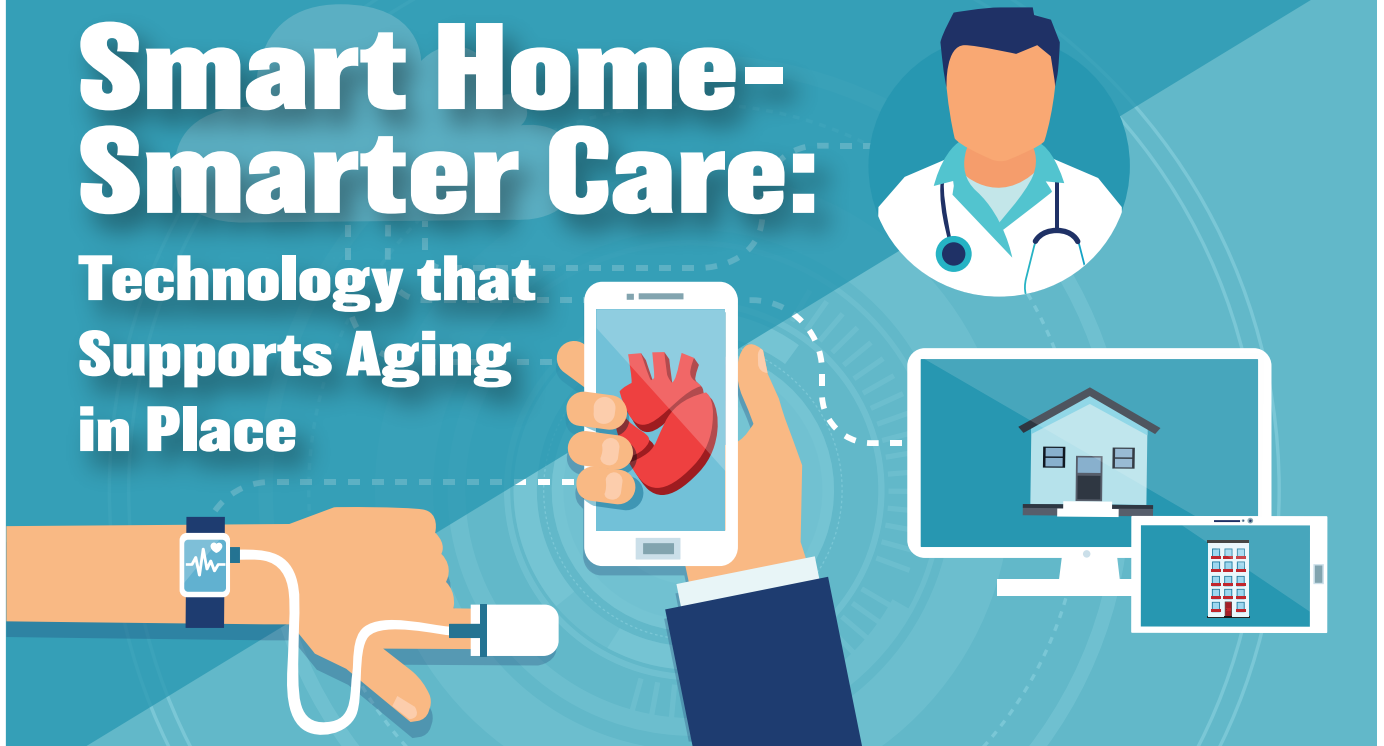


# Smart Home- Smarter Care:

Technology that  
Supports Aging  
in Place



Safety | Health & Wellness | Communications | Caregiver support | life-long Learning | Digital Equity

**Public Forum Report**  
sponsored by the  
**Montgomery County  
Commission on Aging**

in cooperation with  
the **City of Gaithersburg at the  
Bohrer Park Activity Center**

**May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

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Photos Courtesy of Mr. Adonis Miller

## Executive Summary

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging, in conjunction with the City of Gaithersburg's Active Aging Expo, convened a Forum on May 4, 2023, titled "Smart Homes – Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place."

At this meeting, national experts and local practitioners described how technology can help older adults remain safe and independent in their homes. Technology solutions can help those with limited mobility, limited vision, and hearing impairment to maintain and extend their independence. The Forum increased awareness of new and emerging technologies so that those who can benefit from them will better understand how they can best apply them to their own circumstances.

### Key Take-aways from the Forum:

- Technology offers a wide array of devices to help people remain in their homes safely and independently.
- Technology brings many advantages to the health care system. It can enhance access to health care services via telemedicine; help to educate both clinicians and patients; improve care coordination; and more.
- The selection of specific technologies must focus on the needs of the individual user.
- Vetting the myriad of technologies and devices requires expertise that is usually well-beyond the knowledge and capacities of older adults.
- To ensure its most effective use, training and on-going support is essential.
- Younger persons, and early (older) adapters can play an invaluable role in helping most older adults adopt and adapt to emerging technologies.

