

YOUR QUESTION ANSWERED**TechAge offers computer help for seniors****The question**

How can I learn about computers as an older adult — so I can keep up with my grandkids?

The questions

TechAge Adult Computer Learning center, which is located in the JCC of Greater Rochester in Brighton, is a perfect and affordable option for those over the age of 45 who are looking to improve their computer skills.

The non-profit organization teaches classes on everything from beginner introduction to digital photography classes. Over 3,000 students have taken the 7,000 classes that have been offered by TechAge since its inception in 2000.

Why is the program so successful? "The key is that people never feel intimidated," said Horace Becker, a volunteer from Bushnell's Basin, and also a retired vice president of Xerox.

That's because most of the instructors and coaches are also older adults, who are retired and using their free time to give back to the community.

"The instructors being the same age as the students definitely adds to the comfort level," said Judy Bubel, a volunteer from Chili.

The classes are also very small — there are only 10 students in each section, with one instructor and three coaches in the classroom for one-on-one assistance. Students never feel left behind, and additional



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Joel Elias, standing, gives instructions to students at TechAge.

coaches are also available for those with hearing or sight problems. Most classes consist of a session once per week for eight weeks, but there are some four-week classes available as well. There are morning, afternoon and evening sessions, and prices range from \$40 for the four-week classes to \$75 for the eight-week session. The money goes to maintaining computers and paying to print their own handbooks, which have step-by-step instructions for the tasks the students learn in class. "Then they can go home and do it themselves," said Joel Elias, a volunteer instructor, said.

Apart from formal classes, students

can participate in open lab from noon until 2 p.m. every Monday-Friday. This service, which offers individual help with instructors and coaches, is available for free a year after enrollment in the class. On Wednesdays during open lab, TechAge offers "Ask the Pros" sessions with computer experts on hand to fix computers and help students with software problems. Classes and seminars vary from season to season, so check www.rnyseniornet.org for the latest information, or call (585) 461-2000 x463.

— Jessica Bagley