

THE AMERICAN VETERAN
FEBRUARY 2007 EDITION

SEGMENT TITLE: TRAINING FOR ELDERLY VETS

KANE FARABAUGH, HOST: THESE DAYS, MANY OF US USE COMPUTERS EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. THIS SHOW EVEN STREAMS VIDEO FROM A WEB SITE. FOR AGING VETERANS THOUGH, NAVIGATING THE INTERNET CAN BE INTIMIDATING. A VOLUNTEER AT THE MONTROSE, NEW YORK V-A MEDICAL CENTER IS TEACHING ELDERLY VETS HOW TO GET AROUND ON THE WEB.

JAMES LIPPERT, VETERAN (TYPING ON A COMPUTER KEYBOARD): WWW.

RITA LIPPERT: DOT V-A DOT GOV

JIM BENSON, NARRATOR: HOW TO USE A COMPUTER IT CAN SEEM A DAUNTING TASK FOR SENIOR CITIZENS INCLUDING AGING VETERANS.

RITA LIPPERT: "INTERNET DETAILS," MAYBE THAT SHOULD DO IT.

BENSON: OFTEN THEY END UP FEELING LEFT OUT, AND LEFT BEHIND, BY A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD.

JAMES LIPPERT: I HAVE SO MANY FRIENDS WITH COMPUTERS, AND THEY'D ASK ME, WHEN AM I GETTING MY COMPUTER, AND I'D SAY, "ONE OF THESE DAYS."

RITA LIPPERT: BEFORE EVERYONE WOULD SAY OH, GIVE ME YOUR WEBSITE OR YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS, AND WE DON'T HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS.

BENSON: THEN WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN JAMES LIPPERT AND HIS WIFE RITA HEARD ABOUT A SPECIAL PROGRAM OFFERED AT THE NEARBY F.D.R. VA MEDICAL CENTER IN MONTROSE, NEW YORK.

ROBERT MULCARE, VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTOR VAMC MONTROSE, NY: NOW THIS IS ALL DIFFERENT PROGRAMS THAT YOU CAN MAKE CARDS WITH.

BENSON: A COURSE IN COMPUTER FUNDAMENTALS AND HOW TO NAVIGATE THE INTERNET.

MULCARE: I'M GOING TO TAKE CLOTHING.

JAMES LIPPERT: HERE IS YOUR RED HAT.

BENSON: THEIR TEACHER IS A VA VOLUNTEER NAMED ROBERT MULCARE, A FORMER MARINE AND A VIETNAM VET WHO OFFERS HIS CLASS THREE DAYS A WEEK. SO FAR, HE'S TRAINED MORE THAN 100 VETERANS.

MULCARE: THIS COMPUTER OPENS A WHOLE WORLD TO THEM. THEY CAN FIND THEIR FRIENDS FROM THE SERVICE, THEY CAN COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS THAT THEY ARE LONG DISTANCE FROM.

ROCCO J CUSANO, KOREAN WAR VETERAN: IT'S TAUGHT ME THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE OF COMPUTERS, THE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE, TO THE POINT WHERE MY WIFE AND I WENT OUT AND PURCHASED A COMPUTER AND WE HAVE IT AT HOME.

BENSON: EXACTLY THE IDEA THAT TOOK SHAPE IN THE MIND OF WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN VINCENT LISANTI WHO FOUNDED THE PROGRAM.

VINCETN LISANTI, WORLD WAR TWO VETERAN: IF MORE VETERANS BECAME LITERATE, COMPUTER-WISE, WE CAN GET TO THEM AT HOME WITH ALL OF THE INFORMATION THAT'S OUT THERE AND MAYBE IT'LL LESSEN THE WORKLOAD OF THE VA. AND MAYBE LESSEN TRAVEL TIME TO VA FACILITIES.

MULCARE: EVENTUALLY WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WITH THE VA, THERE'S GOING TO BE AN INTERNET WHERE YOU ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO TALK PERSON TO PERSON TO YOUR DOCTOR, FROM HOME, VIA COMPUTER.

LISANTI: THE ENROLLMENT GREW ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLY. INITIALLY, THE PROGRAM WAS FOR SENIOR VETERANS AND THEIR SPOUSES. WE WANTED THE SPOUSES TO BE IN ON IT, BECAUSE THE WIVES COULD TYPE, AND THE GUYS COULDN'T.

BENSON: VETERANS ARE LEARNING HOW TO USE "MY-HEALTH-E-VET" VA'S REVOLUTIONARY ON LINE SERVICE FOR PRESCRIPTION REFILLS AND LOTS MORE.

MULCARE: YOU CAN ORDER YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS, GET BENEFITS, YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN HEALTH CARE.

BENSON: MULCARE SAYS THERE'S SOMETHING EVEN BIGGER BOTH HE AND HIS STUDENTS TAKE AWAY FROM HIS CLASS.

MULCARE: THIS PROGRAM IS FOR THE VET THAT THINKS HE'S LOST EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD. EVERYTHING YOU'VE LOST IN THIS WORLD IS HERE IN THE COMPUTER, BY PUSHING A BUTTON YOU CAN GET IT ALL BACK: FRIENDS, FAMILY YOUR EGO, YOUR SELF-ESTEEM, YOUR SELF-WORTH.

LIPPERTS: WWW.VA.GOV.

BENSON: FOR THE LIPPERT'S, TAPPING THEIR VA BENEFITS JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT EASIER AND THEIR COMPUTER'S OPENED UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD.

RITA LIPPERT: WE FEEL VERY MUCH WE'RE IN THE LOOP NOW.

JAMES LIPPERT: I ASKED HIM, I SAYS "COULD I COME IN AGAIN?" AND HE SAID, "SURE, COME ON DOWN. WE'LL TEACH YOU SOME MORE." SO THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO.

END OF VIDEO

THE AMERICAN VETERAN IS PRODUCED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS