

Submitted by
Eileen Godek
**RESEARCH &
VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR**

*We Help.
We Care*

OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

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**OCCOA TAP COORDINATOR
JOHN PANCI**

New Computer Club Targeted for Older Adults!

The Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) is pleased to announce that it will be introducing a computer club for area older adults. The kickoff date is scheduled for Monday, May 19th, 2011.

The OCCOA Computer Club is an offshoot of a recently completed research project with the Michigan State University School of Social Work that began in June 2008. Known as TAP (Technology and Aging Project), the study provided computer training for randomly-selected older adults (age 60 and older) in the community. To participate, interested participants had the opportunity to submit a survey that assessed their technology skills. They were then randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The two groups were further broken down into two sub groups: beginning and intermediate computer users.

Free computer training was provided for the experimental group and included once-a-week-classes over a six-month period, beginning in the fall of 2008. Topics included computer basics, Internet safety, web surfing, Internet searches, emailing, and instant messaging. A paid program coordinator, as well as experts from area businesses, taught the classes. A grant provided funding for the program.

Participants in the experimental and control groups were periodically surveyed and the results between the two groups were compared to determine whether or not the training was having a beneficial effect on the health of the experimental group. This phase of the study was known as TAP1.

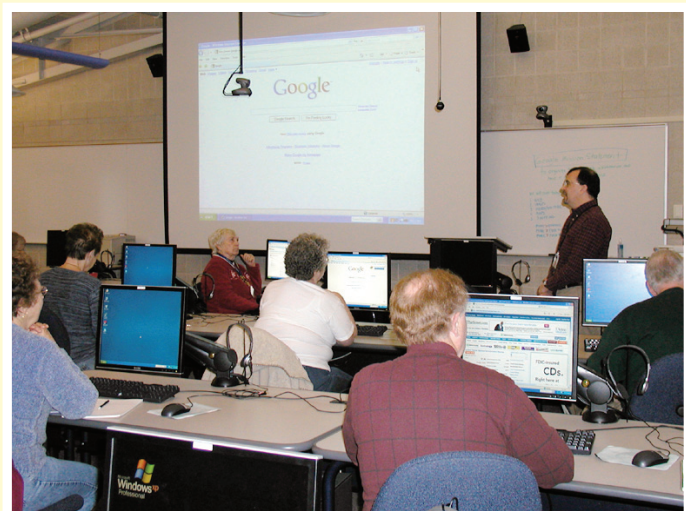
Upon the conclusion of TAP1, the control group was also given an opportunity for computer training. This phase of the study was known as TAP2. Like TAP1, a program coordinator provided leadership. Unlike the first phase of the study, TAP2 enlisted the help of volunteer tutors to teach most of the classes, as well as to provide assistance during class time. These volunteers were recruited from the TAP1 class of learners and followed a teaching model known as the Peer Tutor Model. The TAP2 participants found that learning through the Peer Tutor Model was beneficial because they were receiving assistance from other older adults who had already been through the program and who were aware of the various challenges faced by their age group.

Similar to TAP1, the TAP2 program also offered once-a-week classes over a six-month period, running from November 2009 through April 2010. Because a Peer Tutor Model was used for TAP2, the savings realized by utilizing volunteers, allowed the participants to take the training at no charge.

The results of the study indeed showed that providing computer training for older adults had a positive impact on their health. Because TAP1 and 2 participants have shared the positive impact of their computer training on their lives with friends and acquaintances, the OCCOA has received many requests from older adults in the community for similar types of computer classes.

Computer classes are currently being offered in the County through the Otsego County Library, as well as the University Center, but the OCCOA Computer Club will offer the community yet a different choice, as it will be geared toward teaching older adults through the volunteer Peer Tutor Model. Those in need of slower-paced instruction and more personalized assistance may find the new computer club the perfect way to learn more about computers. Unlike TAP1 and TAP2, the club will allow participants to pick and choose the topics that hold the greatest interest to them.

The Computer Club will operate under the joint leadership of TAP2 Coordinator John Panci and one of the TAP2 volunteer tutors, Jack Udebrock. Udebrock was also involved with TAP1 as a participant. Additional talented and gifted volunteer tutors from TAP2 will be on hand to assist with teaching various topics of their choice and providing individual assistance.



**TAP2 PARTICIPANTS LEARNED
HOW TO DO INTERNET SEARCHES**



**JACK UDEBROCK OFFERS ASSISTANCE
TO A TAP2 STUDENT**

Udebrock's passion for volunteering for the club was clear in a recent conversation we shared, "I wanted to continue helping with this program in a leadership role because it is a way for me to give back to my community for all the leadership training I received at the Naval Academy in Annapolis."

He added, "Continuing to volunteer, this time for the OCCOA Computer Club, is all about the people and friendships I made during the TAP study and providing help for those in need of it."

Udebrock stressed that the classes offered by the computer club will operate at a slower pace than classes offered to the general public and will be less structured. "We are going to tune in more to the interests of our members and cover areas that weren't offered during the TAP study." He concluded, "Of course, the bottom line is to make sure that the participants and tutors who are involved have fun!"

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE OCCOA COMPUTER CLUB,
PLEASE CONTACT THE AGENCY AT (989) 732-1122 OR CONTACT
US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.OTSEGOCOUNTYCOA.ORG.**

989.732.1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org • Advocacy 989.732.9977

Fax: 989-731-2739 • occoa@occoaonline.org • Weekdays 8:00 am to Noon and 12:30 to 4:00 pm

120 GRANDVIEW BLVD. ✧ GAYLORD, MICHIGAN 49735