



## **SeniorNet is Celebrating their 25th Anniversary!**

### ***Yesterday's Highlights ....***

SeniorNet was founded in 1986 by Dr. Mary Furlong. Dr. Furlong realized that the senior population had a great deal of talent and experience to bring to the table. Her goal was to use technology to create a sense of community for older adults where they could share what they were learning to enhance their lives and the lives of others.

Although she encountered skepticism as she tried to find funding for a program to support seniors using computers, she was able to convince New York based Markle Foundation to help. Lloyd N. Morrisett, Markle Foundation's President recognized the potential that existed and

funded a research project, based at the University of San Francisco. Five learning centers were opened with twenty seniors in 1986. Apple Computer donated computers to the individuals and centers.

In 1990, SeniorNet became a Corporation in the State of California. It wasn't until 1994 that SeniorNet was officially recognized as a 501(c) (3). Now an educational non-profit organization, SeniorNet established its first independent headquarters in San Francisco, CA. Over the next several years, SeniorNet earned respect in the community and gained new sponsors, which led to the opening of more Learning Centers. Around this time, the organization started to receive national press attention, which caused a flood of interest from seniors all across the country.

When asked about her vision for SeniorNet, Mary Furlong said, "My vision for SeniorNet is that it would one day to be as successful as *Sesame Street* was for young children."

Keeping that vision in mind .... in 2006, SeniorNet led by Chairman Leslie M. Smith, an IBM Business Development Executive, celebrated its 20th Anniversary with an expanded focus to bring computer access and education to older adults in under-served communities. This resulted in Learning Centers being opened on five Native American Reservations which were made possible through an IBM grant. In addition, three scholarship-based Learning Centers were established through a grant from the HRC Foundation.

### ***Today's Accomplishments ....***

Fast forward 25 years and today, SeniorNet is the nation's premier provider of computer education to those in need (seniors and underserved). Now head quartered in Herndon, VA (since 2009), SeniorNet has opened up new worlds of information to more than a million people through Learning Centers and online communities. People from across the country have

benefited from SeniorNet's mission - enabling them to share and enjoy a world of wisdom through computers. Today SeniorNet has more than 8,000 members and 3,100 volunteers.

2009 was a pivotal year for SeniorNet. Still under the leadership of Leslie M. Smith, SeniorNet continued to thrive. Smith shared, "In the midst of a national economic crisis with major corporations going bankrupt, the healthcare issue, and unemployment reaching 10%, SeniorNet stuck with their plan of providing tangible value."

Several new processes and ideas were implemented to improve communications between HQ and Learning Centers. This included Monthly Newsletters (with a special focus on Center of the Month), Special Reports, Standard Operating Procedures, and Circle of Friends.

Collaboration with Sponsors and Partners like Microsoft, AT&T, IBM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tech Soup and Adobe resulted in Learning Center pilots, cell phone coaching sessions, discounted software and software donations. Chairman Awards recognized those Learning Centers who went above and beyond to help their communities. As a result 'Best Practices' were shared with other Learning Centers.

Curriculum, one of the life lines for SeniorNet also continued to expand with new and revised courses. It was a year to be proud of ....and helped paved the way for more to come.

The new ideas from 2009 extended into 2010. Sponsors and Partners continued their support through software grants, curriculum assistance and special Open Houses for Learning Centers. And SeniorNet's website got a new look to make it more 'user-friendly.' as well as, made it easier for people to join/re-new their membership.

***Tomorrow's Vision ....***

In 2011, SeniorNet celebrates 25 years – a milestone to be proud of! However, quoting famous Poet Robert Frost, Smith said, “We have miles to go before we sleep”.

The heart of SeniorNet continues to be its members and volunteers. This is an exciting journey and one that we are sharing together.

Stay tuned as SeniorNet turns 25. There are many new and beneficial projects on the horizon ... and millions more to educate!