

SeniorNet

Eastern Bays Inc



June 2009

Rooms: 106 West Tamaki Rd

Phone: 578 0994

www.sneb.org.nz

Who's Who

Chairman Eddie Hagen 528-0332
Treasurer Rick Scott 521-5150
Course Manager Cedric Hoskins
Member database Margaret Bates 528-6355

Getting in touch

If you have a query relating to SeniorNet the quickest and easiest way to get an answer is to ring the SeniorNet rooms (ph 578-0994) and leave a message on the voicemail. The mailbox is monitored very regularly by a committee member who will pass on your query to the person best able to help you. You will receive information about all other activities very quickly using the voicemail box.

From the Chair

With this newsletter comes a copy of the remit from the steering committee that will be discussed at the Annual General meeting and the motion that will be voted upon. It proposes, for the incoming committee's consideration, sweeping changes to the way SeniorNet Eastern Bays is run, including moving to other premises and slashing subscriptions from the beginning of our next financial year on 1st April, 2010. In the meantime we are urging members to register for whatever courses they feel they are likely to want to take because we are likely to close down our courses and classes at the end of September this year and devote October to clearing our present rooms and moving our equipment to new premises in preparation for terminating our lease. We would then recommence our activities from the beginning of February, 2010. The remit covers clearly, the situation in which we find ourselves and the suggested changes to our SeniorNet. Please read the remit carefully and attend the AGM so that you can express your opinion. If the remit is passed we are likely to cease giving lessons on basic computer skills, such as in the Computer Awareness course.

There is still time to be nominated for the committee or Chairman. If you have lost the nomination form you can send your name in on a sheet of paper with your name, signature of a seconder, and an indication that you are willing to serve and signing it. Post it to the Secretary, SeniorNet Eastern Bays, 106 West Tamaki Road, Glendowie, 1072

At the time of writing we still do not have a nomination for Chairman. I will be around for awhile to hand over materials and give advice to the new chairman and the committee if it is required.

As mentioned in the May newsletter, from the July newsletter onwards our SeniorNet will be sending the newsletter to only those on our email list. If you have not been receiving any of the two or more emails each month from us please send an email to pated@actrix.co.nz and we will enter your correct address on the list. You will require a copy of Adobe Reader on your computer or a similar .pdf file reader.

Eddie

Annual General Meeting

St Heliers Church & Community Centre
Wednesday 17th June 2009
100 St Heliers Bay Road
10 – 11am

AGM followed by morning tea

DISCUSSION GROUP at the CLUB ROOMS –

All Welcome - no charge

These session are led by Eddie ably assisted by Wayne and John

No meeting on the 1st June (Queens Birthday)

2-4 Mon, Jul 06

2-4 Mon, Aug 3

2-4 Mon, Sep 7

Courses to be scheduled as needed

Camera Selection

One 2-hour class for \$7

A seminar on how to select a camera in terms of specifications, reliability pricing and other important factors.

Computer Maintenance and Security for WindowsXP

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

Learn to understand and control your computer better, faster, safer and more securely. We use the built-in WindowsXP utilities as well as stand alone security and performance enhancing programs

Computer Awareness Windows Vista

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

This course is especially designed for those who are new to computing or who have little experience with computers. It is intended to introduce you to the basic operations, terminology and layout of the Windows Vista interface. Some basic text editing skills and functions such as opening, saving, printing and closing a file will be covered.

Computer Awareness Windows XP

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

This course is especially designed for those who are new to computing or who have little experience with computers. It is intended to introduce you to the basic operations, terminology and layout of the Windows XP interface. Some basic text editing skills and functions such as opening, saving, printing and closing a file will be covered.

Digital Picture Transfer Workshop

One 3-hour class for \$5

This workshop will cover the transferring of photographs from a digital camera to a computer and managing them using the Windows file management program Windows Explorer. If requested and time permits, we will have a look at Picasa. Photo-editing will not be covered

Email

Six 2-hour classes for \$25

This course is designed to help people with a basic knowledge of common computer procedures to use e-mail with the program Outlook Express or windows Mail

Email Revision

Two 2-hour classes for \$10

Students may join this class to practice revision of email routines.

Excel

Seven 2-hour classes for \$30

This course is intended to give the student an understanding of the basic skills required to create, edit, save and print spreadsheets using the MS Excel program which is in wide use in the commercial sector.

Files Management for Windows XP and Vista

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

This course covers the Windows folder structure and

management of files using the Microsoft file management programme called Windows Explorer in WindowsXP and Windows Vista.

