



July 2009

VAN FORUM

Getting a Handle on Social Networking

Online Sites Offer New Opportunities and Challenges

Social Networking, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blogs are common buzz words in today's society. If you are left wondering what all the hype is about, come to this forum. Dr. Lightfoot will explain the benefits of social networking and will take you into the world of Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs, and YouTube.

You will learn:

- How to create personal accounts on social networking sites
- How to design your own blog; Dr. Lightfoot will create one with you during the Forum

- How to reap the benefits of social networking for yourself personally and for society as a whole
- How to activate and control privacy settings

Featured Speaker

Elizabeth (Liz) Lightfoot, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Director of the Ph.D. Program, University of Minnesota School of Social Work

Dr. Lightfoot holds a M.S.W. from the University of Minnesota School of Social Work and a Ph.D. in Public Policy from Indiana University. She teaches about web technologies in her community organizing class and lectures about it at national conferences.

Questions? Need a ride? Call VAN at 651-917-4652.

"Each friend represents a world in us; a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only in meeting them that a new world is born."

—Anais Nin



Getting a Handle on Social Networking

Tuesday, July 14, 2009

10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Free and Open to the Public

**Southdale Library
Ethel Berry Room
7001 York Avenue South
Edina, MN 55435**

[Map to Southdale Library](#)

In This Issue

Getting a Handle on Social Networking	1
Social Networking Offers Many Potential Benefits?	2
Social Networking 101	4
From the Chair	6
Volunteering Spotlight	7
For Your Calendar	8

Save the date
August VAN FORUM

ALVA Update

August 11, 2009

10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Additional information on page 8

Social Networking Offers Many Potential Benefits

Recently, YouTube made an unknown Scottish singer, Susan Boyle, an overnight international sensation. Online social networking sites have become a cultural phenomenon. Primarily used by people 25 and under in the past, these sites are now attracting older individuals.

According to a recent article in *USA Today*, "[Boomers Zero in on Social Networks](#)," baby boomers are rushing to social networking sites and are the fastest-growing group of users.

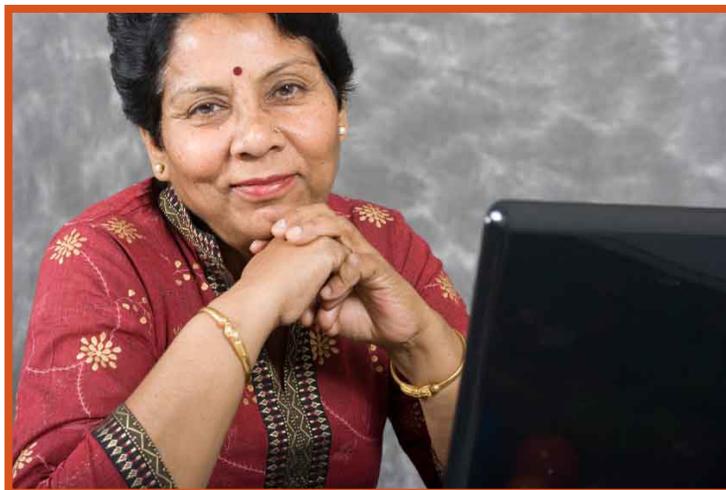
What do all these sites mean to you? Social networking affords you another way to connect with others, which can add to the quality of your life and potentially provide health benefits. And, social networking is just plain fun.

The following articles might entice you to hop on the social networking bandwagon:

- **Stephanie Clifford, of the *New York Times*, recently wrote the article "[Online, 'a Reason to Keep on Going.'](#)"**

Clifford writes, "That more and more people (older adults)...are joining networks like *Eons*, *Facebook*, and *MySpace* is hardly news...But now researchers who focus on aging are studying the phenomenon to see whether the networks can provide some of the benefits of a group of friends while being much easier to assemble and maintain."

People interviewed by Clifford said that online social networking



provides them a reason to keep going. Social networking and technology provides older adults the opportunity to make new connections, and perhaps, to decrease the isolation and loneliness that can plague old age.

