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Contact: Mechelle Haines
Public Information Officer
OC Community Resources
OCCRComm@occr.ocgov.com

Orange County Board of Supervisors Approve Technology Services for Older Adults

SANTA ANA, Calif. (September 17, 2021) – On Tuesday, September 14, 2021, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved over \$2.4 million to provide iPads for older adults and help bridge the digital divide. Data plans, training, technology support, and a subscription to an online platform of virtual classes will also be included.

“When the pandemic hit and in-person activities were limited, technology and the Internet proved to be critical tools for students, employees, and anyone wanting to access health care or even ordering essential items,” said Chairman Andrew Do, First District Supervisor. “COVID-19 exacerbated social isolation, especially among our seniors. To help bridge the digital divide, we are providing our community with the resources necessary to safely stay connected.”

The iPads come in response to the goals outlined in the State of California’s Master Plan and are part of a new program for older adults to help them stay connected through technology and reduce social isolation. Older adults who reside in Orange County and are at risk for isolation may apply to receive an iPad which also comes with training to help them learn to use their new device.

“Loneliness impacts the physical and mental health of our senior citizens,” said Vice Chairman Doug Chaffee, Fourth District Supervisor. “These iPads can help alleviate these effects and be part of the solution toward a better wellbeing.”

“These iPads are a great tool and open doors to a variety of ways older adults can engage with others in their community,” said Supervisor Katrina Foley, Second District. “Orange County has more than 600,000 seniors and providing the technology for our most vulnerable to stay connected while staying safe is a way to improve their quality of life.”

In addition, the County has contracted with a company called GetSetUp, an online learning environment for older adults to connect and share with peers in small intimate classes. A GetSetUp subscription will be provided to all Orange County older adults age 60 and over to access free online classes and groups to help them stay connected.

“Providing the iPad alone was not enough so we sought support around it,” said Supervisor Don Wagner, Third District. “Tools such as training and tech support will maximize the iPad’s resourcefulness and better serve those using it.”

“Many older adults on fixed incomes simply can’t afford a mobile device and lack internet access,” said Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, Fifth District. “This program not only provides them with a device, but the essential training and tech support necessary for them to participate in telehealth



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appointments, connect with family and friends, and access online programs and services,” she said. “I am hopeful this program will result in a more tech-savvy, less lonely and more engaged older adult population.”

To apply for an iPad and training, contact the Orange County Office on Aging Call Center at (800) 510-2020 or (714) 480-6450. Devices are limited and will be distributed based on eligibility criteria including age and income, and having one of the risk factors for isolation, such as mobility issues; limited English skills; functional impairment; living alone; or living in a care facility.

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Orange County’s Office on Aging serves as the lead advocate for approximately 600,000 seniors 60 years and older residing in the county, with a specific focus on low-income ethnic minorities. As an advocate, the OC Office on Aging is responsible for understanding the needs of Orange County’s older adults and utilizing the federal funding and programs available to meet those requirements. In addition, the OC Office on Aging is charged with directing or participating in coalitions to drive new ideas, services, and legislation in support of Older Adults. Finally, the department is to take a proactive view and help those in the senior services industry, public and private, plan for the future needs of this populace.