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Valdez Plaza Graduation

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Community Technology Network
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In early 2016, CTN partnered with a wonderful organization called Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA). SAHA is an organization that's committed to building long-term communities for low-income and special needs populations. We formed this partnership to offer in-house digital literacy training to SAHA residents.

One of CTN's core beliefs that you're never too old to learn, and we appreciate these seniors who have the courage to take on learning new technology later in life. Recently we celebrated a graduation at Valdez Plaza, a SAHA housing site located in Oakland. Over a three-week period, seniors gathered to cover the fundamentals of how to find their way around a tablet computer. Starting with the basics, students are shown how to navigate through the machine's user interface with the goal of learning how to approach the tablet in useful ways. One of the perks of the program is that, following graduation, the students get to keep the very device they've been learning on. With patience and encouragement, our learners begin to look beyond what may seem an intimidating piece of hardware at first, to eventually grasp its capabilities as a tool. Soon students start seeing the tablet as a cooking school (YouTube), or a window to keep in touch with loved ones overseas (WeChat). By the end of the training, learners have set up email accounts and know how to develop strong passwords and how to be more safe online. At graduation, students were generous with their honest and affecting perspective on experiencing the digital divide. Two students delivered speeches about their experiences of the training. One reminded us of the challenges the students face as a whole adjusting to American society as older adults and thanked CTN for providing the opportunity to learn. I was gratified to see the pride in the eyes of my students as they received their tablets and graduation certificates. Many thanks to SAHA for their stewardship in providing this curriculum that becomes such a resource for hope.

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