### Challenges in using technology to remain safe and independent:

- There remains a digital divide that must be addressed if the benefits of technology can be disseminated and employed by all members of the community.
- Technologies can be expensive and unaffordable for many.
- Retro-fitting old homes to accommodate various devices can be expensive and disruptive.
- Notwithstanding the advantages that technology may have, there are serious concerns that must be addressed, including privacy and the inappropriate use of personal health information, and potential dissemination of false information.



A Welcome from the Mayor of the City of Gaithersburg Jud Ashman, Ryan Spiegel, City of Gaithersburg Council

### Opportunities for follow-up:

- The Commission can:
  - Create a list of trusted sources for information on various technologies and apps, such as CAST, MOCO, Senior Planet, AARP, and others.
  - Develop a fact sheet to disseminate information about the advantages and disadvantages of using smart technologies.
  - Partner with the Villages and other not-for-profits groups to help disseminate and facilitate the use of smart home technologies.
  - Survey GROWS members to identify which of its members are using smart technologies to assist older adults and how they are using them.
  - Foster intergenerational collaborations with the Montgomery County Board of Education, Jewish Council on Aging (JCA) InterAges, Empowering the Ages, Linked Generations, and others to advance intergenerational activities.
    - Recognize intergenerational teaching by high school students as eligible for community service credit.
  - Advocate for the inclusion of technology in the county's Design for Life grant program.
  - Advocate that CNA's be trained in the use of the standard technologies used to monitor patients in their homes.





The Montgomery County Commission on Aging Forum  
Smart Homes – Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place  
May 4, 2023

## Introduction and Purpose of the Forum

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging, in conjunction with the City of Gaithersburg’s Active Aging Expo, convened a Forum in the Activity Center at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg titled “Smart Homes – Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place.” National experts and local practitioners described how technology can help older adults remain safe and independent in their homes. The Active Aging Expo showcased many of these technologies in the Exhibit Hall. During the event, the Commission also presented its Community for a Lifetime awards to the 2023 recipients. (See Addendum #1 for details.) The audience, present at the forum and virtually, consisted of older adults, family caregivers, government officials, representatives from not-for-profit agencies, and others.

Physical impairments increase with age. Technology solutions can help those with limited mobility, limited vision, and hearing impairment to maintain and extend their independence. The purpose of the Forum was to increase awareness of new and emerging technologies so that those who can benefit from them will better understand how they can best apply them to their own circumstances.

“Smart Homes — Smarter Care” refers to a category of electronic devices and technologies that can help older adults remain in their homes safely. A growing number and variety of new devices and applications (apps) can help to facilitate home-monitoring, remote caregiving, in-home safety and security, family connection, access to transportation, and social interaction. Electronic “smart home” devices can help individuals do simple things like asking a digital assistant to dial 911, call a family member, or monitor blood pressure. Devices can detect falls, monitor movements around the house, provide medication reminders, and improve social interactions with family and friends. Many devices allow clinicians and family caregivers to monitor a patient’s vital signs remotely, monitor mental and physical status in real time, and provide alerts for rapid intervention when warranted. The demand for these types of devices is being driven by the growth in the number of older adults who prefer to age in place and the creativity and ingenuity of hi-tech engineers.

The Mayor of the City of Gaithersburg opened the Forum with welcoming remarks, as did County Executive Elrich and Odile Brunetto, Chief, Montgomery County Aging and Disabilities Services. On behalf of the County Executive, Dr. Brunetto read a proclamation declaring May 2023 as “Older Americans Month” in Montgomery County and that the county is “committed to guaranteeing our community remains age-friendly, where all older adults remain safe, connected and free to age unrestricted.” Steve Gurney- publisher of Positive Aging, facilitator of the proceedings, suggested that participants listen to the presentations and think “outside of box” as they learn about the resources being discussed. (See Addendum #2 for the Bios of all the speakers.)



Proclamation in recognition of Older Americans Month presented to CoA Chair David Engel by Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, of Aging and Disability Services

**Keynote: Scott Code, Vice-president of the Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST) at Leading Age, “Smart Homes-Smarter Care: Technology that Supports Aging in Place.”**

Mr. Code introduced his talk by describing CAST. CAST’s mission is to expedite the development, evaluation and adoption of emerging technologies that can improve the aging experience. It is a broad coalition of aging services organizations, technology companies, research universities, and government representatives.

Mr. Code noted the nation’s changing demographics and the emerging dominance of the older population by the year 2034, when older adults will outnumber children under the age of 18. Considering this demographic shift, it is necessary to recognize and address the needs of the older cohort. According to an AARP survey, most older adults report a strong preference for remaining in their communities and in their homes. These views coincide with two phenomena: (1) a decline in the number of nursing homes residents, a trend that predates the COVID-19 pandemic; and (2) a huge shift towards the use of technology to deliver services, such as Uber, Instacart, TaskRabbit, and the like. Almost every new technology is considered “smart,” (i.e., self-monitoring, analysis, and reporting technology). Thus, technology can play a key role in helping to satisfy the clear preference of older adults to age in place.

