



June 2011

VAN FORUM

Social Networking Is for Everyone!

Learn How to Make the Most of Your Accounts

Join Liz Lightfoot as she explains the world of social networking on both a practical and global level. Professor Lightfoot will assist you in understanding the basics of social networking and how social media are playing key roles in society ranging from the everyday social life of youth to the social

movements we are witnessing in the Middle East and North Africa.

You will learn how Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter work and how to manage accounts on these sites. Professor Lightfoot will discuss the benefits and limitations of social networking for you personally and for society as a whole.

Presenter:

Elizabeth (Liz) Lightfoot, Associate Professor and Director of the PhD program at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work

The forum is free and open to the public.

To register, go to www.vital-aging-network.org; look under What's New.

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

"The common reputation of Twitter is that it's frivolous, which isn't the case. If it's set up right, it's a rich environment for lots of learning and sharing of important material. It's not just 'what I had for breakfast.'"

Lee Rainie,
Director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project



Social Networking Is for Everyone!

Friday, June 17, 2011
10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Hennepin County
Southdale Library
Full Meeting Room
7001 York Avenue South
Edina, MN 55435

[Map to Southdale Library](#)

Free and Open
to the Public

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August VAN FORUM

Be the Change: Making a Difference in Your Community

Tuesday, August 9, 2011
10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

[Additional information on page 8](#)

New Ways for Staying Connected

By Liz Lightfoot, Associate Professor and Director of the PhD program at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work

Social networking websites, such as [Facebook](#), allow users to create personal profiles, become *friends* with other users, and post updates, photos, videos, or news stories that their friends can see. Social networking sites also provide opportunities for users to join groups, such as alumni clubs, religious groups, or interest groups, or to become fans of local organizations and establishments. These sites also allow users an easy way to organize events.

Its founders originally established Facebook in 2004 as a way for college students to see photos of their classmates. When it became available to the general public in 2006, the number of users skyrocketed. Currently, over 600 million users worldwide have Facebook accounts. People over age 55 are the fastest growing users of the network.

Some groups have attempted to establish senior-only sites, but older people rejected them. People over age 55 prefer using websites where they can interact with people of all generations. Many grandparents use it to keep in touch with their grandchildren who live far away. Others use Facebook to reconnect with high-school classmates, network professionally, or organize family reunions. For people who live a long way from family or who have difficulty traveling, social networking has opened up a new avenue for staying connected. These tools can be particularly beneficial for the many older people living alone who might otherwise become isolated.



In addition to Facebook, other social networking sites exist and new social networking sites are continuously being developed. [Twitter](#), with 200 million users, is a social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send short messages, otherwise known as *tweets*, to members of their social network. Twitter proved important in the recent Egyptian protests as the protesters used the network for organizing rallies and sharing protest information. [LinkedIn](#) is a social networking website that focuses exclusively on professional networking, and members often use it to recruit employees or seek jobs. LinkedIn currently has over 100 million users. Another useful social networking site is [MyHeritage](#), which provides a means for sharing genealogical information.

For all of these sites, some concerns about privacy and safety exist. Some users unfamiliar with the privacy settings of these websites put up too much personal information on these sites, leaving them vulnerable to information theft. Social networking also provides a new venue for stalking or bullying. Users of social networking need to spend some time learning about the privacy controls and should be careful in sharing personal information or becoming friends with people they don't know or trust.

Despite these concerns, social networking can be a big help in staying connected with friends and family and what's going on in the world.

The ALVA Program Evolves

The Vital Aging Network is excited to announce that the ALVA Leadership Development program is now **Evolve: Re-igniting Self & Community**. Classes start October 14, 2011, at five locations across Minnesota: [Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College](#) in Cloquet, [Inver Hills Community College](#), [North Hennepin Community College](#), [St. Cloud Technical & Community College](#), and [St. Paul College](#).

This year, VAN is also growing the program beyond Minnesota. With a grant from the [New York Life Foundation](#), we also will hold classes in **Denver** and **Seattle** starting this fall.

Evolve is leadership development for people who want to apply their past experiences to making a better world. The program *strengthens* participants' leadership skills, *focuses* their energies, and *connects* them with others who share their visions, interests, and passions.

The class helps participants:

- (Re) discover lifework and connect it with leadership opportunities.



- Understand the opportunities for and barriers to leadership in later life.
- Plan and implement a project to build capacity as a civic leader.
- Build an ongoing network for sharing ideas, knowledge, and resources.

VAN has geared the Evolve class toward people 50+ who possess both a desire to contribute and time to do civic work, usually people who have retired, have entered a preretirement stage, or are working part time.