Genealogy

Two 2-hour classes for \$20

An introductory course of two classes and two field trips, in a subject much sought after by grey-headed students.

Internet

Four 2-hour classes for \$20

An introduction to the World Wide Web. This course, based on Internet Explorer, explains the Internet and the use of search engines.

Making Videos with Vista

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

This course uses Movie Maker version 6 which comes with Vista.

Photo and Image Editing

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

An introduction to photo-editing and enhancing.

PowerPoint

One 2-hour class for \$5

Learn to use Powerpoint to design attention-grabbing presentations

Publisher 2003

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

A course based on Publisher 2003 covering various aspects of creative computing.

Scanning

Five 2-hour classes for \$30

The course is an introduction to scanning for photocopying, processing photographs and optical character recognition - converting printed paper text into digital form, such as MS Word documents.

TradeMe

Two 2-hour classes for \$10

Learn how to navigate around the TradeMe web-site, the procedures for registration, buying and selling.

Word Processing MS Word 97-2003

Six 2-hour classes for \$30

This course takes the student further into the powerful programs Microsoft Word2003 and Open Office Writer following on from the Computer Awareness course for WindowsXP. It does not, however, purport to cover all aspects of these programs.

Word Processing Revision

Two 2-hour classes for \$10

This is a short course revising the "Microsoft Word" skills learned in the Introductory and Intermediate Computer Skills courses.

Word Processing Workshop

Two 2-hour classes for \$10

Would you like to brush up on Word Art, Clip Art and some of the features on the Drawing? Would you like to know how to create a Template and put Headers and Footers in your documents?

The Future of SeniorNet Eastern Bays Inc.

A remit submitted to the 2009 Annual General Meeting

The aim of this remit.

This remit outlines some problems facing SeniorNet Eastern Bays at this time. It also proposes a way forward which is given as a formal motion at the end of this remit. We urge members to consider this motion carefully. If this motion is passed at the AGM, it will clear the way for a somewhat different role for SeniorNet in the future. This means that the new committee, to be elected at the AGM, would have the support of the membership for implementing the proposals in the motion. It is understood that the committee would have the authority to exercise their discretion in handling the details.

If the motion is not passed at the AGM, it may be difficult to find people willing to serve on the committee, and there is a real risk that SeniorNet Eastern Bays may have to wind up, as pointed out by the retiring chairman, Eddie Hagen.

The decline in membership.

Since SeniorNet Eastern Bays was founded in 2000, the membership numbers have gradually fallen until at the end of the 2008/2009 financial year the membership stands at approximately 200. Of these the majority are long term members who participate very little in our activities. This section of our membership is slowly decreasing through deaths and old age. New members are getting fewer and fewer each year in spite of efforts to attract them with Open Days, advertisements, and personal contacts. Back in 2000, many people retiring in their 60s had little experience of computers at work, so they were keen to catch up with the computer age by joining SeniorNet. We provided congenial classes, taught by volunteers in the same age group, and introduced these folk to the world of home computing. Once they had mastered the basic skills, including word processing, internet, email and file management, many people then chose to leave SeniorNet because they had learnt enough to be independent computer users.

In the 10 years since we were founded, computing has grown enormously in the workplace, and most people retiring now have adequate computer skills, so they have no need to join SeniorNet. This is the main reason for the decline in membership. It was foreseen by Russell Comber, the founding Chairman in 2000, who said that "we would eventually do ourselves out of a job."

Fewer members taking our courses.

In the last three years there has been a noticeable fall off in members taking the introductory courses, and some of those who do enrol have left it rather too late to pick up the new skills needed to master a computer. Our learning centre at West Tamaki Road has 15 computers, a good network and three classrooms, but the occupancy has dropped to below 30%. The burden of operating and maintaining this learning centre by volunteers, not to mention the high rental costs, means that it is hard to justify continuing as we are at present.

Loss of nearly half our tutors.

The number of tutors who are available to teach new members is steadily declining. Some are discouraged after many years of teaching and the fact that some of our older students have delayed their attempt to master the use of a computer until too late to be successful. Last year we had 9 tutors, but 4 of these (experienced and popular tutors) have indicated they will not continue beyond this year. By the end of this year we will have only 5 tutors to carry the load.

It has been suggested that we might employ a tutor at a \$30-40 per hour, but this would cost around \$400 per course, and it is not likely that this would attract any more than the present small numbers.

Alternative courses for beginners.