Mr. Code proposed three categories of uses for smart home technology: Safety technology; health and wellness technology; and social connectedness and engagement technologies.

- (1) Safety technology permits remote monitoring, such as shoe inserts worn by individuals to help caregivers detect falls; smart watches enabled to detect falls or car crashes; and passive sensors that use motion to measure activities of daily living.
- (2) Health and wellness technology enables health professionals to remotely monitor medication adherence, blood pressure, weight, oxygen levels; tools to provide educational content on health conditions, and telehealth.
- (3) Social connectedness and engagement technologies helps individuals retain connections to families and friends by means of video chats; captioned telephones (not high-tech but a very important free service for those with hearing impairments). Mr. Code stated that there is considerable research evidence to support the use of technologies among community-dwelling older adults to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

To be of value, the strategies and technologies employed must be relevant and meaningful to the user. Importantly, those using the technology must be trained in its use and proper application and have on-going support. In addition, Mr. Code identified three key elements to ensure digital inclusion: internet access and robust broadband; computer devices; and digital literacy.

In closing, Mr. Code proposed four technology adaption strategies: communicate relevant value; provide ongoing training and support; identify and be transparent about ongoing concerns or difficulties; identify early adapters and influencers who can influence their peers.

He then entertained questions. One individual mentioned the Surgeon General’s recent report on social isolation that emphasized the value of interpersonal interactions and that for some, certain technologies can have negative impacts. In response, Mr. Code agreed that technology certainly could have a negative effect. While it is preferable for people to interact with others, some are unable to, in which case, some forms of technology can help to mitigate isolation and loneliness. Mr. Code reasserted the importance of ensuring that technological applications be used appropriately and in the proper context.



Scott Code, Leading Age, Keynote

Another questioner asked whether efforts to advance the use of technology among older adults should focus on age cohorts. Mr. Code suggested that rather than focus on age, the emphasis should be on matching an individual’s needs with the proper technology.

## Morning Panel Discussion: “National Perspectives on Technologies in Use for Aging in Place”

Each panel member gave a brief overview of the focus of his/her respective organizations. This was followed by further discussion generated by questions from the live and virtual audiences. Moderator was Steve Gurney, Founder of Positive Aging Sourcebook.

Steve Ewell, Executive Director, Consumer Technology Foundation- the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) is a trade association representing the \$505 billion U.S. consumer technology industry. The foundation, a public, national foundation affiliated with the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), was launched in 2012 with the mission of linking older adults and people with disabilities with technologies to enhance their lives. In Montgomery County, they have helped to support AccessHEARS (a project to help older adults with hearing disabilities obtain hearing aid devices) and Senior Planet (an organization that trains older adults on the use of technology). This year, they are hosting an annual “pitch competition,” sponsored by [AARP Innovation Labs](#), to highlight solutions from up-and-coming companies that help older adults with a focus on technology solutions to help bring people together and address social isolation and loneliness. The use of technology in the home can enhance independence and increase quality of life. However, Mr. Ewell noted that there are challenges to increasing the use of smart home technologies. Many people are not aware of the wide array of technology solutions that are available. In addition, for those who do have access to technology, training is essential. Otherwise, devices go unused. Explaining the value proposition for the use of smart solutions is critical to its adoption.



Steve Gurney, Moderator

Reema Jweied-Guegel, Director, Enterprise Strategic Relationships, AARP- This is an AARP unit that focuses on vetting and identifying innovative technologies that are of potential value to people over age 50. Its mission is to discover, support and scale ideas that will help empower people to choose how they



L to R: Neil Tantingco, Ryan Elza, Reema Jweied-Guegel, Steve Ewell

live as they age. Ms. Jweied-Guegel pointed especially to the needs of the over 50 million unpaid caregivers in the United States who might benefit from smart home technologies if they were aware of them. AARP’s AgeTech Collaborative brings start-ups and investors together by providing funding and support and piloting opportunities for technology solutions. She stressed the need for a person-centered approach to technology that focuses on the needs and capabilities of the potential user. It is important to help instill in older adults a feeling of self-efficacy and competence with technology. Technology can transform lives, give pleasure, and enhance connectiveness if properly used. However, she emphasized it is no substitute for human interaction.