Now is the perfect time to start planning what you will do this fall. Are you ready to take the leap? Go to www.vital-aging-network.org and click **Evolve** for more information.

Evolve Leaders Are Doing Amazing and Inspiring Work

Teaching English to immigrant elders to alleviate the social isolation that comes with a lack of connection to the mainstream culture.

Developing a community farm for people with mental illness. The farm model allows individuals to live productive lives in a managed-care setting.

Growing and delivering fresh produce to a local food shelf through a collaborative effort that

engages a community of faith, a local boy scout troop, and a food shelf in the area.

Leaders in the 2011 class of **Evolve: Re-igniting Self & Community** initiated these innovative projects. Evolve graduates—over 200 in all—are making positive and lasting changes in their own lives and in their communities.

[Download a list of 2011 projects.](#)

Bringing Fresh Foods to Over 200 Families



Cathy DeSutter

Cathy DeSutter began displaying her talent as a leader early in her life. Her kindergarten teacher called Cathy was a born leader. Cathy went on to demonstrate leadership throughout her high school years, during her career in public accounting with Arthur Andersen, and in a variety of community efforts. Along the way,

she participated in the United Way's Loaned Executive program and completed the Leadership Minneapolis program. She recently retired from her part-time position as assistant controller for Don Stevens, Inc., a distributor of commercial food service and HVAC equipment to the hospitality industry.

"I took the **Evolve: Re-igniting Self & Community** class because I was ready for my next big step," says Cathy. "I wanted to zero in on a passion that would keep me active in my community." The Evolve program helped her achieve that goal. "Our class, which was full of very talented individuals, gained a wealth of knowledge on how to give our talent *legs*. Many of us—myself included—came into the first class with absolutely no ideas for projects. With the help of classroom materials and great discussions with fellow students, we found our projects!"

As her project, Cathy helped the [Lakeville Resource Center](#), a local food shelf, secure storage units for fresh and perishable food. The food shelf serves over 200 families in Lakeville, Apple Valley, Rosemount, Farmington, and Burnsville.

Cathy's research revealed that the demand for food assistance had increased by 40 percent in the past year for Second Harvest Heartlands' service area, which includes over 1,000 agencies in 59 counties throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin. Families in Minnesota miss 125 million meals each year, and one in eight children are at risk of hunger every day.

In 2010, the [Food Center's Hunger Impact Study](#), which analyzed costs and benefits,

found that hunger costs Minnesotans between \$1.26 billion and \$1.62 billion every year in direct and indirect healthcare and educational costs. The most effective antidotes to these costs are the nutrition-rich, fresh foods that are the hardest for at-risk families to afford. Fresh foods equate to better nutrition and a more balanced diet. For food shelves, one of the greatest challenges to offering fresh foods is the lack of storage capacity.

By organizing a collaboration among the Lakeville Resource Center, [Eagan Resource Center](#), Lakeville businesses, and Lakeville civic organizations, Cathy was able to obtain the resources needed to achieve her goal. A \$1,100 grant from the [Thrivent Foundation](#) and cash contributions from the community's banks, businesses, and nonprofits got the fundraising off the ground. Cathy's past employer, Don Stevens, Inc., agreed to sell the equipment at a discount, and Eagan's Hardware Hank agreed to install it at no cost.

The refrigerator was delivered and installed at the food shelf on May 26, and the freezer will follow in June as additional funds are raised. Cathy's leadership has paid off and, as a result, families who would otherwise have gone without fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy foods, and meats are enjoying them.



Volunteers and Barb Dauchy, the Lakeville food shelf operations manager, with the new refrigeration unit.

evolve
re-igniting self & community

In the News

[Elderly Drivers Fail a Test](#) (New York Times, 5/27/11)

In her article, Paula Span discusses research in Australia that found driving errors to be commonplace among adults aged 70 to 88 (without dementia or impaired vision) and to increase in frequency with age. Most commonly, drivers did not check the car's blind spots, but also had problems maintaining lane position and failed to use directional signals. The researcher indicates that age alone does not distinguish poor drivers, and she proposes restrictions based on functional capacity, not age. She also suggested driver retraining and adjustments, such as extra blind-spot mirrors, to improve the older driver's performance.

[Recovering from the Great Recession: Long Struggle Ahead for Older Americans](#) (AARP Public Policy Institute, May 2011)

In this article, Sara E. Rix discusses the findings from a survey of 5,027 Americans aged 50 and older about their experiences during the current recession. The results were disheartening:

- Nearly 30 percent either were unemployed and

looking for work at the time of the survey or were employed but had been involuntarily unemployed in the previous three years.

