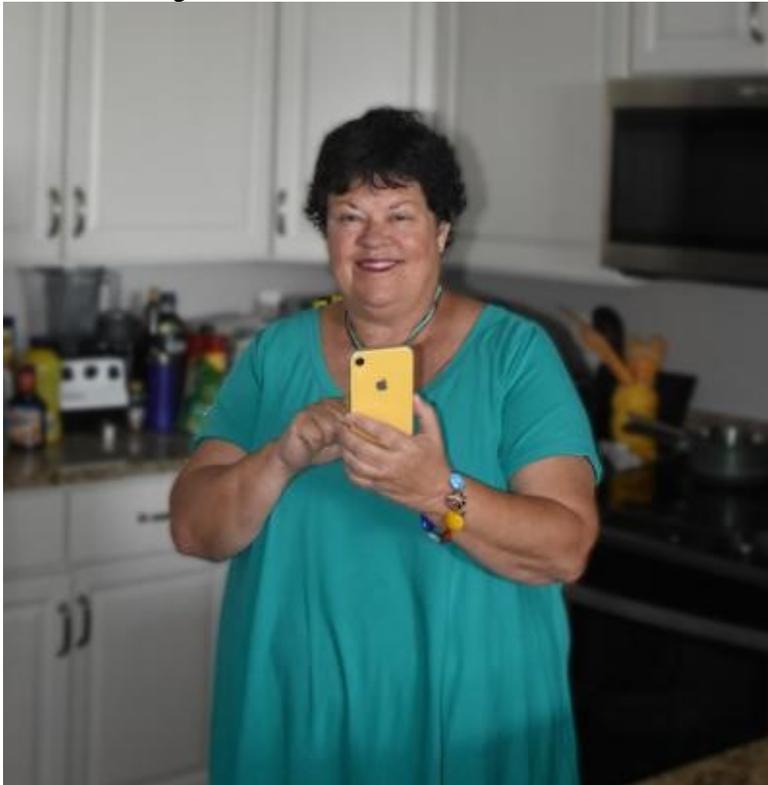# Senior Life: Maris Grove residents are embracing technology and living vibrant lifestyles

By Dorrie Anshel

Becky Diamond hasn't used a stamp in years. She rarely calls, never writes letters, and says Amazon is her "best friend."

The resident of Maris Grove, a developed and managed Erickson Living retirement community in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, exemplifies the new wave of tech-savvy seniors – 66 percent of the US population over 65 – who do everything online, from paying bills to shopping to connecting on social media.

In fact, 75 percent of seniors who use technology say they go online at least once a day, and 58 percent say technology has had a positive impact on their lives.

Becky couldn't agree more. A very early adopter, she recalls her husband bringing home a computer in 1981. "We inserted the 5 ½" floppy disks and taught ourselves how to use it," she says with a chuckle.

"There was no Internet, so you couldn't watch a YouTube video," she continues. "We read the manuals and learned as we went. Every time new software launched, I bought the "For Dummies" book and figured it out."

Sharing Her Knowledge with Residents

Word of Becky's skill set spread quickly. Friends and neighbors called when they had computer or software issues, and she was happy to assist. Sensing an opportunity, she created a computer instruction and repair business that she ran until she and her husband moved to Maris Grove in 2017.

Although happily retired, she continues sharing her knowledge by teaching an iPhone class to fellow residents. "I cover everything, from the basics to the most advanced functions," she says. "We usually have 25 people per class, which shows you that everyone, regardless of age, is using smart phones."

Becky is passionate about digital photography, and uses Photoshop to enhance the images she takes. "It's incredible how creative you can be," she notes. She also used her webpage design skills to create a site for the Maris Grove Women's Club. Called "ofadvancedyears.com," the site has a wealth of information on life at Maris Grove, from FAQ's and tips for newcomers, to events, club news, and volunteer opportunities.

Becky cannot imagine her life without technology, particularly her smart phone and tablet. She uses a variety of apps, including MyErickson, which shows residents everything going on in the community. "I use it every day," she says. "The cafes change their menus daily, and I like to see what they're serving. If I'm in a hallway and need to find someone, I can look up their apartment. It's so convenient."

Erickson Living's Commitment to Technology

According to Hans Keller, Erickson Living's Chief Information Officer, "The response to the MyErickson app has been tremendous. The number of residents enrolled doubled from last year, and we expect to reach 75 percent enrollment next year. By year's end we will integrate Alexa into MyErickson, enabling residents to ask for the information they need."

Keller and his team recognize that digital access is a factor as seniors choose where to live in retirement. He points to Erickson Living's leadership in providing technology and the company's ongoing commitment to enhancing residents' digital lives.

In addition to the app, Erickson Living offers high-speed WiFi and tech support to residents, which helps them connect with others and find information that supports their active lifestyles.

Says Keller, "The wireless connectivity on campus enables residents to use smart appliances and devices, voice-activated assistants, and more. They can enjoy social media, research topics, and be entertained. We meet them where they are, whether they're just starting or are long-time tech users like Becky."

He also notes the proliferation of computer clubs at Erickson Living communities. "These clubs provide a peer-to-peer experience in which

residents learn together and support each other. It's a fantastic way to share knowledge. We fully embrace the kind of classes Becky and others are teaching on campus."

For residents who need additional support, Erickson's internal IT pros are available via email or phone at no charge; they also provide in-home support for a nominal fee. According to Keller, "The Erickson Resident Computer Services desk handles about 140,000 contacts a year. They help fix problems and serve as digital ambassadors to all the things we're doing online for residents."

Erickson Living's commitment to state-of-the-art IT services and expertise has been recognized repeatedly by *Computerworld magazine*. For the past nine years the company was named one of the "Best Places to Work in Information Technology." In 2019 the company ranked number 14 among companies with more than 5,000 employees.

Resident Embracing Technology

Says Keller, "Technology is not stratified by age. Our residents have embraced devices, apps, and websites that enable them to perform daily tasks, stay connected, and explore new worlds. Erickson Living will continue to provide our residents with exciting new tools and fast connectivity, so they can use technology in ways that work best for them."

Maris Grove Executive Director Maureen Heckler agrees, "Having excellent technology resources on campus is a vital part of our residents' vibrant and engaged lifestyle."

Maris Grove is a not-for-profit organization, developed and managed by Erickson Living®. The community is governed by its own board of

directors affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community.

About Maris Grove

Maris Grove, one of 20 continuing care retirement communities developed and managed by Erickson Living®, is situated on a scenic 87-acre campus in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. The not-for-profit community of more than 1,600 residents and 740 employees is governed by its own board of directors, affiliated with National Senior Campuses, who provide independent financial and operational oversight of the community. Additional information about Maris Grove can be found at MarisGroveCommunity.com.