

More seniors saying hi-tech hellos

Seniors learn modern tech to communicate with loved ones in a whole new way

BRITTON LARSON

Central Florida Senior

Seniors are exploring the world of technology more and more: six in 10 adults 65 or older go online and just a little less than half have their own high-speed internet connection, according to newly released data from the Pew Research Center. But it's not always easy for them to dive in. Most surveyed, 77 percent, said they'd need someone to help walk them through the process of using a new technology device.

Dealing with confusing pop ups, emailing, opening photo attachments of their newly arrived grandchildren, even turning a computer on can be a challenge for seniors who didn't grow up with this type of technology at their fingertips.

"The basic things that we take for granted," said Didier Nicholas, CEO and founder of Senior CompuCare.

Senior CompuCare, based in Longwood, offers technology training for seniors, by seniors, in their own homes. Trainers can teach them anything from basic computer knowledge like emailing and creating documents to joining Facebook or using a smartphone.

Virginia Thayer, 93, of Cas-

selberry, is one of those seniors.

"I have absolutely no intuition about what to do with these buttons," Thayer said. "When I grew up you just didn't go around pressing buttons because rather bad things happened, and so I've had to learn that it's not going to blow up the computer if I press the wrong button."

Thayer uses her computer to share poetry with her writing group in Massachusetts. But many times, she'd save her work — which the computer has made much easier to accomplish and edit with the



handy "delete" button — but then never knew where to find it again.

"There's a helplessness," said Shirley E. Mayor, senior vice president of operations and licensing for Central Florida for Senior CompuCare, "With se-



PHOTOS BY SARAH WILSON — CENTRAL FLORIDA SENIOR
Team Elliott instructor Joel Fuller teaches iPad basics at Serenades by Sonata in Longwood.

It's a rewarding job, Mayor said. She's even helped a grandfather see his daughter-in-law and grandson for the very first time by teaching him how to Skype, or video chat, with them.

That was the first Thayer had ever really heard about Skyping, and Mayor's story seemed to pique her interest; she might do it with her daughters who live in Texas and Illinois, she said. While technology is intimidating at times, Thayer said she sees the value in trying to understand it.

"It keeps you in touch with

the world and what's going on, and your friends and your family and just the whole world, because the whole world is using computers and if you want to live in it and understand it you have to be a part of it I think," she said. "The only alternative is to just withdraw into your rocking chair and I kind of avoid that."

It's also quite valuable for seniors who might be past retaining something new, but aren't beyond enjoying the experience technology can give. At the Oak View Assisted

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