- Nearly one-third found that their homes had declined significantly in value.
- A large number fell behind on or accumulated more debt on credit cards.
- More than half worried about not having enough money for a comfortable life during retirement.
- More than two out of five anticipate working part time during retirement.
- One-third expects to postpone retirement.

[Age4Action Network Newsletter](#)

Age4Action is a national network of organizations that works to leverage the talents, expertise, and experience of people 50+ for civic good. VAN is a founding member of the Age4Action Network. Take a look at the network's [latest newsletter](#).

Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program

Applications due June 30

The Retiree Environmental Technical Assistance Program (RETAP) is a program of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. RETAP employs retired environmental professionals and engineers from a variety of fields, including heating and ventilation, lighting efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, and commercial-site stormwater management. Consultants are paid an hourly rate. They conduct

environmental assessments of small businesses, nonprofits, and public facilities in Minnesota on a flexible, part-time basis at no charge to the clients. Look for details and application materials at www.pca.state.mn.us/RETAP. Contact Madalyn Cioci at madalyn.cioci@state.mn.us or 651-757-2276 for more information.

Guest Column

Social Media as a Tool for Civic Engagement

By Grit Youngquist, Leadership Group Member, Vital Aging Network

I really enjoy social networking, particularly Facebook and LinkedIn. They are a great fit for how I think, work, live, and stay civically engaged.

I use Facebook regularly to connect with people in my personal life. I love getting messages from friends and family with updates about their lives. Increasingly, I use these networks to help me do my work and stay connected in my civic work.

Work

I often post information that my workplace (public health) wants publicized. Over the past year, I've developed over 500 contacts on LinkedIn, which is an excellent avenue for communicating quickly with a lot of people from different sectors. The site is particularly useful when I am looking for resources or knowledge that other people can provide.

Civic Engagement

As I reflected on how I use Facebook, I was somewhat surprised to discover that Facebook has become a primary vehicle for my civic-engagement activities.

Friends of Lilydale Park

My husband and I are leaders of a group called Friends of Lilydale Park. The park lies in the heart of Saint Paul on the Mississippi River not far from downtown. Previously, we used email to connect to the group's approximately 300 members, but in the past year, we developed a Facebook page. Some members have switched to Facebook as their way of connecting with us

and our information. The page also has helped attract more people to the group, which now has approximately 185 Facebook friends. The site allows anyone in the group to post messages and photos. As I write, a member is posting photos of a favorite spot in the park that is in dire need of a clean-up, and he is using the site to organize other volunteers to make it happen.

Neighborhood Block Club

Facebook is also a place where my neighbors and I convene to address issues in our neighborhood. Last fall, someone stalked a neighbor while she was running, and Facebook provided a quick, easy way for her to share detailed information about what had happened as a way to alert others. Members exchanged tips for running more safely in the early morning hours, and some people began to run with a buddy as a result.

Friends & Amigos of Baker Community Center

My husband and I also are involved with a neighborhood group called FAB! (Friends & Amigos of Baker Community Center!). This group is a forum for neighbors who are responding to the city's anticipated budget cuts, which could have dire consequences for the recreation center, elementary school, and shared swimming pool near where we live. A professional photographer, who lives in the neighborhood, attends activities and events that the group hosts. She posts her beautiful photos on the group's Facebook page in support of its efforts to reduce the impact of cuts on these amenities.

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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 Coordinators

Are you organized? Do you like participating in special events? If so, help The Bakken Museum this summer with its biggest event of the year: The 10 Best Days of the Bakken! For 10 straight days, the Bakken Museum hosts special activities and helps 5,000 guests have a great time. This event requires a number of volunteers to make it successful. Volunteers must be available between June 5 and July 25, have data entry experience, and be able to take direction and execute plans. To volunteer, fill out the volunteer application online at www.thebakken.org/volunteer.

Beacon Bluff Business Center Greening Volunteers

The new Beacon Bluff Business Center, at the site of 3M's former corporate campus on the east side of Saint Paul, needs greening volunteers. The business center is home to the next generation of storm-sewer management systems, including the largest underground filtration system in Minnesota. Greening volunteers will plant trees, shrubs, and grasses to ensure stormwater is properly managed at this innovative urban green space. Volunteers' efforts help prevent pollutants and sediments from entering the Mississippi River. Exhibits and community representatives educate volunteers about the many innovative environmental systems at the site. Space is limited for this exciting



volunteer event, so sign up today! To register, contact Mark Turbak, Greening Volunteer Program and Event Manager, at volunteer@greatrivergreening.org or 651-665-9500 ext. 11.

