

1. Armonk SeniorNet is sponsored by the Town of North Castle, a Town of approximately 12,000 inhabitants in Westchester County, NY approximately 35 miles north of New York City. Armonk is one of three Hamlets in the Town, and the seat of Town government. Armonk is within the commuting belt of New York City, and is the home of several large corporations, including IBM Corporate HQ.

2. We “went live” October, 2001

3. This start of operations was proceeded by initial funding and equipment from SeniorNet HQ and initial training of volunteers by John Bonilla (Sandy Krasner’s predecessor)

4. At 12/31/01 we were 17 trained volunteers, we had given 12 courses (Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, and Windows 98) to a total of 50 students

5. Seven courses were scheduled for January – February, 2002, including the introduction of an Advanced Word course, with Quicken and TurboTax courses contemplated as well

6. Our student enrollment was growing via favorable word-of-mouth

7. Our Learning Center is prominently featured on the Town web site, and we were undertaking a wide-ranging newspaper publicity campaign

8. November 15, 2002 I hosted what would be our first annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon and All-Hands Meeting

9. As I reported immediately afterward to our Town Supervisor in our annual “Progress Report”

—
a. 170 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our first year of operations.

b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had 240 students in courses.

c. We are currently teaching 5 courses; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Advanced Word, and Quicken.

d. All this takes place in our nicely fitted-out SeniorNet Learning Center in Town Hall Annex which is equipped with 8 new IBM computers, color printers, and the latest software which was provided through SeniorNet by our sponsors, IBM, Verizon, and the Benedict Foundation.

e. The Town provides the room, prepared and painted it and provided attractive carpeting and tables as well as upgraded electrical service, an air conditioner, etc. (We funded this with internally generated funds from student fees)

f. At our startup one year ago, SeniorNet also provided initial startup funding, volunteer training, and provides us via their web site master copies of excellent course manuals which we copy without charge and distribute to students as part of their course fee.

g. We are currently 21 volunteers.

h. Most of our volunteers act as instructors and/or coaches in our classes.

i. Others keep our computers and software up and running despite hard use by students, schedule classes, students, instructors and coaches for those classes, arrange publicity, etc.

j. Many volunteers handle more than one activity.

k. Our publicity has included coverage in newspapers, magazines, and a brochure we developed and distribute and periodic mailings, etc. We are on the Town of North Castle web site, and articles on us have appeared twice in the Town magazine and we are also in the North Castle Recreation and Parks Department 2002/3 Guide.

l. Many of us attended the May 24 SeniorNet Annual Conference held at Verizon HQ in Valhalla. It was a very interesting and useful day. Topics covered included information on courses, techniques, technical aspects, as well as a very useful opportunity to meet volunteers from other Centers and exchange helpful information. We plan on attending again.

m. We have accomplished all this and provided this valuable service to the community at unbeatably low cost to students while still showing a positive net cash flow to the Town, necessary to cover our low operating costs (thanks to an all volunteer staff) and provide for future equipment replacement.

n. Looking to the year ahead, our plans include the following -

o. Our high-speed cable modem service was installed November 15, and SeniorNet has provided us with a new cable Router. Our Lab Team will shortly get this all hooked up to permit all 8 computers to access high speed internet and e-mail.

p. This will enable us to roll-out an Internet and E-mail course that is the one most-requested course by seniors. We anticipate this will materially increase our student days beyond the excellent record of last year.

q. While maintaining our current course offerings, we will be also be adding a TurboTax course shortly, and our Curriculum Committee will be exploring adding a PhotoShop Elements course. Other courses will be added over time.

