

Computers for Homebound & Isolated Persons (CHIPS)

CHIPS accepts applications from homebound and isolated seniors age 60 and older living in Knox County. Also eligible are adults who are homebound by virtue of serving as a live-in caregiver to a homebound Knox County senior.

The CHIPS program trains and equips homebound persons to use e-mail and the Internet to overcome social isolation, connect with people and resources, assert more control over their own lives, and contribute to their community.

Volunteers refurbish used computers, install them in clients' homes and then provide follow-up technical support. They also help train mentors (usually a friend or family member), who in turn train the clients.

Under the auspices of Mayor Mike Ragsdale's "No Senior Left Behind" initiative, Knox County has provided the initial funding for this program, along with the first 50 donated computer systems. The University of Tennessee provides the internet connection. Other partners are the Knoxville-Knox County CAC Office on Aging and the East Tennessee Technology Access Center.

Seven clients have now received CHIPS computers, dialup access to the Internet and training, which is ongoing. All are connected with one another through a group e-mail list.

Many more opportunities are

available. A major marketing effort is underway to advertise the availability of the program to Knox County's homebound seniors.

To apply for a CHIPS computer or to volunteer in the program:

Contact David Massey

Phone: 215-5994

E-mail: chips@DiscoverET.org

Web: www.DiscoverET.org/chips

Mrs. C. is typical of many CHIPS clients. At 89, she is unable to leave home except for medical appointments, because she wears a pacemaker, suffers from severe arthritis, and has difficulty breathing. She had never used a computer before she joined CHIPS, but now she is a big fan of the computer and the Internet. "I don't know what I would do without this computer," she confided.

"Words cannot express how much this has meant to me," she says. "I don't care for the TV, and I cannot use my hands to knit or shuffle cards. But with this computer, I can punch that little jigger (the mouse) and play Solitaire to my heart's content!"

In addition, the computer and Internet connection have allowed her to stay in touch with friends and family. "My daughter, who lives in



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*— Nettie C.,
CHIPS recipient*

another city, calls me every day, but sometimes I cannot think of what I want to tell her. So I just shoot her an e-mail, and she gets it at her work.”

is looking forward to taking some courses online.

She sums up her experience in one short sentence: “I am having fun!”

Through the CHIPS member e-mail group, Mrs. C. has found new friends, with whom she corresponds daily. She is 99% sure that she and one other members of the program were in the same Bible study group more than 35 years ago.

Mrs. C. isn't going to stop at Solitaire and e-mails, though. She is already visiting web sites that cover subjects of interest to her. Never able to go to college, she is still passionate about learning, and