Free Arts Minnesota Mentors

Work with kids and art as a mentor! Work with a team of volunteers to lead abused, neglected, and at-risk children in art projects for two hours per week. The Weekly Mentorship Program offers children an opportunity to develop healthy relationships with adults, increase their sense of self-worth, and learn new ways to communicate through participation in the arts. Volunteer opportunities exist throughout the Twin Cities and at varying times, including evenings and weekends. The organization provides training. The position requires no artistic background though creativity is welcome! Contact Hannah at 612-824-2787 or visit www.freeartsminnesota.org/.

HandsOn Twin Cities Frontier Volunteers

Frontier Volunteers spend time at Gibbs Farm in St. Paul making minor repairs (painting, window-washing, repairing paths, etc.) and doing garden work to support historical preservation of the farm and surrounding prairie. Volunteer the fourth Saturday of each month from 10 am to 12 noon. For more information on leading a project or to get started, contact Angela Carlson at angela@handsontwincities.org, Matt Bielefeldt at matt@handsontwincities.org, or Erika Dani at erika@handsontwincities.org.

For Your CALENDAR



AUGUST VAN FORUM

Be the Change: Making a Difference in Your Community

Come and enjoy a participatory workshop on getting engaged in your community. Do you remember the days of neighborhood coffee klatches when you knew everyone on your block and knew immediately when someone needed help? Are those days gone?

This workshop will explore shifts in community and how we, as citizens, need to re-ignite our commitment to being engaged and involved. The program will include active participation and, of course, humor.

Tuesday, August 9, 2011

10:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Location: TBD

CREATIVE AGING AROUND TOWN SERIES

MnCAAN

Wednesday, June 1, 2011

MnCAAN will once again be offering this series. The topic this month is *Using Art for the Good of the Community*. The series encourages people to share information and tips about how they put artistic creativity to work for the benefit of the larger community. Presenters include Loren from Park Writers Group, Grace Notes hospice choir, and Story Theater. Held at the Winnetka Learning Center in New Hope, the series is free and will run from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. For more information, visit www.mncaan.net.

42ND ST. ANTHONY PARK ARTS FESTIVAL

Saturday, June 4, 2011

This popular, annual neighborhood event benefits the St. Anthony Park Branch Library. Proceeds from the festival fund reading and activity programs at the library during the summer, keeping thousands

of children active and engaged in reading. The festival will feature music, food, and, of course, art! The event starts at 9:30 am and runs all day. For more information, visit www.stanthonyparkartsfestival.org.

OUTDOOR MOVIE SERIES

Beginning Friday, June 10, 2011

One of Saint Paul's most popular outdoor movie series is back for eight weeks of free films in the courtyard at the Central Library. Bring lawn chairs, blankets, and bug spray and join the St. Paul Central Library as it presents a SUPER line-up. This year, it's all about comic-book heroes. The movies are held every Friday, rain or shine. In the event of inclement weather, the library presents the movies inside in the former coffee-shop space. The movie on Friday, June 10, will be *Superman*. The library also will show *Flash Gordon* and *Darkman* in June. For more information visit host6.evanced.info/melsa/stpaul/eventcalendar.asp.

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For Your CALENDAR (continued)

AUTHOR TALK: LAURIE HERTZEL

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Laurie Hertzell, the Star Tribune's book editor, will speak about her book *News to Me: Adventures of an Accidental Journalist*. She'll also suggest great books for reading during the summer. Hertzell will speak at the Maple Grove Library from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm. For more information, visit www.hclib.org/pub/events. The Friends of the Maple Grove Library are sponsoring the event.

13TH ANNUAL
TWIN CITIES JAZZ
FESTIVAL

**Thursday,
June 23 to 25**

The festival once again is offering an exciting line-up of top-notch jazz musicians at Mears Park, St. Paul. Free jazz clinics will be held throughout the



weekend, and many concerts are available. To check out the schedule, visit www.hotsummerjazz.com/schedule.html.

FIRST PAGES: CAPTURING LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES

Saturday, June 25, 2011

Hennepin County Library is offering an opportunity for people to learn how to share their stories through creative nonfiction writing. Explore tips, techniques, and tools that help capture the moments, decisions

and events that have significantly altered our lives. The event requires registration, with a limit of 20 people per class. The workshop is at 10:30 am at the Edina Library. For more information, visit www.hclib.org/pub/events. The Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund supports this project and it is presented in collaboration with the Loft Literary Center.

Guest Column (continued)

Summary

I am growing more excited and pleased about how I can use social networking for my civic life. After I wrote this piece, my next tasks included posting information about an upcoming event on the Facebook page for the Friends of Lilydale Park and then posting an announcement about

a community barbecue for the Facebook page for the FAB! Facebook has become a fun way to communicate easily with a lot of people. It sure beats the days when we started our Lilydale group and delivered fliers door to door or sent information via snail mail. Social networking is much faster and more creative and fun!