St Heliers Library offers free courses at beginner level. One-hour lessons on each of six different beginner topics are taken by a librarian in small groups of 2-3, using the latest model computers, and with notes supplied. After the lessons, there are 8 computers available free for one-hour practice sessions. So it is possible to learn the basic skills before one takes the plunge of buying a computer. This service is recommended for beginners who wish to find out whether they can really succeed in acquiring the basic skills.

Selwyn College has a highly regarded course on “Computers for Beginners,” with a professional teacher, costing \$72 for seven 2-hour weekly lessons. This is very competitive with our course on “Computer Awareness,” which costs a new member \$40 membership plus \$30 course fee for six 2-hour lessons in a little over two weeks.

Other courses include the free courses available in some shopping centres run by Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT). No active teaching is provided; students must work by themselves using written notes. MIT also offers free online courses which meet NCEA standards, but they require good basic skills and familiarity with the internet.

Good support for discussion sessions.

Our most successful activity at present is a monthly discussion group for “Questions and Answers (Q & A),” digital photography, photo-editing and much more. These sessions are for people who have moved beyond the beginner level, and are keen to improve their knowledge by picking up tips and learning about new programs. There is clearly a core group of members who enjoy these sessions. The excellent sessions on “Processing Digital Photographs” given in April by Graham McLeod from Queensland are a good example – both sessions were booked out.

Hence in the future it would be possible to run discussion sessions twice a month, or more as the demand dictates. Some discussion sessions could be quite general, covering Q & A and a variety of other topics. Some other sessions could be short courses (2-hours) on selected topics, for example spreadsheets, scanning slides, genealogy, greeting cards, desktop publishing, videos, trademe, computer security, PowerPoint, Picasa, SketchUp, cloud computing, texting, and advanced word processing, email and internet skills.

An advantage with discussion groups or short courses is that it is not necessary to lease permanent rooms as a learning centre. All that is required is to hire a suitable room for two (or more) half-day sessions per month. We already do this for our monthly SeniorNet meetings at the Community Centre at St Heliers Bay Road. A laptop, projector and screen are essential, plus a set of say 6 laptops with wireless connections for hands-on instruction when short courses are held. These could be stored in a secure cupboard between meetings, in the same manner as many other clubs do (e.g. Lions, Rotary).

This proposal for a discussion club with some short courses is completely in accordance with our constitution “to teach computer skills to older adults in an enjoyable and friendly way.” Anyone who has attended the current Q & A discussion group will know that it is an excellent learning experience, and that is why it is subsidised by around \$2.50 per person per hour from the Government via the Federation of NZ SeniorNet Societies.

The SNEB Website.

Our website at www.sneb.org.nz is arguably one of the best SeniorNet websites in New Zealand. There you can read our history, year by year, consult a calendar of courses and events throughout the year, read the current Newsletter and past issues, find links to other good sites used by SeniorNetters, and study over a hundred computer tips which cover a range of programs and procedures, all explained in simple terms for seniors! This website alone is a good reason for not closing down SeniorNet Eastern Bays.

In addition to this excellent website we also possess an archive of over 100 course notes written by SNEB tutors over the last 10 years, and from other SeniorNets in New Zealand. These notes are a resource which could be distributed on request to members who attend one of the discussion groups by downloading to USB flash drives or printed.

The Committee.

Our Chairman Eddie Hagen is retiring at AGM after three very strenuous years when he worked very hard to keep SeniorNet functioning. He will also leave SeniorNet at the end of the financial year, so we will lose not only a tireless chairman but also an experienced technologist, a great tutor, our Q & A discussion expert, and writer of most of the computer tips in the Newsletter. No-one replacing him can reasonably be expected to devote to give as much time and energy Eddie gave to SeniorNet. As yet there is no-one willing to step up to the Chair to take over responsibility for the club and it is unlikely that many will be willing to continue on the committee which has been operating with 7 members this year. Efforts to attract committee members have been very difficult and mostly fruitless. The capable people who have been approached are unable to spare the time from their very busy lives to take on extra responsibilities.

Our loyal helpers – administration and operations.

There are a score of tasks that need to be undertaken to keep the SeniorNet learning centre running. We have been fortunate that we have had a loyal and efficient band of volunteers to handle finance, membership database, subscriptions, monthly meetings, course planning, course enrolments, course fees & records, copying notes, making class CDs, newsletter editing & distribution, website, net-work maintenance, equipment and housekeeping.

