

## The Applications of Appy Hour

Brady Lass

Tucked away in a classroom located in the St. Peter Community Center a group of senior aged community members listen intently to their volunteer instructor describe how to use the cellular devices in front of them. Joe remembers how he was last efficient with a computer at Gustavus in the 1960s, Mary expresses her desire to “keep up with everyone else,” and Sylvia’s husband is still reliant on a flip phone. Off to the side, three Gustavus students write down how the session is progressing so they can report back to their 2017 spring course, English 310: Writing and Nonprofits.

This course is a prime example of community-based service (CBSL) and learning as it allows the students the opportunity to work closely with a nonprofits organization. While collaborating with their community partners to design grant proposals and other writing tasks for the nonprofit organization, the students reflect on their work with their professor and fellow classmates, connecting real-life service and learning. The professor gives them readings that showcase multiple forms of philanthropy and service, and helps them to analyze the process of grant writing and the problems faced by rural communities and the elderly. The ENG 310 students improve their writing abilities by learning rhetorical terminology and studying how their community partners use different forms of media to communicate to their audiences, which in turn will help them prepare their own texts.

One of the ENG 310 groups attends sessions called “Appy Hour,” which is a part of the LIFE classes (short for “Learning if Forever”) provided by the Saint Peter Senior Center, a division of the city’s Recreation and Leisure Services department. The Gustavus students assist the instructors (who are professionals in the fields they teach) while recording notes on how to

improve the program in the future for their community partner, Jane Timmerman. Timmerman monitors each student's the progress and then provides the whole team with new tasks they can work on collaboratively for her organization.

The Senior Center believes classes such as "Appy Hour" can teach older community members how to communicate and use this technology properly, taking them one step toward bettering relationships with their younger relatives and fuller participation in society as a whole. Without enough technological knowledge, seniors can lack opportunities to engage with others about current issues. This goal is exemplified by one of the instructors of Appy Hour, Becky Menk, who specializes in software operations.

"The Senior community is on the cusp of societal change," Menk stated. "Whereas when I was young, you went to Grandma and Grandpa's every Sunday for dinner, those traditions have yielded to the overscheduled modern life. The technology of today is vital to maintaining contacts with a younger generation. It transcends locations as well, easily connecting people around the world. Seniors have a tendency to become isolated as their peers succumb to medical problems, relocations and other issues. Technology also provides a valuable opportunity to keep them using their minds, whether reading books and newspapers, playing games or simply emailing friends, it's a process which keeps them mentally active and is very beneficial in regards to staving off Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia."

ENG 310 offers a unique opportunity for students to apply their writing abilities in a workplace environment. Just as Appy Hour attempts to connect the elderly to the more tech-oriented generations, this course helps students prepare their compositional skills to relevant jobs they will find themselves eventually applying for.