

Northern Valley
SUBURBANITE

Students give helping hand

By Leslie Coulter
Staff Writer | May 7 2009

TENAFLY — Delores Shnipper looked back six weeks ago when she didn't know how to turn on a computer, let alone shop bargains on the Internet.

But now, with the help of an eighth-grader, she's got her own e-mail account and is finding the best deals on Broadway tickets.

Shnipper was just one of the dozens of seniors invited to Tenafly Middle School to learn basic computer skills from students.

The seniors were given one-on-one help to navigate search engines, open e-mail accounts and shop online, to name a few.

"I was frustrated, anxious and just not happy the first time I sat down at a computer. But people told me just sit down and just do it and work at it," said Edie Levene. "Slowly, but surely I'm getting it with Ryan's help. He's patient, courteous and bright. I think I'll take him home with me. It's nice to see our tax dollars at work."

Ryan Woo, the eighth-grader paired with Levene, taught her how to maneuver the Internet and use advanced searches to find information. Levene also learned how to send and forward e-mails, but didn't like downloading files or watching videos.

Some students, like 13-year-old Sophie Nelson, said having the group there reminded her of her own grandparents.

"My grandpa has an AIM® account, and when he's on it I'll send him a message, but he never writes back because he doesn't know how to use it," Nelson said laughing. "So someone will go and write me back for him. It's really funny."

The two learning sessions were spearheaded by "The Do Something Club," a local sector of a national organization that works off the mantra, "If something needs to be done then do it."

The club has adopted a soldier, sent get-well cards to the Walter Reed Medical Center and volunteered at an animal shelter.

But Maria Reinecke, a teacher at the school, said students enjoy visiting the seniors so much, volunteers from the entire school attended the event.

"It makes the kids feel great to share what they know with someone so much older," said Reinecke. "It's a great feeling between the two generations. They develop a nice relationship with one another."

"There's no end to the amount of information. The Internet is just chucked full of everything. But just give me the meat and potatoes. I don't need all the fluff," Levene said.