Ryan Elza, Vice-president, Innovation, Growth and Business Transformation, Volunteers of America National Services (VOANS). VOANS, an affiliate of Volunteers of America, Inc., is an affordable housing developer and senior healthcare provider with operations nationwide and in Puerto Rico. It serves a wide variety of clients facing challenges due to income, age, physical or mental disability, with a special focus on older adults. The organization serves vulnerable people in skilled nursing facilities, PACE programs, and provides home health services. Mr. Elza stated that his organization uses technology to help address social isolation. He noted that affordability is a key issue and suggested several sources such as Medicare Advantage plans that sometimes include technology in their benefit packages, and local libraries that have computers available for their patrons. He stated that his organization offers free Internet and devices in their facilities. In closing, Mr. Elza stressed the importance of a person-centered approach to technology adoption in which understanding the needs and desires of each individual client for using technology is essential. He predicted that the future location of health care delivery will be in the home. Technology will enable individuals to detect illness earlier and, in many cases, prevent illness.

Neil Tantingco, Founder/CEO, Connected Home Living (CHL) - Connected Home Living is a

California based company operating nationally and in Canada that serves private duty and home health agencies, hospitals and skilled nursing facilities, and independent and assisted living facilities. Its emphasis is on helping its clients avoid unnecessary hospital admissions by means of various approaches, such as remote clinical monitoring, the availability 24/7 of trained personnel, triage, and other techniques. Their services may involve telephone check-ins, reminders to take medications and maintain hydration, assistance in scheduling medical appointments; support to obtain medication refills to ensure adherence; acquiring food, and transportation; and moderated virtual group activities (via Zoom or telephone). Mr. Tangingco presented case studies on falls detection to demonstrate the effectiveness of these virtual care giving strategies and approaches. He described his company's use of real-time wellness status updates and daily reports that include alerts to allow family members to become aware of risk, injury, adverse sleep patterns, or other situations in the home. These notifications allow family members to become involved in early resolution if problems arise with their loved ones. Sensors enable the collection of information in real-time to determine wellness status updates. This information is reviewed, and appropriate action taken when indicated.

Mr. Tangingco foresees a bright future for various technologies, suggesting that they may provide resources to help low-income people access telehealth; apply artificial intelligence to use machine-learning to quickly identify individual preferences; and to offer better control over one's environment to help older adults remain in their homes as long as possible. Remote care will play a larger role in providing mental health services. He predicts that pharmacies will help to promote health by becoming a source of information and assistance. Finally, remote care coordinators will make a big difference in improving health outcomes.

Members of the panel then entertained questions from the audience.

Question: How will personal health information be protected?

Answer: Mr. Elza mentioned that some organizations offer "High Trust Certification." However, it was not clear how widespread or how rigorous this certification is.

Question: How does one know how to find a list of resources to determine valid and trustworthy apps and technologies?

Answer: The panelists named several sources, such as Tech Enhanced Life, AARP, Senior Navigator, and Senior Planet, and numerous podcasts. However, there was also agreement that identifying and vetting technologies is a difficult task for most people, including older adults.



Panel speakers answering audience questions



CoA Commissioner Joyce Dubow

Question: How can older adults best be educated and learn what to do when they need help?

Answer: The panel members all agreed that funding is necessary for this function. Senior Planet and AARP are examining how various apps are rated for use. Cyberseniors, and Bridging Apps have reviewed apps for age appropriateness.

Question: What is the potential of Artificial Intelligence applications such as Chat GPT (AI)?

Answer: The panelists all agreed that AI will emerge first for clinical use. Several audience members expressed concern about the cost of technology to individuals. A panelist pointed out that offering people the use of technology is often cost-effective for providers and insurers. For example, telehealth services can potentially help avoid the need for costly readmissions to hospitals. Since hospital readmission is costly for hospitals, often they will pay for services delivered through technology to prevent avoidable readmissions. Some insurers are offering technology services as part of their benefit packages because they also recognize the cost-saving opportunities. Providing devices for home use can help avoid home care services. Nevertheless, cost remains a factor and digital equity remains a concern.



## Afternoon Panel: Advancing “Smart Homes-Smarter Care Technologies” in Montgomery County

Dr. Galina Madjaroff Reitz, Faculty Program Director, UMD College of Information Studies, moderated the session.

Dr. Monifia McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), (presenting via video) stated that technology can foster stronger bonds between and among the generations. Therefore, intergenerational programming can be a “win-win” for all participants. The effective use of technology helps elders learn new skills and helps to enhance self-worth for students. MCPS has established intergenerational workgroups.



Dr. Galina Madjaroff Reitz, Moderator, Dr. Monifia McKnight, Superintendent, MCPS

Leah Bradley, Executive Director, Empowering the Ages, an organization whose mission is to strengthen social-emotional well-being, provide life skills, and create connections across generations to provide older and younger people with a sense of belonging and purpose. Specifically, its work focuses on school readiness, civic engagement, and workforce development by developing connections among children, youth, families, and older adults. The organization attempts to “meet people where they are” with respect to their level of familiarity with technology, ability to pay, and the under-served who could benefit from access to technology. They offer individualized support, rather than group training, for those who need it.

