Jewish Family Services). Another early challenge was following COVID safety measures; then, Malik went to Germany as a Fulbright Scholar. At this point, they realized the project would be most successful if they used their complementary strengths. Margaret contributed weekly 1:1 time with participants, while Malik focused his time on planning the lessons, gathering resources, and hosting virtual learning sessions. By acknowledging their limitations and strengths, leveraging strong organization and communication skills, and finding mutual benefit for their site partner, they have developed a successful project and are halfway through Cohort 2. CJFS continues to refer participants, and Margaret and Malik have partnered with graduate school professionals to sustain SSN another year and beyond!

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