10. Following our 2nd Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2003 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

a. 185 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our second year of operation, an increase from the 170 last year.

b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had over 230 students in courses this year.

c. We are currently teaching 8 courses, up from 5 last year; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, PhotoShop, TurboTax and Quicken. Installation of our high-speed cable modem service last November and SeniorNet providing us with a new cable Router enabled us to introduce our Internet/E-mail course at that time.

d. All this takes place in our nicely fitted-out SeniorNet Learning Center in Town Hall Annex which is equipped with 8 IBM computers, color printers, and the latest software which was provided through SeniorNet by our sponsors, IBM, Verizon, and the Benedict Foundation.

e. This year we have started to see some of our IBM-donated machines now two years old experience hard drive crashes, and we have learned that IBM donated non-standard machines for which we cannot seem to get warranty service and so we have replaced the hard drives on three of the machines and we are in the process of replacing the hard drives of the remaining machines.

f. We also obtained from SeniorNet an additional better IBM machine that we are using solely for administrative purposes, and purchased some Norton diagnostic software we use in effecting these computer repairs.

g. We also added additional RAM (Random Access Memory) to bring all the machines up to a

higher standard, so that we now have some very capable machines.

h. I also obtained \$300 additional cash support from SeniorNet HQ to help cover the costs of this additional RAM, and Armonk Lions has expressed interest in helping support our good works, and recently presented us with a \$100 check, which we hope will be just the first such partnering.

i. Likely in 2005 we should replace our machines, probably with Dell machines. While this will give us better hardware, they will come with Microsoft XP instead of the ME operating system we have been using, which will cause us to redo some of our courses and manuals and other work.

j. We plan to increase our course fee to \$45 from the current \$40 for courses beginning January 1, 2004 to help provide the funding for these replacement machines.

k. We are currently 25 volunteers.

11. Following our 3rd Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2004 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

a. 127 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our third year of operation.

b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had 204 students in courses this year, i.e. 59 of the 127, or 46% were repeat students.

c. We are currently teaching 7 courses; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, PhotoShop, and Excel. We also teach TurboTax and Quicken when there is sufficient demand.

d. In late June several of our three year old non-standard IBM-donated machines experienced failure of the motherboard. We were able to replace failed capacitors on these, but since all eight of our student machines are the same type, we faced the potential of the remaining machines failing, likely during classes, a situation that could not be countenanced.

e. Accordingly, we replaced all our machines with new Dell computers, including large flat panel displays for ease of viewing. We took advantage of Dell's discounted prices for governmental agencies/charitable organizations.

f. We also obtained and installed Microsoft Office Pro software, obtaining this via a site license at a deeply discounted price offered to non-profit organizations.

g. With this new hardware and software we now have a really first class Learning Center equipped with the latest and greatest hardware and software.

h. Periodic hardware replacements and software upgrades are the nature of computer operations, and this was financed entirely from accumulated positive cash flows, with a positive balance still remaining and continuing planned positive cash flows. To this end, effective with our new term September 1, we raised our course fees to a still very reasonable and competitive \$50 from \$45 (a prior increase raised them January 1 from \$40).

i. Additionally, we received \$500 additional funding from SeniorNet HQ to help defray these costs.

j. As for the old equipment, we first offered it to Armonk seniors in the North Castle Adult Club, but there was no interest, so it has been donated to a charitable organization that has shipped it to Nicaragua where it has been put to a good and useful second life.

k. We are currently 30 volunteers, up from 25 this time last year.

l. This month I was contacted by the NY Times and arranged for their photographer to take

photos of one of our classes in action for inclusion in what we understand is to be a "Best of Westchester" supplement to the NY Times to come out in December.

m. On October 1 we participated in NYS Senator Vincent Leibell's "To Your Health" Senior Health Fair at the Boys and Girls Club in Mount Kisco where we manned a booth and distributed publicity materials about our Armonk Learning Center to the over 500 attendees.

n. 20 of our volunteers attended the October 20 SeniorNet Annual Conference held at Verizon HQ in Valhalla. It was a very interesting and useful day. Topics covered included information on courses, techniques, technical aspects, as well as a very useful opportunity to meet volunteers from other Centers and exchange helpful information. We plan on attending again whenever in the future these are scheduled.