Ms. Bradley asserted that effective intergenerational programming yields positive outcomes related to health and well-being, reducing isolation, and enhancing a sense of worth for older adults; acquiring specific skills and self-esteem for younger adults; and increasing understanding between generations. She stated that technology provides the opportunity for teens to teach and support older adults, helping them to become more technologically capable and increasing skills that lead to reduced social isolation, independence, and mental stimulation. Older adults, in turn, share their wisdom, experiences, and offer supportive relationships. Among the skills covered through intergenerational sessions are the use of social media and smart phones; telehealth appointments; logging into medical portals; online banking; online shopping; and video chats. An example of an intergenerational interaction is a program started by two high school seniors that sends weekly motivational statements via text or email to participants with the goal of sending joy and reducing loneliness and isolation of older adults. Intergenerational training is offered at libraries, senior centers, and schools.

Joan Green, Founder, Innovative Speech Therapy, discussed the promise of “Elder Tech” that seeks to match technology with an individual’s needs. She stressed the value of technology for older adults as a means of improving and enhancing communication and cognition by employing devices and tools such as iPads, smart watches, phones, search engines, etc. She also emphasized the importance of accessibility settings and options for those with hearing, vision, speech, or motor impairments.

For example, smart phones can turn speech into text; television programs can be captioned; Microsoft Immersive Reader can aid those with dyslexia or make reading on a small screen easier; video calls (e.g., on Facetime, Grandpad, Amazon’s Echo-Show, Sociavi, ViewClix,) can be set up to enable the sound to go directly to an individual’s hearing aid; and cell phones are available with simplified navigation formats (Jitterbug phone, Raz Memory cell phone). In addition, there are “smart assistants” that provide reminders, timers, alarms, play music, send texts or emails, keep shopping lists, control “smart” household devices, play games, answer questions, etc. Google Lens reads text aloud and displays information about what one sees, and abilities of the user. Other similar applications are as Lumosity, Constant Therapy (CT), MindMate app, and AARP’s Staying Sharp.



Joan Green presents the Promise of Elder Tech

Ms. Green suggested how older adults could get help and learn to leverage tech's benefits, such as:

- Montgomery County -Department of Recreation,  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/facilities/seniorcenters/>;
- City of Rockville- Seniors <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2063/Classes-Workshops>,
- Montgomery County senior centers
- Senior Planet <https://seniorplanet.org/locations/montgomery-county/inpersonevents/>, (which is supported AARP's Older Adults Technology Services)
- Online classes, and YouTube videos
- Libby application from the Montgomery County Department of Public Libraries allows users to obtain digital books.
- OASIS (a program for training users on computers)
- Computer stores like Best Buy and Micro Center
- Private Facetime groups, online groups, and classes
- YouTube videos
- Elder Tech Advisor Training and Groups and
- Beacon articles



Dr. Galina Madjaroff Reitz, Moderator

Mitsuko R. Herrera Montgomery Connects Program Director, Office of Broadband Programs, discussed county-wide programs that facilitate the use of smart technologies to help residents age in place. A major barrier to digital equity is a digital divide, where some have access to and can use technology while others do not. The county's goal is to achieve digital equity where everyone has access to affordable home and mobile internet, the skills to use technology, and the "digital world" that includes education, employment, connections to family and friends, community engagement, civic participation, and good health.



Mitsuko R. Herrera Montgomery Connects Program Director, Office of Broadband Programs

Montgomery Connects is the county's digital equity program that works to overcome barriers to digital equity by using multiple strategies and interventions, such as distributing free computers to older adults; helping families to apply for and receive broadband subsidies; providing tech hotline assistance to older adults through Senior Planet and the University of Maryland Extension Service; providing free instruction to help people to use technology; intergenerational programs that engage young people at libraries and senior centers to offer assistance to older adults; working with affordable housing

programs to help people set up their computers; offering programs at senior centers to teach the use of video assistants, fitness apps, and heart rate apps; and applying virtual reality to use with dementia patients. Upcoming innovations are planned that will involve virtual reality, 5-G device integration, and video screening.

Senior Planet Montgomery's purpose is to enable older adults to find ways to learn, work, create, exercise, and thrive in today's digital age. Senior Planet programs are designed around [five areas](#): financial security, social engagement, creative expression, health and wellness, and civic participation. All five areas represent opportunities in the lives of older adults where technology can have a transformative effort. It offers multiple types of assistance and resources that emphasize senior empowerment, such as online and in-person training to shop online, use banking apps, and more.

