

United Hebrew Geriatric Center launches Gerontech Program in Collaboration with Pace University

New Rochelle, NY (April 19, 2006) -- In response to the need for the growing senior citizen population to become more comfortable with computers, the United Hebrew Geriatric Center of New Rochelle (UHGC) has partnered with Pace University's Ivan G. Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems and others to create an innovative Gerontechnology program. Their newly formed Consortium for Multi-Faceted Gerontechnology Research began its first class last month at UHGC.

A total of 25 seniors have been meeting with Pace student instructors weekly since March 7, 2006 at various buildings on the UHGC campus. The first instruction program will culminate on April 25, when an informal "graduation" ceremony will take place at the Center at 2:15 p.m.

"The 'digital divide' between new technology and the ability to use and sometimes afford it, is greatest among the senior population because so many older adults are fearful about computers," says Linda Forman, Director of Community Relations at UHGC. "This new program will open a whole new world for our residents to e-mail, learn, and to connect with others." The Consortium for Multi-Faceted Gerontechnology Research was formed in October 2005. In addition to UHGC and Pace, partners are Westchester Community College (WCC), Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services (WCDSPS), and Westchester Public / Private Partnership for Aging Services - SPEAKUP (Student Participants Embrace Aging Issues of Key Concern).

Photo Captions

Photo 1: Students and seniors learning at the Low-Savin Residence Soundview Apartments for Seniors.

Photo 2: Students and seniors working together at Willow Towers.

Photo 3: Lizzie King and Evans Ihenachor taking a break from the computer.



Dr. Jean Coppola, Assistant Professor of Technology Systems at Pace University says, "There are 23 college-student instructors and 25 seniors enrolled in the program which allows for considerable individualized attention. It is rewarding to observe the excitement of seniors and student instructors as new tasks such as mastery of the mouse, e-mail to their family members, and instant messaging are accomplished."

Pace University students are enrolled in courses which correspond directly to their involvement in the Gerontech program. Some Pace students are enrolled in Intergenerational Computing, an undergraduate credit bearing class. These students are working directly with UHGC residents to help them feel comfortable with the computer, Internet, and email. Other Pace undergraduates are enrolled in undergraduate Microcomputer Hardware: Troubleshooting, Maintenance, and Repair, in which they work behind the scenes to refurbish, configure, and install donated equipment relating to the program. Pace Student Teacher Charlie McDonald says that, "I am finding the student teaching experience extremely rewarding and love seeing the seniors make progress each week."

Forman and Coppola, along with Professor Barbara Thomas (WCC nursing) and Dr. Fran Gustavson (Pace Intergenerational Computing course instructor), have applied for grants to enable the project to expand and for assistive software - - computer programs that make the Internet easier to read and use by magnifying letters on the computer screen, increasing the font size of text, and reading text out loud. Assistive software also can make keyboards more sensitive to the typing of people with arthritis, tremors, or partial paralysis.

Residents from UHGC's nursing home, assisted living facility, and senior housing all have the opportunity to meet with students in computer labs in each



building on the UHGC campus. A state-of-the-art UHGC residence, scheduled to be completed in 2007, will offer wireless Internet capacity in rooms and common spaces. Residents who are learning computer skills now will have a higher level of comfort to continue using their new skills in the new building.

"Our residents have a unique opportunity to join a team of students, faculty, and scientists who are looking for better ways to bridge the digital divide that separates seniors from technology that can help them," says Forman. "The social interactions with students help our seniors feel valued and important, and it helps them feel younger."

Gloria Marino, an 83-year old UHGC resident, says that "My family told me that if I learn how to use the computer, they would buy me one. So here I am."

Ms. Forman notes that "older adults who exercise their minds by learning new skills may be able to keep their minds sharp as they get older. And their new relationships will help them feel like important members of society."

The private graduation ceremony is open to media. It will take place at United Hebrew Geriatric Center on Tuesday, April 25 at 2:15 p.m. Representatives from Pace University will give the seniors certificates recognizing their successful course completion. For further information, please contact Linda Forman at 914.632.2804, x 224 or e-mail lforman@uhgc.org and/or Dr. Jean Coppola at 914.773.3755 or e-mail jcoppola@pace.edu.

About the United Hebrew Geriatric Center of New Rochelle

UHGC is a vibrant not-for-profit, non-sectarian, multi-service senior living campus serving the Westchester metropolitan area since 1919. UHGC offers a rich array of programs and services, both skilled and community-based that encourages and supports a life of dignity and spirituality as well as

promoting the highest possible quality of life. UHGC serves over 600 clients daily in their campus facilities -- Willow Towers, an 126 unit assisted living residence; a 270 bed Nursing Home; the 135 unit Low-Savin Apartments for seniors; a Long Term Home Health Care Program; and the Azor Home Health Agency. In 2006, UHGC is scheduled to begin construction on a new, state-of-the-art 300 bed facility.

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