12. Following our 4th Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2005 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

- a. 117 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our fourth year of operation.
- b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had 181 students in courses this year, i.e. 64 of the 117, or 55% were repeat students.
- c. We are currently teaching 8 courses; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Word, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, PhotoShop, and Excel. We also teach TurboTax and Quicken when there is sufficient demand.
- d. In October we used budgeted, internally generated funds to purchase a laptop computer and a projector which we use together to project instructional material during classes as we lead students step-by-step through the course material contained in our manual (which is also distributed to students for their reference during and after the course). Our first use of this advanced, state-of-the-art teaching environment was in our recently completed PhotoShop course, and we plan to gradually expand this use throughout our curriculum, with our Word course this month being the second in which this technique was used.
- e. We are currently 21 active volunteers. Last year we reported 30 volunteers. The decrease is due to two active volunteer relocating out of town, and others obtaining full-time work, several consulting with IBM, their former employer. Formerly we carried them on our volunteer roster as inactive, this year we removed them, though they know they are welcome to rejoin us when their schedule permits, at which time they will receive a warm welcome back and be added back to the roster. So we are in good shape with active volunteers, though new recruits are always welcome and we actively recruit from our student population as well as in our publicity.

13. Following our 5th Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2006 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

- a. 150 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our fifth year of operation.
- b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had 230 students in courses this year, i.e. 80 of the 150, or 53% were repeat students.
- c. The above numbers include us teaching Word and Excel to Town employees during July and August, our first such joint effort, and we welcome Town employees to take additional courses with us throughout the year as Town requirements may make desirable.
- d. We are currently teaching 9 courses; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Word, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, Introduction to Digital Photography, PhotoShop, and Excel. We also teach Quicken and TurboTax when there is sufficient demand.

e. We increased use of our laptop computer and projector which we use together to project instructional material during classes as we lead students step-by-step through the course material contained in our manual (which is also distributed to students for their reference during and after the course). Our first use of this advanced, state-of-the-art teaching environment was in our PhotoShop course, and we have expanded use throughout our curriculum, with our Word course and others using this technique.

f. We are currently 27 active volunteers. Last year we reported 21 volunteers. The increase is due mainly to recruiting from our more able students, starting them as coaches, as we actively recruit from our student population, as well as in our publicity. We also recruited two new volunteers digital camera savvy which enabled us to introduce a new course, Introduction to Digital Photography, as well as improve our PhotoShop Elements course. So we are in good shape with active volunteers, though new recruits are always welcome.

g. At our October 27 luncheon, Nancy Sirota was awarded a plaque marking her being voted by our volunteers "Outstanding Volunteer 2006". Nancy is one of our ace Word and Advanced Word instructors, and she also developed excellent instructional materials supplemental to our manual for those courses.

14. Following our 6th Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2007 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

a. 180 individual seniors have taken courses with us in our sixth year of operation.

b. Since we have many students take more than one course with us, we have had 240 students in courses this year, i.e. 60 of the 180, or 33% were repeat students.

c. We are currently teaching 9 courses; Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Word, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, Introduction to Digital Photography, PhotoShop, and Excel. We also teach Quicken and TurboTax when there is sufficient demand.

d. We increased use of our laptop computer and projector which we use together to project instructional material during classes as we lead students step-by-step through the course material contained in our manual (which is also distributed to students for their reference during and after the course). Our first use of this advanced, state-of-the-art teaching environment was in our PhotoShop course, and we have expanded use throughout our curriculum, with our Word course and others using this technique.

e. We are currently 24 active volunteers. While this seems a significant number, some are more active than others, so new recruits are always welcome, and we especially prospect among students showing an aptitude to step up and become coaches.

f. On June 11 we held a re-organizational meeting in a successful attempt to get more of our volunteers to share some of the critical administrative duties. I am happy to report that the many Registrar duties, previously performed by one extremely busy volunteer are now shared by 5 volunteers, and some of my Coordinator duties are now handled by other volunteers.

g. One of the 4 new Registrar volunteers, Valerie Castleman undertook to make our annual mailing to our student data base more efficient and effective, and we outsourced this previously onerous and labor-intensive task to Ross Mailing, the same vendor the Town Recreation & Parks Dept. uses, at the same favorable pricing.