Kathleen Williams, Director Healthy Communities, Holy Cross Health described the utility of technology from the perspective of a health provider or health care system. She pointed to the value of electronic health records (EHRs) for providers and patients. EHRs help providers improve the quality of care by fostering care collaboration and coordination by facilitating the use of shared records; help identify gaps or inappropriate care; enhance communication among clinicians; facilitate and improve care transfers by ensuring timely sharing of patient information from one level of care to another, and more. For patients, EHRs can provide access to pertinent clinical information that can help them address health issues; facilitate communications with their providers via secure messaging; and permit online scheduling.

Holy Cross uses remote monitoring in the hospital to ensure the safety of patients who may need more supervision; to replace sitters when patients need ongoing observation; and allow visitors to use tablets and platform, especially when no visitors are allowed in patient rooms. Home Care Connect, which is Bluetooth-enabled, permits patients who are in their homes to transmit blood pressure, weight, and oxygen levels to a nursing control center where nurses can do periodic check-ins using a tablet.

In conjunction with other hospitals in Montgomery County, Holy Cross also uses various forms of technology to support its work in the community.

Voice Your Choice is a program that provides advanced care planning tools online. FindHelp performs social needs screenings and resource referral. Patients have access to virtual programming services, have physician visits via telehealth, communicate with their providers through electronic messaging and can participate virtually in classes for exercise, health education, and medical adult day care.



Kathleen Williams, Holy Cross, Leah Bradley, Executive Director, Empowering the Ages



Pazit Aviv, Montgomery County Villages' Coordinator

Following their presentations, the panelists entertained questions from the audience.

Question: How can interoperability across multiple portals be achieved?

Answer: Ms. Williams responded that CRISP a non-profit health information exchange, or HIE, organization serving Maryland and the District of Columbia. HIEs allow clinical information to move electronically among disparate health information systems.

Question: Is technology available and used in nursing homes?

Answer: Some facilities do have electronic records, but in general, technology is in very limited use.

There was interest in the idea of establishing a technology laboratory for older adults to try out various devices. Some use MD TAP, a technology laboratory in Baltimore. It was suggested that this might be something the county library system or the Recreation Department could set up.

## Key Take-aways:

- Technology offers a wide array of devices to help people remain in their homes safely and independently.
- Technology brings many advantages to the health care system. It can enhance access to health care services via telemedicine; help to educate both clinicians and patients; improve care coordination; and more.
- The selection of specific technologies must focus on the needs of the individual user.
- Vetting the myriad of technologies and devices requires expertise that is usually well-beyond the knowledge and capacities of older adults.
- To ensure its most effective use, training and on-going support is essential.
- Younger persons, and early (older) adapters can play an invaluable role in helping most older adults adopt and adapt to emerging technologies.

## Challenges:

- There remains a digital divide that must be addressed if the benefits of technology can be disseminated and employed by all members of the community.
- Technologies can be expensive and unaffordable for many.
- Retro-fitting old homes to accommodate various devices can be expensive and disruptive.
- Notwithstanding the advantages that technology may have, there are serious concerns that must be addressed, including privacy and the inappropriate use of personal health information, and potential dissemination of false information.

## Opportunities:

- The Commission can:
  - Create a list of trusted sources for information on various technologies and apps, such as CAST, MOCO, Senior Planet, AARP, and others.
  - Develop a fact sheet to disseminate information about the advantages and disadvantages of using smart technologies.
  - Partner with the Villages and other not-for-profits groups to help disseminate and facilitate the use of smart home technologies.
  - Survey GROWS members to identify which of its members are using smart technologies to assist older adults and how they are using them.
  - Foster intergenerational collaborations with the Montgomery County Board of Education, Jewish Council on Aging (JCA) Interages, Empowering the Ages, Linked Generations and others to advance intergenerational activities.
    - Recognize intergenerational teaching by high school students as eligible for community service credit.
  - Advocate for the inclusion of technology in the county's Design for Life grant program.
  - Advocate that CNA's be trained in the use of the standard technologies used to monitor patients in their homes.



L to R Top Row: CoA Commissioners: Jean Dinwiddie, David Engel, Marsha Weber, Mary Sweeney, Betsy Carrier - Public Forum Committee Co-Chair, Janice Zalen, Yvette Monroe. Front Row: Marcia Pruzan - CoA Alumna, Commissioners: Joyce Dubow, Virginia Cain, Siboncube Barbara Selter, Laurie Pross, Mona Grieser, Pazit Aviv - Village Coordinator, Dr. Odile Brunetto - Chief Aging & Disability Services, Wayne Berman - Public Forum Committee Co-Chair. Commissioners not in photo: Nikiru Ezeani, Beverly Rollins, Morris Klein, Ryan Wilson, Arunima Ghosh, Bob Levey, Kendell Matthews, Ruby Moon, Ric Riccardi, Arthur Williams

**Community for a Lifetime Award Presentation**

Wayne Berman, Commissioner, announced the three recipients of the Commission on Aging’s “Community for a Lifetime” award: Dr. Odile Brunetto, Ms. Elva Jaldin, and GROWS (The Grassroots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors), represented by its president, Ms. Meagan Sexton.

