Final Report for $10,000 Grant for Connective Technology
April 15, 2021

What problem were you addressing?
The challenge discussed in our original grant request was to meaningfully and intellectually engage residents to promote positive aging. With the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, Friends Home & Village (FHV) closed both campuses. Keeping the residents and staff safe while creatively addressing the growing loneliness, boredom, and stress of residents during the mandated social isolation was the new challenge. Technology provided the primary means of maintaining connection. With the generous $10,000 grant from Friends Foundation for the Aging, FHV was able to purchase technology to both connect the two campuses and to offer a virtual lifeline for residents to engage with and "see" their families and friends.

The Logic Group was hired to evaluate the FHV computer network infrastructure and identify gaps and insufficiencies to support virtual engagement programming. Equipment and hardware were ordered and infrastructure improvements were completed. The improvements in infrastructure were vital to FHV during COVID. The stable signal was critically needed for Zoom connections for residents with families and medical consultations and for administration for daily operations. The pandemic caused delays in delivery of some equipment. FHV is delighted to have finally received two large, flat screen smart television sets and the software and hardware necessary to offer video conferencing, allowing FHV to begin virtual programming to connect the two campuses and extend our reach beyond our physical properties.

What change did you expect to create?
We had expected that technology would allow us to knit our campuses together, support virtual program participation and improve accessibility to the less mobile. The pandemic has expanded everyone's view of what is possible in virtual formats. We are confident, moving forward, that virtual events, activities, visits and telehealth options will be part of FHV's standard operations.

How did you measure success?
FHV achieved the overall goal of purchasing equipment (2 large, flat screen smart tvs; 2 mobile storage carts to house the tvs) updating the needed computer and WiFi infrastructure and putting the equipment into use. The infrastructure improvements have been in continuous use and were critically important to virtual connectivity for our residents.

Quantitatively, a total of 40 of FHV's 61 residents have participated in at least one of the four larger, formal virtual activities offered so far. The four events included an FHV board of directors meeting with residents; virtual bingo with participants from both campuses; a beloved, long-time resident's 100th birthday party and a virtual Open House to introduce FHV to the wider community. For Irene Fisher's 100th birthday party, members of Solebury Friends Meeting sent a commemorative video and participated in the party via Zoom. State Senator Steve Santarsiero also participated and was one of the faces on our big new screen. For the Open House, FHV residents shared their experiences and answered questions about life at FHV. A total of 8 staff members are now trained to successfully operate the virtual conferencing equipment and can support programming on both campuses at once.

Collaborations that supported the work.
The on-going partnership with The Logic Group has been beneficial. They have demonstrated understanding of FHV's needs as a small non-profit and they continue to seek competitive pricing for equipment. Just recently, The Logic Group facilitated a donation of three rebuilt laptop computers for FHV use.

Unanticipated outcomes or barriers.
During the Virtual Bingo game that engaged residents at both campuses, staff observed that residents would benefit from education & training on video conferencing etiquette. Sidebar conversations and noise generated by movement was detected over sensitive microphones and, at times, made hearing the host difficult and caused some confusion. It also became clear to the host that residents from both campuses are unfamiliar with one another socially and expressed that they are not sure how the other campus "works." This made it imperative to FHV Leadership to facilitate more social engagement activities between campuses to expand resident social circles and to help all residents feel a part of the same organization. We are now focused on providing re-socialization opportunities that encourage coordinated conversation and icebreakers for residents to reconnect with one another.

The administration has also utilized the equipment for hybrid Staff Town Halls. With staff on two campuses and spread among multiple shifts, the ability to address them simultaneously in-person and virtually has been an unplanned benefit.

How do you plan to share and replicate results?
This new video conferencing technology will be highlighted in the 2021 FHV Newsletter and distributed to residents, families and the wider community. Blog posts about resident experiences with using the new technology will be posted on the FHV website and Facebook page.

Project financial statement.
The Logic Group was hired to assess the needs for the WiFi upgrade at each campus for signal stability to support the video conferencing equipment and to recommend, order and install all equipment. Total cost for video conferencing system, 2 desktop computers, 2 65" Samsung TVs, 2 TV carts with mounts and the installation, configuration and testing labor was $17,287. The $10,000 grant from FFA made it possible for FHV to connect our two campuses and begin engagement programming to improve resident isolation. FHV is grateful and appreciative of the support of FFA.

Feedback on interaction with FFA.
Susan Hoskins was very helpful in guiding us through the proposal process and was readily available for questions. Her collaborative approach is very much appreciated. FHV is sincerely grateful for the support of FFA and we look forward to the possibility of future projects together.