- **An article by Tara Parker-Pope in the *New York Times*, "[What are Friends For? A Longer Life](#)" highlights the importance that friendship plays in maintaining health.**

Parker-Pope writes that researchers are only now beginning to look at the benefit that relationships play in overall health. Parker Pope refers to *The Girls from Ames: A Story of Women and a 40-Year Friendship* by Jeffrey Zaslow, which illustrates how friendships continue to sustain the women throughout their lives.

Rebecca Adams, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro states, "Friendship has a bigger impact on our psychological well-being than family relationships."

These findings encourage us to consider the question: Can virtual relationships provide the same health benefits as friends or family provide in person?

- **Lev Grossman provides a humorous perspective on social networking in an article entitled "[Why Facebook is for Old Fogies](#)," which was published February 12, 2009 on *Time.com*.**

Grossman offers 10 humorous but real reasons why older adults, particularly boomers, would enjoy this

continued on page 3

Social Networking, continued

phenomenon. As his top reason, he indicates that Facebook is about finding people that you have lost track of over the years.

Grossman writes, "And, son, we've lost track of more people than you've ever met. Remember who you went to prom with junior year? See, we don't..." He ends by stating, "Facebook never forgets."

- **Anita Gates, of the *New York Times*, also wrote about the joy that Facebook can provide.**

In her article, "[For Baby Boomers, the Joys of Facebook](#)," she writes, "Finding or being found by old, old friends, all the way back to grammar school, can be a real kick. How many 14-year-olds have truly long-lost friends?"

It seems that the ability to find old, old friends on Facebook will continue, especially since women over 55 are the fastest growing group of consumers on the site according to [InsideFacebook](#).

Why jump on the social network bandwagon?

- Reconnecting with long-lost friends? Check ✓
- Benefiting your health? Possible check ✓
- Providing a reason to keep going? Check ✓
- Changing demographics of users? Check ✓

Joseph F. Coughlin, director of AgeLab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said to Stephanie Clifford in "[Online, 'a Reason to Keep on Going'](#)" "The new future of old age is about staying in society, staying in the workplace, and staying very connected. Technology is going to be a very big part of that (future)."

Providing you the opportunity to be engaged throughout your lifetime? Check ✓



Helping Your Program Survive and Grow

Taking a fresh look at volunteers

Saturday, July 18, 2009 - 1:30 PM to 5:30 PM

Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Open to the public; pre-registration is required.

Tap into the potential of older adults to help communities. Participants will learn about best practices and latest trends and have opportunities to interact with national experts.

Mark Skeie, Chair of the Vital Aging Network, will present as part of a panel titled, "Benefits and Value of Service and Exceptional Models." [\[pdf flyer\]](#)

Registration fee \$45 (no additional charge for those registered for the full conference). Register by July 6 at www.n4a.org click "Register Today."

Social Networking 101

By Emily Strand, VAN Program Specialist and highly valued millennium mentor

Social networking sites allow you to connect with others, find new and old friends, and share information on the internet. Popular social networking sites include: MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. You also can find social networks that are geared towards people with particular interests such as myartspace.com for artists and myfolia.com for gardeners.

Wondering how to get started? Here are the steps I recommend:

Step 1: Determine the Right Social Networking Site

- Ask your friends and family members if they participate in social networking sites, and, if they say “yes,” ask them “which ones?”
- Decide what you want to get out of your social networking experience. Do you want to make professional connections or connect with friends and family? Or do you want to connect with people with similar interests, such as quilting or gardening?

The following brief overview of popular sites also can help you determine which one is right for you:

- If you are looking for connections that will help your career, LinkedIn is probably your best bet.

This tool is the most professionally oriented of social networking tools. LinkedIn advertises that it has over 40 million users that exchange information, ideas, and opportunities.

- If you are hoping to connect with family and friends, MySpace and Facebook are the way to go. Facebook and



MySpace primarily connect people to others that they know.