15. Following our 7th Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon in November, 2008 I reported the following to our Town Supervisor –

- a. 186 individual students have taken courses with us in our seventh year of operation.
- b. Since 43 of these students, or 23% took more than one course with us, we have had approximately 270 students in courses this year.
- c. We are currently regularly offering 8 courses: Computer Fundamentals, Introduction to Computers, Exploring Windows, Word, Advanced Word, Internet/E-mail, Excel, and a combined Digital Camera and PhotoShop course. We also teach Quicken and TurboTax when there is sufficient demand.
- d. We are currently 24 active volunteers. While this seems a significant number, some are more active than others, so new recruits are always welcome, and we especially prospect among students showing an aptitude to step up and become coaches.
- e. Most of our volunteers act solely as instructors and/or coaches in our classes.
- f. Several, besides instructing and/or coaching keep our computers and software up and running despite hard use by students; schedule classes, students, instructors and coaches for those classes; arrange publicity, etc.
- g. Our publicity has included coverage in newspapers, magazines, and the brochure we developed and distribute together with our year's class schedule in our annual mailing, etc. We are on the Town of North Castle web site, and also in the North Castle Recreation and Parks Department Guide. We also appear in the weekly Westchester Express and regularly in Westchester Generations.
- h. We have accomplished all this and provided this valuable service to the community at unbeatably low cost to students while still showing a large positive net cash flow to the Town, necessary to cover our low operating expenses (thanks to an all volunteer staff) and provide for future hardware and software replacement and upgrades.
- i. We have been participating in RSVP (Retired & Senior Volunteer Program) for many years now, enjoying their annual late fall county-wide volunteer recognition luncheon, and we are enrolled in their mileage reimbursement program under which senior volunteers can be reimbursed for mileage incurred in volunteer activities up to \$35/month.
- j. Two of our volunteers live in retirement communities, and they talk up our operation and send us many students
- k. Our publicity chairperson has ably carried out that responsibility even though she and her husband relocated some distance from Armonk.
- l. We do an annual mailing in August during our July-August summer break of our coming academic year class schedule and the brochure we developed
- m. We benefit from many satisfied students spreading the word about our operation, and we receive students who prefer to come to our Learning Center rather than others that might be closer, even after we advise them of those closer.

16. Our volunteers:

- a. Though we current list 25 volunteers, the 80/20 rule holds, i.e. 80% of the work is accomplished by 20% of the volunteers
- b. Our Registrar is a crucial member of the team. She has won our Outstanding Volunteer Award several times. This charming lady, who speaks with a lovely English accent receives all student calls, interviews new students to assure proper initial course placement, cajoles current students to enroll in follow-on courses, making sure they have the required prerequisites, etc. She has been doing this with us for 4 years now. At her request we have tried for two years to enlist one of our other volunteers to succeed her, but no one wants to

take on this time-intensive task. She has agreed to carry on through June 30, 2009. This is a key exposure for us.

c. We have several very good instructors, but most of our volunteers just want to coach, now and then. It is difficult to get coaches to step up to instructor.

d. Most of our most active volunteers have been with us for many years, and burn-out is a serious risk for continuation of our operation.

e. Our area receives fairly severe winters, and many of our volunteers and potential students are “snowbirds”, i.e. they fly down and winter in Florida so they are not available to us for part of the year.

17. We generate a cash surplus each year, simply because our revenue, at \$50 for each and every course generates more income than our expenses. We are also able to make our purchases on a NYS sales tax-exempt basis using the Town’s tax exempt certificate.

18. In previous years, this surplus resided with the Town, our sponsor, and was not available to us.

19. We cleared with the Town that for 2008 we would budget for a zero net cash flow, i.e. the surplus we generated would be disbursed to SeniorNet HQ as a “special dividend”.

20. A major reason is recognition and thanks for the initial support in getting Armonk SeniorNet started upon our inception and the continuing support provided.

21. I have budgeted a 2009 “special dividend” as well.

Art Adelman
Seniornet Learning Center Coordinator