Silver Surfers DIY Project

Civic Circle Area: Volunteer

The impact of COVID-19 continues to change our daily lives and routines, but volunteering and civic engagement are just as important as ever. This project can be modified to adhere to social distancing guidelines set by local and national authorities, to do virtually or to do at home and deliver via mail or drop off.

Over 90% of Americans use the internet and smartphones in their daily lives; however, 27% of older adults (ages 65 and older) do not use the internet at all and 47% do not use a smartphone. Help older adults learn how to use the internet and smartphones so they can find information.

Pre-Project Discussion:
- What will you teach? (How to use the internet, social media or applications on their phone)
- How many older adults do you want to help?
- What types of resources will you have access to? (Wi-fi, computers, laptops, tablets or smartphone)
- When and how often will you hold your tutoring sessions?
- Why is it important to help older adults learn how to use technology?
- How can using technology improve peoples' lives?

What You Need:
- A local computer lab in a library or community center
- Large Poster Paper
- Markers

Steps:
1. Obtain permission to host a tutoring session(s) at your local library or community center.
    - Work with the library or community center to schedule dates and times for your sessions.
    - For a socially-distanced alternative, work with a local senior or community center to host a virtual tutoring session.
2. Use flyers, posters and word of mouth to advertise your tutoring sessions.
    - Consider advertising in senior centers, community centers and places of worship. Be sure to include the date, time and registration information for your tutoring session(s).

Before the session:
1. Make sure the computers are working and that there is internet access.

2. Check out the links you and your students will be visiting prior to your session.

During the session:
1. Introduce yourself.
2. Ask students what they hope to achieve:
   - Take time to gather information about the knowledge your students already have about the internet and/or smart phones. This will give you an idea on how best to help them.
3. Once you're finished with your session, ask your students their feelings about the session.
4. Assign a short homework assignment and schedule a date for your next session.

Tutoring Tips:
- Be mindful of the computer terms you use: Older adults don't need to know all tech terms in order to use a computer or smartphone, so avoid tech talk unless absolutely necessary.
- Slow Down: Older adults are not in a rush -- you shouldn't be either. Assume that you are always going too fast. Take your cues from your tutees to slow down and repeat when necessary.
- Lastly, be patient and understanding! The computer is a new concept for many older adults and some websites are hard to navigate. Instead, use positive reinforcements.

Reflection Questions:
- Was this project successful? Why or why not?
- Next time, what can you do better to help your tutees?
- What impact do you think this project has had on the seniors in your community?