MySpace allows you to personalize your profile to a greater degree than most networks. You can add music and decorate the background of pages to personalize your profile.

Facebook uses a standard background for all users. Many find Facebook screens more orderly and easier to follow.

- If you want to meet people with similar interests, a good place is eons.com or meetup.com.

Eons.com is a social networking site targeted to boomers. It allows you to connect with friends and to make new ones based on shared social interests.

Meetup.com is a website where you can find groups who participate in activities or other things that you might enjoy. People plan activities based on these interests and get together. Groups range from participating in book clubs, volunteering, or hiking to scrapbooking.

- If you want to keep people updated on your status, then Facebook and Twitter are the way to go.

Twitter asks the question: What are you doing? You have 140 characters to answer. Each entry is a status update or a *tweet*. People can set up links to

follow your status, and you can follow others. Facebook provides space for similar status updates with the question: What's on your mind?

Step 2: Sign Up

When you have determined the right place for you, sign up.

continued on page 5

Social Networking 101, continued



At most sites, you need to sign in with an e-mail address and create a password.

Tip: Make sure your password has capital letters, numbers, and lowercase letters in it.

Step 3: Create a Profile

Your profile allows you to post information about you. Remember that you can decide how much information you want to put on your profile. I have found that my friends who are 50+ tend to put their name, birth date (minus the year!), hometown, and educational and employment information.

I suggest that you at least put your high school or college in your profile as doing so allows you to find other people who went to school with you. You can add photos, videos, and regular updates about what you are doing. Don't put something on the site that you are not feel comfortable sharing with the world.

Step 4: Find Other People or Organizations

You can find others on these sites by searching for people from your high school, college, or even elementary school. Recently, I was able to reconnect with a friend from 2nd grade who moved away. Twenty years later, I learned about his life since he moved.

On Facebook, you also can search for people by typing in a name. The site allows you to identify

people who are your friends. After you identify people as friends, Facebook automatically suggests people that you may know based on shared connections. You also can become fans of organizations, musicians, causes, or nonprofits.

Step 5: Choose your Privacy Settings

On all sites, you can choose how private you want to make your information. People cannot access your information if you don't want them to do so.

For example, on Facebook only people that are your in your *network* can view your profile, but you can limit viewing to *friends*. A network on Facebook is any community/group to which you choose to belong. It could be a geographic place, school, or company. For example, I belong to the Minneapolis/St. Paul network. However, I have controlled my settings so that only my friends can see the information on my profile. On Facebook, you can control your privacy by clicking on **Settings** at the top of the page.

Step 6: Have Fun and Enjoy

Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other networks are fun ways to stay connected with other people.

For more information about social networking, visit the following helpful websites:

- <http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking>
This site provides a video that offers a very basic overview of social networking.
- http://www.aarpmagazine.org/games/lifestyle/secrets_of_social_networking.html
AARP's website offers help in understanding terminology, creating Facebook accounts, and learning the etiquette of social networking sites.
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_networking
This site offers an overview of terms, provides a history of social networking, and identifies its uses.

From the Chair

Social Networking: Just One More Way to Stay Connected

We often take our networks for granted. When we were children, we made connections in our neighborhood, schools, churches, sports, 4-H, or a scouting program. After we entered the workforce, the importance of our networks grew. In our careers, our networks are often the single most important factor in getting a promotion or a job. Having an active network is just as important as we age.

In our later years, our social networks are often friends and colleagues from work, school, or organizations that we joined along the way. For most of us, they are a critical part of our lives. Our networks include individuals with whom we share our successes or from whom we get the support that we need when we are confronted with a crisis. Without them our lives can be a little more difficult; with them, we have true treasures.

When we go through a transition such as retirement, a layoff, or a change in jobs we often need to rebuild our social networks. For most of us, that task is easier said than done. But it is a critical task that we should not overlook. Social isolation is one of the major problems of our aging population.

With the popularity of online social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn, we now have even more ways to connect. They serve a purpose and are often a good way to connect with friends with whom we have lost contact.