These duties are very time consuming and it is unlikely we will find new volunteers when some of these people wish to move on. We must find better ways to manage our affairs where that is possible. For example, our monthly Newsletter is sent by email to about a third of our members, which means that the remaining members get a copy by mail, requiring a lot of voluntary time spent on printing, folding, addressing envelopes, and posting. It is recommended that the Newsletter be distributed by email only in future.

Lease of rooms.

It is important for us to make a decision about our future activities because our 2 year lease at West Tamaki Road is due for renewal on 1 November 2009 and any notice not to continue with the lease has to be given to the landlord by October 1st. The current lease is around \$24,000. A substantial grant towards this cost is donated by Auckland City. However, with the present Council pruning its finances, and our declining use of the rooms, it is doubtful whether we can be sure of any such grant in the future. As pointed out above we face a declining market for beginner courses at our SeniorNet, so it may be wise to bite the bullet and move out of 24/7 lease of rooms that we have used for about 8 years.

There have been some good suggestions concerning alternative accommodation, such as leasing suitable space at a local church or RSA. However, these would incur considerable costs for a lease, and it is not easy to see how they would attract greater numbers of members, for the reasons given above.

Financial position.

SeniorNet Eastern Bays is in a very sound financial position with 9 computers just two years old and 6 at six years old. The newer computers have both Vista and XP operating systems installed with a RAM of 2 MB. We also own sundry furniture, such as computer desks, a cupboard and tables, a very good projector, a laptop, and 2 screens. Besides this we have cash reserves of approximately \$40,000 - \$50,000. However, this cash reserve could quickly disappear if we had to pay full price for a two-year lease. Surely it is a far better option to invest a small part of this money to set ourselves up as a computer discussion club, offering some short courses, but no longer paying for a permanent home.

Who is responsible for this remit?

When the Chairman Eddie Hagen announced his pending retirement in the April newsletter, he also pointed out that there appeared to be no-one prepared to take over. In the May Newsletter he spelt out in some detail the problems facing our club. He also drew attention to the possibility of SeniorNet having to wind up completely. Eddie organised an urgent meeting of the committee and tutors on 22 April with Grant Sidaway, Executive Officer of the Federation of SeniorNet Societies. Various options were discussed, as set out below. A steering committee of three was formed and it met with the committee on 29 April to draft the motion for the AGM given on the last page.

What are our options for the future?

1. Continue with the learning centre, but with more energy and innovation, such as lower course fees, free courses for beginners, paid tutors, and fresh course topics. This option was **not** favoured by any of the committee members or tutors who attended a meeting with Grant Sidaway on 22 April.
2. Phase out the learning centre and beginner courses during 2009, and then promote discussion groups and short courses to be held in a suitable community facility to be hired for a half-day each time. There was strong support for this option at the meeting of committee members and tutors who attended the meeting with Grant Sidaway on 22 April.
3. Do the same as option 2, with the addition of hands-on courses using a suite of laptops to be held in a suitable community facility to be hired for a half-day each time. There was less support for this option at the meeting of committee members and tutors who attended the meeting with Grant Sidaway on 22 April, but in subsequent discussion it was seen to have merit.
4. Continue to run courses in the learning centre at West Tamaki Road as at present. Declining numbers of new members, the large financial commitment, and fewer willing volunteers make this a difficult choice, which might lead to a final close down when the money runs out. This option is not supported by the committee or tutors.
5. Close down and wind up SeniorNet Eastern Bays Inc. The assets and funds would then be passed to “an organisation having similar charitable object” in accordance with the constitution. This option is not favoured by any members as far as is known.

The following motion is hereby submitted to the AGM of SeniorNet Eastern Bays Inc.

We move that:

- as a result of falling numbers of members, particularly those taking courses at the beginner level, the current activities of SeniorNet Eastern Bays be realigned to place more emphasis on activities catering for members wishing to advance beyond the beginner level;
- and the new direction of SeniorNet Eastern Bays be to upgrade and update the computer knowledge of older adults (55 years and above) in a congenial semi-social environment;
- and monthly or twice-monthly discussion groups, question and answer sessions, and short courses be held as appropriate;
- these activities to be held in a hired meeting room in the St Heliers Community Centre, or a similar venue if available;
- a necessary amount of equipment and furniture be retained and stored in a secure space;
- surplus equipment, furniture, and other chattels be disposed of at the discretion of the committee;
- the newsletter be distributed by email only;
- the SeniorNet learning centre at West Tamaki Road be closed and the lease terminated on 31 October 2009;
- and the subscription for the next financial year, 2010-11, be reduced to \$10 for each member.

Doug Bates Cedric Hoskins John Richards

Rick Scott Noel Thompson Graham Wright