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Opinion

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Program can teach new technology to older adults

Re the Jan. 1 story “How older people looking for COVID vaccines struggle with and conquer a digital divide:” There are so many older adults in our community who are not tech savvy, and if in the past they depended on family and friends to help them, in the age of COVID-19, they no longer have that social interaction.

The South Florida Institute on Aging offers free technical and teaching classes through SoFIA Tech Services, which teaches important digital literacy skills such as effective online searches to access health benefits, navigation of online portals for prescription ordering and the use of the internet to plan routes or order transportation to medical providers.

Based on our internal data, SoFIA Tech training has had a profound impact: 90 percent of users felt more confident in accessing Social Security and Veterans Administration or Medicaid/Medicare benefits; 77 percent felt more connected to friends, family and the community; and 71 percent reported an increase in their confidence to remain independent.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, SoFIA has helped train and prepare older adults to be able to use these tools, while reducing social isolation through an interactive educational environment.

To date, SoFIA has provided nearly 250 tablets to older adults and volunteers.

We invite the older population in our community to take advantage of our services and programs.

In addition, we also welcome sponsors and donors to help empower our older population to think, act and thrive.

*- Nikki Austin-Shipp,
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