The purpose of the “Community for a Lifetime” Award is to formally recognize the contributions of members of the Montgomery County community who help to advance the vision and mission of the Commission on Aging to enable older adults to live quality lives, regardless of their abilities, so that Montgomery County is their community for a lifetime. Recognizing Montgomery County’s diversity and that older adults are the fastest growing demographic in the County, the Commission serves as a valued voice for older adults.

Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services was recognized because she has been a vital partner, leader, and innovator in developing and executing programs and services for older adults in the County. She is a respected voice for older adults of every community and background in the County and is a cherished and respected role model of excellence for all.

Ms. Elva Jaldin was recognized for her long service and program leadership to the older adult Latino community in Montgomery County as a Volunteer Health Promoter. She has been active in bringing resources to improve the health and wellbeing of this community over the past 20 years.

The third recipient of the award was Grassroots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors, known as GROWS. The GROWS program was recognized for its long service and program leadership to the older adult community in Montgomery County that GROWS, and its membership provide. GROWS is a vital partner in helping to advance programs and services for older adults in the County and contributes to the important work of many people, organizations, communities, associations, and agencies in the County. GROWS president, Ms. Meagan Sexton, accepted the award on behalf of her organization.



CoA Commissioner Wayne Berman, Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief Aging & Disability Services, David Engel, CoA Chair



Elva Jaldin, (center), Ingrid Lizama, Latino Health Initiative (right)



GROWS Board Members Kerri Donnelly, Abby Sakariyah, Meagan Sexton, President, CoA Commissioner Wayne Berman

**SPEAKER BIOS- MORNING SESSION, ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

Scott Code is the Vice President of the Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST) at LeadingAge with over 15 years of experience helping aging service providers strategically adopt and implement technology. CAST is leading the charge to expedite the development, evaluation and adoption of emerging technologies that can improve the aging experience. Scott has Master's degree in both Gerontology and Business Administration, providing him with the unique ability to both evaluate and implement new technology across the care continuum.

Ryan Elza currently serves the Vice President for Innovation, Growth, and Business Transformation at Volunteers of America National Services (VOANS), where he helps to lead their new program development and Health & Housing work. He has an extensive background in the social determinants of health (SDOH), design thinking and civic engagement. He is a nationally recognized subject matter expert on Social Connectedness, Digital Equity and Inclusion, and Voice-First design for older adults. Ryan has been at the frontier of developing programs to address social isolation and loneliness including voice-first solutions for low-income older adults.

Ryan is a trained anthropologist and has a master's degree in technology entrepreneurship from the University of Maryland. Prior to joining VOANS, Ryan Elza led AARP Foundation's social isolation and digital inclusion work. Ryan developed and launched several initiatives during his tenure at AARP Foundation, including the Connect2Affect Connected Communities program, the Connect2Affect My Activity Center, and a public-private initiative with the Administration for Community Living and other federal agencies to launch the National Coordinating Center for Social Isolation, a national awareness campaign about social isolation, and a clearinghouse of technology solutions to address social isolation. Through his combined work at AARP Foundation, he has impacted the lives of thousands of low-income older adults and equipped them with technology and solutions to address social isolation.

Steve Ewell is the executive director of the Consumer Technology Association (CTA) Foundation, a charitable foundation with the mission of linking seniors and people with disabilities with technology that enhances their lives. They support programs providing independence, purpose, and vital connections for people across the country.

He serves as co-chair of the Forum on Aging, Disability and Independence at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, the Advisory Council for the Center for Inclusive Design and Engineering (CIDE) at the University of Colorado and the External Advisory Board of the Enhance Center RERC, a consortium between Weill Cornell Medicine, Florida State University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Reema Jweied Guegel is a Director with the Enterprise Strategy Group at AARP – the largest non-profit dedicated to helping people choose how they age and thrive in the US. In her role, Reema leads collaboration and partnership discussions for the enterprise on the unique challenges and needs that face family caregivers, to include how accessible technology and smart homes are for all Americans. Previously, Reema worked with FSG, a social impact consultancy firm headquartered in Boston where she focused on the moral imperative business has in society. She is a lifelong Montgomery County resident—to include a graduate of Wootton High School—and she holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from the Smith School of Business at University of Maryland, as well as an MBA from the George Washington University.

Steve Gurney founded Retirement Living SourceBook in 1990. Drawing from the experience of observing his family caring for Steve's aging grandfather, he created a comprehensive publication/website to help others in the same situation. In 1998, Mr. Gurney sold the company to The Washington Post where he served as General Manager of the Senior Living Solutions Division for over 20 years. In 2019, Mr. Gurney acquired the Sourcebook back, and has rebranded as the Positive Aging Community which most notably includes live and interactive weekly discussions with national thought-leaders on a variety of topics.

