

THE VILLAGES APPLE USER GROUP

THE RESIDENT GROUP HELPS OTHERS LEARN HOW TO OPERATE AND TROUBLESHOOT THEIR APPLE PRODUCTS.

BY SYLAISHA TAYLOR

As technology evolves and The Villages continues to expand, The Villages Apple User Group welcomes new members and volunteers to help continue its mission.

The club shares tips and tricks with each other and new members, troubleshoots, gives product recommendations, donates unused devices, and shares its love for the well-known electronic brand they all have in common.

"We want people who need help to contact us," said group president Dexston Reed, of the Village of Winifred. "We take it one step at a time. If there's something we don't know, we research it for them and we also advise them to go to Apple when necessary. However, it's rare when we find something we can't resolve."

Founded in 1999, the group started out in members' homes and at one point grew to over 1,000 strong, including members from all over the world. It is governed by a five-member executive board and a 20-member advisory board.

The club assists members who are looking for ways to get the most out of their Apple devices and keeps members informed about the latest products and updates for iPhone, iMac and Apple watch operating systems.

Residents who may be considering switching to Apple products can find help from experienced users.

"We have people who have been doing this for 30

years," Dexston said. "There's a lot of experience."

The club is comprised of members of all experience and skill levels as the goal of the group is to learn, share and teach. It offers in-person help sessions for members who have Apple devices from 6:30 to 8 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month, except throughout summer and on holidays, at Saddlebrook Recreation.

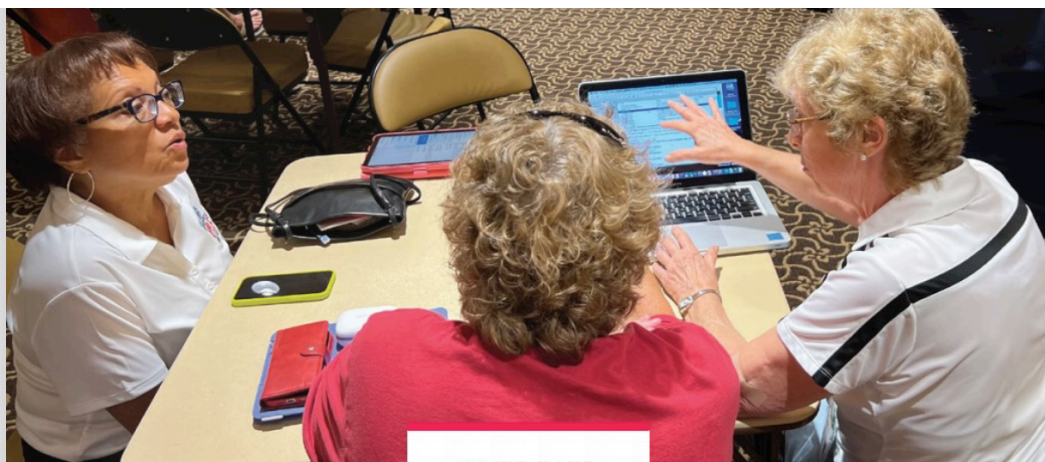
Zoom meetings that include guest presenters and technical support are offered from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Presentations are recorded and posted on the club's website along with news, Apple user guides and other helpful links.

Special interest groups, which are smaller and more hands-on, sometimes meet from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month to discuss topics like artificial intelligence.

Anyone who would like to attend the meetings must be a member of the group. New memberships and renewals can be completed online prior to attending a session.

Volunteers dedicate their time to accommodate as many people who need help as possible. Those needing a hand are encouraged to bring their phones, iPads and computers when attending the sessions.

"We had someone come to a session who was having trouble typing using the pages application," Dexston said. "We hadn't had that problem in 20 years and we resolved it for her."



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But the group offers more than technology assistance.

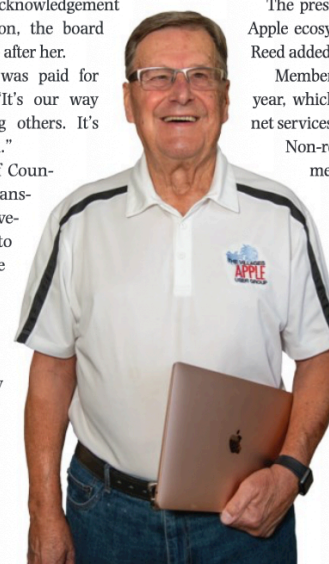
In 2016, it launched the Carole Martin Scholarship Program, which awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are pursuing careers in the technology field.

Martin is one of the founding members of the club and has been a member for 20 years, during which she served as the group secretary and worked on other projects.

She retired from her leadership positions in the group, but remains a member. In acknowledgement of her service and dedication, the board voted to name the scholarship after her.

"Part of our education was paid for by others," Dexston said. "It's our way of giving back and helping others. It's something we're familiar with."

Ed Muhs, of the Village of Country Club Hills, and Iris Stansfield, of the Village of Belvedere, volunteer their time to collect, reset and distribute refurbished iPads, iMacs and MacBooks to local organizations and charities such as the local Boys and Girls Clubs in Lake County and the Sumter County Youth Centers in Bushnell and Wildwood.



Parts are used to refurbish donated devices and there is never a charge for the recipient.

The club sometimes offers themed presentations, especially around the holidays, like a recent Apple buying guide presentation.

During this presentation, group member Tony Crawford, of the Village of Sunset Pointe, gives an overview of the latest

versions of Apple products.

"It is usually a helpful presentation, as I can go over gift recommendations," Dexston said.

The presentation also contains information about the Apple ecosystem and how all the devices work together, Reed added.

Membership in the club is \$10 per household per year, which covers printing expenses, equipment, internet services, scholarship donation and device parts.

Non-residents are welcome to participate in Zoom meetings and the group's online support forum.

Crawford also teaches Apple device courses through The Enrichment Academy. His classes include "Apple Camera and Photos for the iPhone and iPad," "Apple iPhone and iPad Made Easy" and "Apple Watch." To see what classes are coming up and to register, visit theenrichmentacademy.org.

For more information about The Villages Apple User Group, visit tvaug.org.

The Villages Apple User Group president Dexston Reed.

