

Allyson Ososki: Ramsey County Library, Roseville Library

Devon Matti: Ramsey County Library, Shoreview Library

Grace Clark: PPL Learning Center

Tabitha Duggan: Hennepin County Library, Central Library

Civic Engagement Written Reflection

We started this project a year after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we knew, through our service sites as well as personal experiences, that the isolation of the last year had been especially hard on senior citizens, many of whom live in facilities that were locked down to visitors and are less connected via technology than many of them would like to be. The original idea for this project was simple – find ways to help our older community members access technology, or improve their skills on the devices they already have, such as computers, tablets, and phones. When Joel suggested Episcopal Homes as a potential partner, we reached out to them and they jumped at the opportunity to work with us.

During the span of our project, we offered five different presentations on technology skills. These sessions covered computer basics, email, Zoom, iPhone/Android, and internet scams. Each presentation had an average of 8-12 attendees who actively participated in the workshop and asked questions specific to their needs. To supplement these workshops we also created over 10 resource packets with written information on the skills we covered in the workshops, as well as some additional topics, such as flip phones, social media, accessibility, and how to use the St. Paul Public Library system. We shared these packets with Episcopal Homes staff to disseminate to residents as needed. In March and April we offered individual help sessions to assist Episcopal Homes residents with specific issues they were dealing with on their devices. Between the four of us, we offered 8 hour-long time slots per week for 8 weeks. Though not every single time slot was filled, we had the capacity to assist 64 residents during these one-on-one sessions, and were able to reach a significant percentage of that number.

Looking back on our project charter we had several different goals for this project. We said that “our goal is to serve Episcopal Homes residents through the workshops and 1:1 support, and be able to disseminate the written resources to other elder care homes in the Twin Cities that are interested”. We feel like we met those goals. We did five workshops and provided one to one support throughout the duration of the project. We also said that “our hope is that by creating written resources and connecting elders to hands-on technology experience (and potentially connecting people to devices through PCs for People or other opportunities), we will be able to increase the capacity of those individuals to learn more in the future, and increase the capacity of the elder care centers to provide these resources to residents in the future. We could also potentially share our workshop curriculum if there is interest in offering more workshops in the

future.” While we did create written resources, increase the residents and elder care centers capacity for learning and resources, and also created curriculum for future resources, we did find that because of the nature of Episcopal Homes we were unable to really connect the participants with hands-on technology during the workshops. Most of the workshops were done on group zoom calls where an employee worked the zoom and the participants just watched. This made it more like a lecture and less like a hands-on workshop for the residents, which wasn’t ideal for our goal of connecting elders to hands-on technology. This was slightly balanced out by the one hour tech appointments in which we got to work one on one with participants and really teach them how to use the devices they were working with.

The biggest challenge of this project was the fact that we could not go into the homes and everything had to be done virtually. While we were aware of everything needing to be done virtually-- we taught a workshop about zoom and other video call options to help with isolation-- I don’t think that we were truly prepared for the lack of technology on their end. Many of them worked on shared devices or had older technology such as flip phones or landlines. This made it difficult to help them with things like social media or email when they couldn’t access it all the time. The biggest example of this challenge was in the zoom workshop that Ally taught. Ally teaches a similar class at her site, and it’s an interactive class in which participants practice turning off and on the cameras and microphones and practice using the chat. However, during this workshop we had 3-4 participants per device and we weren’t able to have them practice any of the skills they were learning. In that specific case we made sure to advertise the one on one sessions as a way to practice using zoom and other video call software. Overall, overcoming this challenge was just a matter of readjusting our focus and reimagining how much work we could get done in a workshop or a 1:1 session.

Looking into the future we believe there is potential for our project. Episcopal Homes was very grateful for our help and stated that in the future they would love to work with CTEP again. Having that connection with this organization means that future projects wouldn’t need to spend as much time looking for partners and more time focusing on the curriculum itself. Additionally, the curriculum we created for the project is being shared with our sites and other CTEP members. This means that if people are interested in teaching something like our workshops people can use our curriculum or at least have something to reference in the future.

This project was a resounding success in our eyes. We met many of our goals, the participants seemed to learn a lot and were really appreciative of our work, and we found that the challenges we faced didn’t negatively affect our outcomes. We as members enjoyed this opportunity to impact the community and work with the participants.

Pictures:

A meeting of the four CTEP members from this civic engagement project.



The logo from the organization we partnered with.



The two pictures below are examples of the extra resources/handouts that we created for topics that had interest but we didn't have time to host a whole workshop about.

Flip Phones

Many people prefer flip phones to the more complex and expensive smartphones. Flip phones come in many models and sizes, and with different features. With a flip phone you can still make calls and send text messages, which is all a lot of people want to do with their phones. However, they are not “smart phones” in that they cannot go on the internet – which can be useful for things like checking email or searching for directions on the go. Below are two of the most common kinds of flip phones, ones with a top that flips up, and that require the user to type using the keypad, and one that has a keyboard that flips to the side. However, the two different kinds of flip phones have very similar features, so no matter which one you have, this resource will provide you with more information on how to use your flip phone.



Instagram Handout

What Instagram is used for:

Primarily a photo and video sharing platform. The ability to edit, post, view, comment, and like other people pictures and videos.

Difference between desktop version and app

Instagram was primarily created for apps. On the desktop you can still interact with other people's posts and view content, however you are not able to create content on the desktop version. That includes posts, messages to other people, etc.

Create an account:

Go to [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com) and fill out the blanks. You will need either a phone number or an email.

Instagram

Sign up to see photos and videos
from your friends.