Getting on the social networking bandwagon is not always easy for those of us who didn't grow up in the internet age. I recently spoke with [Trish Herbert](#), author of the *Vintage Journey: A Guide to Artful Aging* and a new book *Journeywell: A Guide to Quality Aging*. When Trish gets a request from someone to be a friend on Facebook, she responds, "I thought I was your friend!" I know how she feels. Having a network of friends to call, have coffee with, go for a walk with, or just be present in your life is critical to our well-being. Connecting on the web is just one more way to maintain your network.

Don't be afraid to try one of the social networking tools. You just might amaze your grandchildren again!

Thank You



Mark Skeie
Chair, VAN Leadership Group



Volunteering Spotlight

Can we help spread the word about a volunteer opportunity in your organization? Send us information by the 10th of the month for publication in the e-Bulletin for the next month. While we will make every effort to include what you send us, space is limited.

The Bakken Museum Volunteer Tour Guides

Celebrate summer with the Bakken Museum! The *10 Best Days of the Bakken* coincides with the Minneapolis Aquatennial beginning on Friday, July 17. The museum needs volunteers to give guided tours of the 1930s Tudor mansion. The mansion houses the museum's collections and spectacular gardens! No previous knowledge is necessary, and the museum provides all required training. Shifts are available on July 19 and 26 from 12:45 to 3:00 p.m. For further details or to sign up, contact the Volunteer Department at info@thebakken.org or visit www.thebakken.org.

Greg Coleman Celebrity Golf Tournament (ACES) Golf Tournament Volunteer

Join ACES on Monday, August 24, 2009 at the Victory Links Golf Club in Blaine, Minnesota. ACES, a premier after-school tutoring and mentoring program in the Twin Cities, is holding a celebrity golf tournament with host Greg Coleman. ACES needs volunteers to register players and celebrities, provide hospitality, witness hole contests, and assist with prizes and the live auction. Volunteering times are flexible. ACES provides a meal. For more information, contact Anna Wienke at annawienke@aces4kids.org or call 612-331-3454.

Athletes Committed to Educating Students (ACES) Triathlon Volunteers

Have fun and volunteer with ACES at the Life Time Fitness Triathlon 2009. The triathlon takes place on Saturday July 11, 2009 from 6:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Lake Nokomis in South Minneapolis. Your participation will help ACES meet its 60-volunteers goal and secure both financial and in-kind contributions for ACES. Your volunteering helps ACES continue its after-school mentoring and tutoring program that assists over 300



students during the school year. For further details or to sign up, contact Whitney McGrew at mcgr0214@umn.edu or call 612-331-3454.

Kinship of Greater Minneapolis Teachers of Lifeskills

Kinship of Greater Minneapolis is looking for volunteers interested in teaching classes in lifeskills to kids. Teaching is a great opportunity to share the wisdom and skills that you have developed over a lifetime. Provide intergenerational learning on topics like financial literacy, social skills, career options, peer choices, and personal strengths and talents. Volunteers help Kinship reach a select group of low-income kids who may not have the financial resources to attend other opportunities in the community. Volunteering might be for a 4-hour workshop or two 2.5-hour classes. Volunteers can help Kinship design formats highlighting their teaching abilities. For further information, contact Penny Kallas at (612) 588-4655 or visit the website at www.kinship.org.

For Your CALENDAR



AUGUST VAN FORUM

ALVA Update

VAN is pleased to announce that the agency will offer the 2009–2010 course in three locations around the state—Century College in White Bear Lake, Inver Hills Community College in Inver Grove Heights, and Minnesota State University in Mankato—starting October 9, 2009. Join us for this forum to learn more about the life-changing course.

