



## NEWS

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### New WISE Connections Project Helps Older Adults Cross the Digital Divide

#### *Eight Hours of Training Earns Eligible Seniors a Free Laptop*

**SANTA MONICA, CALIF. (May 5, 2022)** – WISE & Healthy Aging is pleased to announce the launch of WISE Connections, a new project that will help eligible older adults in Los Angeles County master basic computer and internet skills to earn them a free laptop once they have completed a series of training sessions.



#### **WISE CONNECTIONS**

Connect with Family, Friends & Community Activities

Get more information and sign up! Call WISE & Healthy Aging at (310) 394-9871

Funded by a \$99,942 grant from the California Advanced Services Fund through the California Public Utilities Commission, WISE Connections kicked off its first class this week and is open to low-income eligible adults aged 50 and older.

WISE Connections will enable older adults with lower incomes, as specified by the California Public Utilities Commission, to earn a free Chromebook/laptop once they have completed eight hours of computer and internet training. Trainings include a series of 60-to-90-minute classes on computer and internet basics, staying safe online, using email and Zoom, as well as how to use Microsoft Word. Individuals interested in signing up for WISE Connections can call: 310-394-9871.

“By the end of the training, our goal is that participants in WISE Connections will be able to confidently use their new laptops to safely access the internet and connect with their loved ones, pay bills, refill prescriptions, access virtual programming and order groceries,” said Nikki Davis, Vice President of Program Administration at WISE & Healthy Aging.

While the fast and ever-changing pace of technology is challenging even among the most tech savvy, it is older adults who often struggle to keep up with its steep learning curve.

“Some of the challenges older adults deal with are entirely technical — like learning to push screen icons that work like buttons and using a mouse — or convincing them that learning how to use their computer is worth the effort,” said Davis. “But then came the pandemic, which really changed all that, proving that the oldest among us could and did learn to use Zoom.”

A [2021 AARP](#) study confirmed that more older adults (44%) viewed tech more positively as a way to stay connected with family and friends than they did before COVID-19 and increased their purchases of tech devices accordingly. At the same time, 54% acknowledged they were not confident about using the technology and needed to learn more.

The pandemic also underscored the digital divide that existed between those who have easy access to the internet – and to those who do not – with the AARP study finding that 18% of adults 50+ did not have any access to the internet, mostly because they could not afford it.

“With more of what we need to do in life going online, it’s important that we not only train older adults to use the technology, but that we make it available for those who couldn’t afford it otherwise,” said Davis. “WISE Connections will help to do just that.”

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### **About WISE & Healthy Aging**

WISE & Healthy Aging is a multiservice, community-based nonprofit organization serving older adults and their families and caregivers throughout Los Angeles County. Headquartered in Santa Monica, the team at WISE & Healthy Aging works to advance the dignity and quality of life of older adults through leadership, advocacy, and high-quality, innovative services.



***Class learns basic computer and internet skills at first WISE Connections training on May 4, 2022.***