

CONNECTING GENERATIONS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Are computers and the Internet widening the generation gap? Beatrice Shelby, the executive director of Boys Girls Adults Community Development Center and a grandmother, thinks they are, and she wants to fix it, at least in her corner of the Mississippi Delta.

The way to do it is to introduce as many adults as possible, including grandparents, to computers, the Internet and some of the basic software applications that their children and grandchildren now grasp at an early age, she said.

The Internet has become a life-improving tool for people of any age, providing instant access to knowledge about how to do almost anything, from preparing healthy meals quickly with a microwave oven to exploring a Bible verse in depth. Gerontologists recognize its value in staving off cognitive slowing and dementia.

But more and more adults, including the aged, are discovering like she did a more practical and emotional benefit: communicating with the kids and grandkids.

"If you have a grandchild who's moved to Chicago or Memphis, it is now about the best way to talk to them - and often the only way," Mrs. Shelby said.

BGACDC has developed a computer lab. Its original value was to teach children but it has become useful also to train older generations on how they can access knowledge and help of all kinds - and how to tell the precious granddaughter you're thinking of her today.



Laverne Sims, a VISTA worker who recently returned home to Marvell, and Zachariah Jackson, a school-to-work intern at BGACDC, work in the BGACDC computer lab.



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