

Tropical Life

PEOPLE

SARAH JESSICA PARKER COMING TO BLOOMINGDALE'S, 3C



TECHNOLOGY

Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

Teen offers one-on-one tech tutorials for residents at The Palace at Coral Gables

Residents at the senior community have learned to use FaceTime, Skype, Facebook

The 16-year-old has recruited other students and launched a website about his project

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When Sarah Wishnia received an iPad from her daughter, she "didn't even know how to open the thing." Max Rosenblum showed her how to socialize on Facebook and how to shop on Amazon with her new device.

When Sam Nevel's children and grand-

children handed him an iPhone, "it was like Greek to me." But Max taught him how to find his way through email and how to connect on FaceTime.

With Max's help, Elena Rosner learned to give orders to Siri, Mike Smith familiarized himself with Waze and Honey Rosen began searching for information about movies, res-

SEE TUTORIALS, 6C

Max Rosenblum teaches Sarah Wishnia how to use her iPad during a one-on-one tech tutorial at The Palace, a luxury senior community in Coral Gables.

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TUTORIALS

taurants and books on her smartphone.

Max is 16, a rising junior at University School in Davie. His students are residents of The Palace at Coral Gables, octogenarians fascinated by technology and eager to learn about this brave new frontier.

“Max,” says Wishnia, “has opened a whole new world to me.”

She can now receive texts and photos from her grandchildren scattered around the country, order a ride on Lyft, purchase walking shoes on Amazon and, as of just recently, synchronize her phone with her iPad.

The seniors who gather for the monthly one-on-one sessions at The Palace library echo Wishnia’s enthusiasm — and appreciation — for a teenager who has become like an adopted grandson to them. Max’s weekend visits at the senior community are more than a social event. They’re a lifeline.

“Hardly a week goes by that I don’t have a computer question,” Rosner said. “By the time he comes, I have a list this long to ask him.”

Max began offering his tech tutorials for seniors at The Palace and at The Palms in Weston more than a year ago, after he helped his grandmother, Nancy Okun of New Jersey, with her iPhone, iPad and Apple watch. He taught her how to text and use Facebook and FaceTime. He also downloaded a Scrabble app for her to play.

“She loved it,” he said, not without a trace of pride.

That experience inspired him and his parents, Adam and Heather. They reached out to a connection at The

Palace at Coral Gables and launched a website, techmaxed.com. He also recruited other teens to teach the one-on-one lessons in Weston and Coral Gables, including students from Belen Jesuit Prep.

These young tech pros go to the retirement communities at least once a month, and the sign-up sheets for the one-on-one tutorials fill up fast. Though a class might appear to be more expedient, Max found out that group sessions simply didn’t work.

“People are at different levels, and it was hard to teach that way,” he said. “It’s much better to give them individual help.”

All his students, regardless of age or skill, are motivated by the power of technology to connect.

They want to stay in touch — and see — children and great-grandchildren who live elsewhere. They come with their notepads, laptops and smartphones in hopes of learning how to text, Skype, FaceTime, Facebook and email.

“Most people come more than once,” he added. “I have my regulars.”

The hardest part of his job is when he’s unable to help a student — not because they can’t learn or because he doesn’t have the tech know-how but because the request is . . . well, a bit unusual. One prospective student wanted help investigating a stockbroker.

“I could show her how to do a search, but I couldn’t do it for her,” he explained.

The best part of giving up a weekend day? Watching the pleasure someone gets when he or she sees a faraway relative on the screen. “One woman hadn’t seen her sister in



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Max Rosenblum, 16, teaches Julius Wishnia how to use Google Chrome during a tutorial at The Palace in Coral Gables.

years and she learned to Skype,” he recalled.

“That was pretty nice.”

Max’s patience is legendary in the senior community. “First he showed me how to get my email on the phone,” Rosen, 88, said, “and then he wrote up a short step-by-step tutorial for me so I could remember.”

Nevel, 85, observed: “I think there are very few 15-year-olds who would have the patience to teach us.”

Max admits that teaching older adults the intricacies of something that comes naturally to him has made him a more conscientious and patient person, but he figures he’s also paying it forward.

“Maybe when I’m 87 and there’s new technology,” he said, “somebody will teach me, too.”



At left, Max Rosenblum teaches Honey Rosen tips and tricks for her iPhone, including how to search for information about movies, restaurants and books. Below, he also helps Elena Rosner and Mike Smith learn how to better use their smartphones.

