

# OCCOA

## OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING



Submitted by  
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RESEARCH &  
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*We Help.  
We Care*

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

### Home

- Board of Directors
- Agency Representatives
- FAQ
- Customer Service
- Staff
- Aging Resources
- Community Resource Directory
- Complaint Resolution Procedure

### Activities Calendar

**Adult Day Services - Otsego Haus**

### Advocacy Department

### Caregiver Support Group

### Creating Confident Caregivers Workshop

### Donations and Planned Gifts

- Make a Donation
- Make a Planned Gift
- Testimonials
- Donor Wall

### Educational Breakfast Series

### Employment Opportunities

### Fall Reduction Programs

- A Matter of Balance
- Young at Heart

### Grandparents Raising Grandkids

### In-Home Service

### Meal Program

- Menus
- Meal Reservations

### Medical Resources Department

### Medical Transportation Program

### Medicare / Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP)

### Parkinson Support Group

### PATH Workshops

### Prime Times

### Special Events

- See What's New!

### Tax Assistance Program

### Technology & Aging

- BeBloomin
- Computer Club
- TAP

### Volunteer Program

- Volunteer Opportunities
- Volunteer Registration



### OCCOA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DONA WISHART AND BEBLOOMIN FOUNDER JOEL ACKERMAN RECENTLY HOSTED THREE BEBLOOMIN INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR THE PUBLIC

computers, the Internet, smartphones, and iPads? Technologies that could help you stay connected to friends, family, and your community, but which are too difficult and frustrating to learn and use? Are you a family caregiver, the owner of a business, or member of an organization that deals with homebound older adults and wish you had an easier way to connect with them through technology and provide better for their needs?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you are going to want to learn about the following "buzz" on BeBloomin, an exciting pilot program that will be offered in our community through a partnership between the Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) and BeBloomin. The partnership was approved by the OCCOA Board of Directors on December 10, 2014 and will run from January through June of 2015.

### What is BeBloomin?

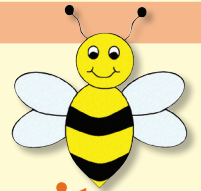
Information sharing sessions were recently held at the University Center for interested individuals, businesses, and organizations. There, OCCOA Executive Director Dona Wishart shared the long-standing call by national aging industry leaders Ken Dychtwald and UCLA professor Fernando Torres-Gil for the development of a technology-based intervention for older adults that could add meaning and quality to life. "Today we have such an intervention through BeBloomin!" she announced.

During the same sessions, Joel Ackerman, the founder of BeBloomin, explained that it is an Internet-based technology that is intended to safely and securely enable individuals to always remain supportively connected with all the people, organizations, and services that are important to them and their well-being.

In a live demonstration of the web-based program, Ackerman showed how BeBloomin takes a 360° view of individuals' needs and provides innovative tools, services, and connectivity in eight key areas of their lives. He noted that individual BeBloomin account holders can easily and securely enjoy video calls with other BeBloomin users, or with participating BeBloomin partners, such as pastors, financial advisors, physicians, service providers, or care providers. This can be done through webcam-equipped computers, and through any of the six planned touch screens that will be placed at various key locations in the community.

Account holders can virtually attend faith services and visit exhibits at partnering aquariums and zoos. They can also play games, read e-Books, listen to e-Audiobooks, send and receive email, and safely store important digital files. There is no spam or ads to deal with and the site is protected from hackers. Only one password is needed to access BeBloomin's many services and applications. Video call assistance is also available through a BeBloomin call center for those who need help or have questions.

## What's The Buzz?



## Otsego County is the site for an exciting new pilot program!

Are you an older adult who is feeling isolated from all the technologies that have been developed over the past 35 years?

Ackerman noted, "Individuals will find it easy to embrace BeBloomin, not only because its benefits are clear and compelling, but because it is easy, affordable, and supported." In fact, any person who signs up for BeBloomin during the pilot program will receive a free-for-life premium account. In return, individual account holders will use the system on a regular basis and provide feedback to BeBloomin so that the system may be enhanced and improved.

At the information sharing sessions, attending business and organization personnel learned that the pilot program includes nine free-for-life partner accounts that will include supportive equipment. Holding an account will allow partners to be able to connect with individual BeBloomin users through video calls, email and live video feeds. In return for their free accounts, the nine selected partners will provide regular use and support of the technology and provide feedback to BeBloomin for suggested enhancements and improvements. Other opportunities will be available for the businesses and organizations not selected for a free account.

Judge George Mertz, who is a member of the OCCOA Board of Directors, was also present at the information sharing sessions with Ackerman and Wishart. He noted that after reviewing the partnership proposal between the OCCOA and BeBloomin, he felt it was a great low-risk opportunity for the agency and the community.



OCCOA BOARD MEMBER JUDGE GEORGE MERTZ VOICED HIS SUPPORT FOR BEBLOOMIN AT THE INFORMATION SESSIONS

Speaking personally, he shared, "My mother is 77 years old and lives 3½ hours away. My wife and I have two young children. We have purchased a computer and Chromebook for her to help her stay connected with us." He detailed, "Keeping track of passwords, learning how to access and use the services offered by different websites, and avoiding being a victim of hackers has been challenging for her. We tried Skype, but that didn't go well. After a few attempts, she became frustrated and just gave up." He concluded, "I'm excited about this pilot program. After I read through the proposal, I knew this was just the kind of program that my mother needs. BeBloomin is the kind of technology that I can see improving the quality of life for everyone."



BeBloomin and the OCCOA invite you to add meaning and quality to your life! To apply for one of the free nine partner accounts, sign up for an individual BeBloomin free-for-life premium account, or learn more, please contact OCCOA Executive Director Dona Wishart at 989-748-4060. Monthly training sessions are being offered for individual BeBloomin account holders on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the University Center at Gaylord from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The next one is scheduled for Tuesday, February 24, 2015.

**989.732.1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org • Advocacy 989.732.9977**

IN-HOME SERVICE ~ 989.705.2574 • MEAL PROGRAM ~ 989.732.1746 • SPECIAL EVENTS ~ 989.732.4702 • VOLUNTEER ~ 989.705.2572 • WEATHER ~ 989.731.5652

**Fax: 989-731-2739 • occoa@occoaonline.org • Weekdays 8:30 am to Noon and 1:00 to 3:30 pm**

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