# Project Overview

This project will aim to help elderly persons facing social isolation due to the lack of nearby family members. A website will be created promoting social activities as well as more personal outings for seniors. It will allow for members of the local senior community and their distant families to stay connected.

## Problem and Solution

Rapidly advancing technology has allowed people to remain connected even when half a world apart. A person in Seattle can speak with and see a person in London in real time. Or fly from New York to Los Angeles in just a few hours. These advances have allowed people to move freely around the world and still remain in touch with family and friends from their hometowns.

These changes have also led to a group of increasingly isolated individuals; the elderly. As more families choose to relocate for work or personal reasons, the parents and grandparents often stay put in their hometowns. As they age and mobility diminishes, socializing becomes more difficult if not nearly impossible. A lack of socializing can lead to reclusion which can contribute to deteriorating health, both mentally and physically (John T Cacioppo, 2003).

The solution is to promote social outings for the aging population, whether by organizing group outings or having younger community members step in when family is not available. The vision of Dr. Chueh is to have an online site where such activities can be arranged. This would include having a system where families away from older relatives can contribute to an account funding events or meal outings that allow the older family member to socialize outside of their own home.

While software promoting social activities is not unique, it often misses on the most vunerable demographic. This software would solely focus on those who may not be familiar with or able to use computers or the internet well and who may have trouble getting out on their own.

## Stakeholders

The client is Dr. Chueh. She is a Professor of Mathematics at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA. She was inspired to do something for the aging community during a trip to the east coast. During this trip, she attended a funeral where the family of the departed received food and condolences from members of an online site called “Meal Train”. She recognized the good that can come from a community banding together in times of need and thought of her own family. She saw the limitations of the Meal Train site and wanted to create something that was proactive.

The elderly in communities across the globe are also stakeholders. For this project, we will limit this to the elderly in Ellensburg. They currently cope with the problem of isolation by attending (when possible) small gatherings at church’s or sometimes hosted by local retirement homes. There is no prevailing solution.

The families of the elderly who do not live near-by and are unable to visit regularly is another group of stakeholders. These people care for their family members but are rooted in homes across the country making their ability to help impractical with current resources. This site would give them a tool that will allow them to help their relatives maintain a healthy social life.

## Scope

The software will help alleviate the problem by providing a dedicated site to increasing social health among the elderly. It will provide an easy to use, senior friendly interface that will help elderly persons connect to other members of the community.

It will also create a place where distant family members can help their loved ones stay healthy and connected to society. This should reduce some of the stress that can be caused worrying about an older family member.

The site will provide a much needed tool to promote healthy social living, but the weight of utilizing the tool will still rely on people. Family members will need to donate to elderly without sufficient income to pay for their own outings. Younger members of the community will need to volunteer their time, and family members will need to use good judgement when accepting a request to take out their loved ones.

# Works Cited

John T Cacioppo, L. C. (2003). Social Isolation and Health, with an Emphasis on Underlying Mechanisms. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, S39-S52.