Presenters:

- Kris Orluck, ALVA Task Force Chair and Senior Coordinator, Parks and Recreation Board, City of Maple Grove
- Mary Kowalski, ALVA Task Force; Retired, 3M, Training and Development

August 11, 2009
10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Free and Open to the Public

Lenox Community Center
 Art Room 108
 6715 Minnetonka Blvd
 St. Louis Park, MN 55426

[Map to Lenox
 Community Center](#)

THORNTON WILDER'S *THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH*

The Minneapolis Theater Garage

Opens July 2, 2009

Girl Friday Productions will feature *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Written in 1942, *The Skin of Our Teeth* remains remarkably relevant today. Through the adventures of one American family, the play examines the cyclical nature of human existence. The Antrobus family, their maid Sabina and a host of other characters prevail over a series of catastrophes, both natural and man-made. The Director Benjamin McGovern currently serves as associate director of studio programming for The Guthrie Theater. Tickets are \$20, and discounts are available for students, seniors, and groups. For reservations, call 612-729-1071 or visit www.girlfridayproductions.org.

THE DRAGON FESTIVAL

July 11 and July 12, 2009

This annual two-day event starts at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 11, 2009. The Dragon Festival takes place at Lake Phalen Park, and the event features the cultural heritage of local Asian Pacific Islanders, cooking, demonstrations of Asian street foods, make-up tips for Asian women and dragon-boat races. For additional information, visit www.dragonfestival.org.

25TH ANNIVERSARY COMPETITION

Minnesota Community Pride

Nominations due by July 17, 2009

Enter your community or your community's project in the 25th Anniversary Minnesota Community Pride

continued on page 9

For Your CALENDAR, continued

competition. The 2009 Minnesota State Fair will showcase participants and organizers will announce winners at that time. Cash awards will go to winners in each category. The contest is part of the Reinventing Minnesota initiative that strives to recognize communities statewide for their efforts to move beyond the current economic crisis with creative and proactive community and economic development initiatives and to share those best practices with neighbors across the state. Enter at www.reinventingminnesota.org. Contact Jane Cunningham at janeellencunningham@yahoo.com or 651-281-0547 if you have questions.

SUMMER CAMPS FOR PERSONS 55+

Northern Clay Center **Monday through Friday, August 10 to 14** **9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

If you are looking for fun things to do this summer or if you want to enhance your knowledge or learn something new, the Northern Clay Center is offering summer camps for people 55+. A week-long beginners' wheel class for baby boomers will teach all techniques needed to throw pots on the wheel. The center designed this class for students with little or no experience with clay. The cost is \$275. To obtain more information or register, call 612-339-8007 or contact Sarah Millfelt at sarahmillfelt@northernclaycenter.org. Visit www.northernclaycenter.org.

TEA FOR TWO GENERATIONS

Northern Clay Center **July 20 to 24**

Kids and grandparents can work together to create a tea set for everyone to enjoy. The

center offers classes Monday through Friday, July 20 to 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The cost is \$160. For more information or to register, call 612-339-8007 or contact Sarah Millfelt at sarahmillfelt@northernclaycenter.org. Visit www.northernclaycenter.org.

SENIOR CITIZEN DAY

Blue Earth County Fair Sesquicentennial **Friday, July 31**

The celebration starts at 9:00 a.m. with free coffee and donuts and the opportunity to visit booths and vendors. Special entertainment begins at 10:00 a.m. followed by a community theater revue, free lunch, door prizes, and awards. Entrance fee is \$3. For more information, visit www.blueearthcountyfair.org.

2009 NO NAME 5K YOUR WAY

Courage Center **Saturday, August 1, 2009**

Deli Express, Dairy Queen, and the Minnesota Twins present the 2009 *No Name 5K Your Way*, a fun, family-friendly event benefitting the Courage Center. The *No Name 5K Your Way* is open to all ages and abilities. Starting from Courage Center in Golden Valley, participants will travel a 5K (3.1 mile) course on the beautiful walking and biking trails along the scenic Theodore Wirth Parkway. You can run, walk, roll or stroll at your own pace! The 2009 Family Fun Zone features music, face-painting, and games galore. This fundraising event offers great incentives and prizes to groups and individuals who raise at least \$25 per person. To register or for more information, visit www.couragecenter.org.

