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Title:

Pursuing Your Post-Retirement Passions Online

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Summary:

Ten years ago, computer literacy was an issue with older Americans. My father was insistent that one of those machines would never be seen near his desk. So we bought him one for Christmas and let the instruction manual drag him in. Now he paints with it.

It seems that resistance to computers is largely a thing of the past among most of us these days. They are a part of everyone's life, and grandparents are no exception. The ease and simplicity of email has spread computer...

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Ten years ago, computer literacy was an issue with older Americans. My father was insistent that one of those machines would never be seen near his desk. So we bought him one for Christmas and let the instruction manual drag him in. Now he paints with it.

It seems that resistance to computers is largely a thing of the past among most of us these days. They are a part of everyone's life, and grandparents are no exception. The ease and simplicity of email has spread computer use through all generations. Instant communication with children and grandchildren who are far away have brought millions of older Americans online and having arrived there, they have learned about the remarkable resources on the Internet.

You Don't have to Go to School

Those among us who are retired, who may be older but are wondering about the mechanics and uses of this technology, ought to consider learning to work with it. The basic tool for creating a web page is HTML, a techie acronym for a simple term: HyperText Markup Language. Learning to use HTML and create web pages is not, repeat NOT beyond anyone's reach. It's pretty easy, and once you realize how easy it is you'll want to continue do develop your abilities with it.

You can find an excellent tutorial on the basics of HTML at http://www.case.edu/its/itac/web/lrnhtml.html. It was written by an information technology specialist at Case Western Reserve University and it is truly written for beginners. He goes out of his way to use common English and translate tech terms into comprehensible language. The document is dated; it is eight years old and that is a long time in the computer world. However the basics haven't changed and it is a great place to start. Moreover, there are two additional tutorials for "intermediate students" dealing with later versions of HTML.

Use the Resources Online Instead of on the Shelf

Once you have a working knowledge of web pages and how to assemble them, you can look elsewhere for the newer, flashier tools and tricks that have been developed in recent years. There are lots of software packages out there for creating web pages with a minimum of technical background. It's better to start with the basics and understand what you're doing as your skills grow. A good resource for additional tools and tutorials can be found at http://www.ianr.unl.edu/internet/htmlhelp.html. It's a collection of links to free information and software for web page builders.

For my father, the computer became a recreational resource when daily golf was no longer an option. For many of his friends, the ability to create web pages has become a source of entertainment and creative satisfaction. You will find an abundance of 'family' web pages on the internet that have been created as a way of passing family history along. The scrapbooks with captioned pictures have become electronic documents, which can be amended at will - every time a new grandchild or another family gathering occurs, up goes another photograph. You can scan pictures and arrange written copy in an attractive format that is really very different than traditional scrapbooks. The limits of page size do not exist in the HTML universe.

Good Enough to Turn Pro?

Once you're comfortable with your abilities and have developed some unique formats of your own, you might give some thought to marketing your skills. Lots of retirees sell their services on a spot basis just as some sell quilts or ornaments at Christmas fairs. Charge an hourly fee to develop the types of pages that you're comfortable with. That might mean family pages for your friends, or home pages for small businessmen that you know and who are intimidated by the professional online graphics houses. Consider the internet an opportunity, as have thousands of young people developing careers. It can be an avocation as well.