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Intergenerational Computing Reflection 12/14/09

I signed up for Intergenerational Computing with a vague concept of what to expect. Looking back now, I realize that I really had no idea. The experience has been very rewarding and a wonderful learning adventure. Dr. C’s compassion for helping older adults to come together with technology is something that I felt from day one. This enthusiasm rubs off, and helps motivates myself and my fellow classmates. I worked with an older adult within a group of two other classmates, as well as developed a project over the past 8 weeks. The initiative became to be not only for the well being of the specific older adults that we are directly dealing with, but all older adults globally. This past semester has exceeded my expectations of what service learning can be and I am very grateful for the experience.   
 Every week I worked with an older adult named Frances. Frances lives at the Hallmark in Battery Park with her husband. Unfortunately, she suffers from macular degeneration, a visual impairment that hinders her from reading or recognizing any small text or objects. Furthermore, she currently has a grandson in Paris, with whom she would love to be able to email. This seems like a great goal for her to have and was a pleasure for me to help her obtain.   
 Frances is able to use the computer with the use of visual software called Zoom Text. This magnifies the screen to the appropriate setting, in Frances case 8x. We began with a simple tutorial of the keyboard layout followed by some free mouse exercise we found online. She struggled during the first lesson, and although she has used a typewriter, she has not used a computer before. It takes remarkable patience and dedication on France's part to continually attempt to be comfortable with the computer.

A personal benefit I have gained from my sessions with Frances has been the ability to clearly give directions in a specific concise matter. At first I somewhat struggled to find the right words and use the proper computer vocabulary. Eventually by the third session I found the ability to give directions to come more naturally. For a quick study guide, I wrote out directions for Frances on how to start her laptop and begin using programs such as Microsoft Word during her free time. I feel the ability to give clear directions is a trait that I was able to strengthen and will certainly be a tool that I can rely on in the future.  
 Our term project turned is something that can have a real impact. I never took any thought into an older adult’s inability to read small text, yet for the Hallmark’s book club, many members suffer from this very issue. The solution was to make these book club auditory, using current mp3 players. This would allow all of the members to participate in this important social activity without any visual eye strain. We published a website in order to allow others with similar situations globally to follow our methods and learn about the project.

This has been an interesting and influential semester at Pace University. This was semester that I can look back on and realize that I had a positive impact on my community.