Neil Tantingco has over 24 years in healthcare and technology. He started his career during the [dot.com](#) days in Silicon Valley at Netscape, Yahoo and VMware, taking on leadership roles in Sales, Channels and Marketing.

In 2000, Neil left his hi-tech career and acquired an Assisted Living community in Central California, which he remains as co-owner and licensee. It is at Evergreen Residence where Neil began to leverage assistive technology including telehealth and fall safety to improve patient care and staff efficiency. Tantingco founded Connected Home Living in 2015, and currently holds the CEO role where he grew the company in the US and Canada as one of the leading Telehealth and Fall Safety Turn-Key provider, caring for remote patients who prefer to age and heal at home, prolonging the need for more higher and costly care.

## **SPEAKER BIOS- AFTERNOON SESSION, ALPHABETICAL ORDER**

Leah Bradley is Executive Director and Co-Founder of Empowering the Ages. She has extensive experience in the intergenerational field, including providing nationwide training and technical assistance to practitioners establishing intergenerational initiatives. She has visioned, planned and implemented many intergenerational programs throughout the Country. Leah is a licensed social worker and has worked for hospice care and home care for the elderly, as well as led support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Leah earned her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Michigan with concentrations in interpersonal practice and gerontology and a Bachelor of Science from University of Delaware in Family and Community Service.

Joan Green is always looking for affordable technologies to improve the lives of others. She's a speech-language pathologist, assistive technology specialist, and tech advisor. With many years of experience, Joan provides personalized 1:1 tech advising sessions with families and organizations and designs engaging courses and presentations. She excels at leveraging tech's benefits to create innovative solutions for improving cognition, social engagement, communication, reading, writing, memory, and productivity. Originally from Buffalo, NY, Joan received her formal graduate education from Northwestern University and now resides in Montgomery County, MD. You can learn more about her private practice at [www.innovativespeech.com](http://www.innovativespeech.com).

Mitsuko Herrera is Director of Montgomery Connects, Montgomery County's award-winning digital equity program. Montgomery Connects has provided 50,000 computers to low-income, Black, Latino, and senior County residents; has helped over 1,000 families enroll in the Affordable Connectivity Program \$45 per month broadband discount program; and oversees the Senior Planet in Montgomery program that has help thousands of older adults learn to use technology and the internet to participate in the digital world since 2016. She also provides policy, planning and special project support to the County's Chief Broadband Officer and Chief Information Officer, supports MoCoNet, the County's 100 Mbps residential broadband program, and is the County's point person for broadband and technology grants planning and development, and broadband economic development and digital equity public private partnerships (P3) and business engagement.

She is a member of the Federal Communications Commission's Consumer Advisory Committee, served as an advisor to the Maryland Taskforce on Rural Broadband, was a member of the Maryland Telecommunications Tax Reform Commission, is the former Director of Communications Policy and Regulation for Fairfax County, Va., was previously an Associate at Miller and Van Eaton, PLLC, and is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center and the University of California at San Diego.

Dr. Galina Reitz is the Faculty Program Director for the BSIS at the Universities at Shady Grove. Dr. Reitz joined the School of Information Science (iSchool) after 12 years as a faculty member and administrator at UMBC (University of Maryland Baltimore County). Dr. Reitz has presented her research at venues around the country and internationally, as well as consulted with technology companies on the design of new devices for older persons. Dr. Reitz has published on various topics including Voice Technology in Supporting Older persons with cognitive impairments, Person-Centered Technology and Quality of Life, Narratives of Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment, Supporting Caregivers and Care Recipients after the Onset of Cognitive Impairment with Home Based Technology. Most recently Dr. Reitz was awarded a three-year NSF Grant to explore Negotiating Cyber Systems Access for Older Adults with Mild Neurocognitive Disorder. In addition to research Dr. Reitz is focused on the development and continuous enhancement of all aspects of academic programming and continuing to establish community partnerships that support career pathways for students.

Kathleen Williams currently serves as the Director of Healthy Communities for Holy Cross Health Network - Community Health Department where she specializes in creating and growing programs to meet the needs of the community. Since 2015, she has been dedicated to the continued services provided to older adults in Montgomery County through the Holy Cross Medical Adult Day Center and Caregiver Resource Center. Born and raised in Montgomery County, Kathleen's dedication to communities includes over 20 years in Social Work in the DMV area. She has been employed by Holy Cross Health since 2011. Prior to working in the Community Health Department, Kathleen was the Manager of Continuum of Care in the Care Management Department at Holy Cross Hospital.



Smart Homes - Smarter Care Public Forum at Bohrer Park Activity Center



Commissioners Mona Grieser, Sibö Ncube checking in participants



Active Aging Expo Booth - Access HEARS