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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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ALABAMA K-12 STUDENTS MENTORING SENIOR RESIDENTS IN USING TECHNOLOGY

Montgomery, Ala. – A few years ago, the documentary Cyber-Seniors started an international conversation about the growing generational gap that existed in cyber space and technology (http://cyberseniorsdocumentary.com/). While many parts of our lives were moving online – shopping, bill payments, and banking – a whole generation of Americans was being left out.

This week AT&T, the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), and the Alabama State Department of Education officially announced Alabama’s new statewide technology mentoring initiative for senior adults.

Alabama’s new Cyber-Seniors program will allow K-12 students to mentor senior adults in technology, social media, and computer usage. This program’s primary goal is to create stronger intergenerational connections to bridge technology gaps in our state. This event was held at the LeRoy McAbee Activity Center in Tuscaloosa.

“This technology program links generations – it will pair student trainers with senior learners,” said Collie Wells, Education Administrator for the Alabama State Department of Education. “This personal one-on-one learning experience will benefit all involved. Senior adults will enjoy an increased understanding of technology. Student trainers will sharpen their leadership skills, which will help them to further prepare for a lifetime of college, career, and social success.”

During this event, the Brookwood High School FCCLA Chapter conducted a brief demonstration to show the types of specialized technology skills that senior participants will receive through this program. Top executives from each of the partnering organizations, along with local officials and state representatives, were speakers at this event.

“High-speed Internet has quickly become a preferred way to access information and communicate,” stated Fred McCallum, President of AT&T Alabama. “We believe that enabling dedicated students to engage and inform Alabama seniors on the many benefits of digital literacy will help boost statewide Internet adoption rates and further connect our state.”

According to current research, senior adults are one of America’s fastest growing groups in Internet usage. Approximately 59 percent of adults (ages 65 years and above) indicate that they now use the Internet. Research also indicates that once seniors start using this resource, it becomes an important part of their routine – 71 percent report going online daily after becoming familiar with this technology (http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/04/29/older-adults-and-technology/).

“Technology is no longer something seniors avoid, and this statewide pilot program aims to help our seniors embrace the many benefits of digital literacy,” stated Neal Morrison, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Senior Services. “We are working to ensure Alabama’s seniors are enabled with important tools to assist in monitoring and managing nutritional and medical needs and increasing interaction with the ones they love by connecting with ease.”

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ALABAMA CYBER-SENIORS INITIATIVE
Increasing State’s Senior Resident Technology Skills

Local schools and senior centers statewide involved in this community service program are:

- Geneva County High School FCCLA Chapter – Hartford Senior Center
- Brookwood High School FCCLA Chapter – McAbee Activity Center
- Priceville/West Morgan/Athens High Schools FCCLA Chapters – Neel Senior Center
- Arab High School FCCLA Chapter – Arab Senior Center
- Spanish Fort High School and Robertsdale High School FCCLA Chapters – Daphne Sail Center
- Woodland High School FCCLA Chapter – Woodland Community Center

This initiative will also provide students with an excellent opportunity to teach senior residents about e-mail, online maps, downloading applications, using iBooks, accessing information on tablets, and new ways to use their mobile and smart phone devices.

“Our amazing FCCLA students helped develop the curriculum for this technology program and are working monthly with seniors to illustrate the importance of digital literacy and safety for all generations,” said Jennifer Adams, State Adviser for the Alabama FCCLA Association. “Our FCCLA students are working with seniors on an array of digital tasks – everything from learning how to video chat with friends and family, security locks and codes to protect devices and personal data, posting photos on Facebook, and using calendars and reminder apps for important things like doctor’s appointments. This is an exciting program. FCCLA is proud to be a partner with the Alabama State Department of Education, Alabama Department of Senior Services, and AT&T.”

To learn more about this innovative initiative, contact one of the following individuals:

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