Connecting Generations

Cyber-Seniors™

A feature documentary by Saffron Cassaday
RT: 75 mins

www.cyberseniordocumentary.com
SYNOPSIS

SHORT SYNOPSIS
A humorous and heartwarming documentary feature, which chronicles the extraordinary journey of a group of colorful senior citizens, as they discover the world of the Internet, through the guidance of teenage mentors.

MEDIUM SYNOPSIS
A humorous and heartwarming documentary feature, which chronicles the extraordinary journey of a group of colorful senior citizens, as they discover the world of the Internet, through the guidance of teenage mentors. Their exploration of cyber-space is catapulted to another level when 89 year-old Shura decides to create a YouTube cooking video. A spirited video competition for the most “views” evolves as the cyber-seniors’ hidden talents and competitive spirits are revealed. CYBER-SENIORS provides insight into the wonderful things that can happen when generation gaps are bridged, proving you are never too old to get ‘connected’.

LONG SYNOPSIS
A humorous and heartwarming documentary feature, which chronicles the extraordinary journey of a group of colorful senior citizens, as they discover the world of the Internet, through the guidance of teenage mentors. Their exploration of cyber-space is catapulted to another level when 89 year-old Shura decides to create a YouTube cooking video. A spirited video competition for the most "views" evolves as the cyber-seniors' hidden talents and competitive spirits are revealed. CYBER-SENIORS provides insight into the wonderful things that can happen when generation gaps are bridged, proving you are never too old to get 'connected'.

The Cyber-Seniors program was started by two teenage sisters. They came up with the idea after witnessing how cyber-communication had transformed their grandparents' lives and brought them closer to their grandchildren. When one of the sisters is diagnosed with cancer at the same time as her grandfather, we witness how the Internet becomes a lifeline for the family to stay connected and support one another.

The film offers a heartwarming, candid, and at times humorous look at the victories and challenges seniors face as they dive into the digital world. Cyber-Seniors is an inspiring example of the wonderful things that can happen when generation gaps are bridged, and new ways of connecting are explored.

Inspired by
Dan and Verna Rusnak
Kascha and Macaulee Cassaday

www.cyberseniorsdocumentary.com
The idea for the Cyber-Seniors documentary came from a high school project that was launched by two sisters, Macaulee (16) and Kascha Cassaday (18) in 2009. The sisters had witnessed first hand how learning to use the Internet had transformed their grandparents’ lives. After learning some basic skills, their grandparents were in touch several times a week by email, Facebook and Skype. The Internet was instrumental in keeping their family connected despite busy schedules and living in different cities. Inspired by this realization, the sisters started the Cyber-Seniors program to help other seniors get online.

They developed a training manual and recruited their friends to visit a local retirement home twice a week to teach interested seniors how to use the Internet. The seniors all had different interests. Some were eager to get onto Facebook to see photos of their grandkids, while others wanted to play online games, and everyone wanted to use email.

The program had many unexpected and exciting offshoots, including the creation of Cyber-Seniors Corner, a YouTube Channel where student-senior teams were encouraged to upload a short video featuring a senior sharing their wisdom or humour.

Director Saffron Cassaday, Macaulee and Kascha’s older sister, began filming some of the early Cyber-Senior sessions and started to see a story emerge.

The sisters had the support of their mom, Brenda Rusnak, who had worked her entire career with seniors, and had recently sold her business. After a successful first year, Brenda helped continue the Cyber-Seniors program, expanding it to a second retirement home and helping to engage more youth mentors. Over the next ten months, Saffron and her film crew captured over 120 hours of footage and many memorable moments.

To everyone’s disbelief, Macaulee and her grandfather were both diagnosed with cancer during production. During this challenging time, the Internet became an ever-important lifeline for the family. Macaulee and her grandfather grew even closer while undergoing cancer treatment, sometimes even Skyping during chemotherapy sessions.

The Cyber-Seniors documentary is not only a labour of love – but an inspiring example of the wonderful things that can happen when generation gaps are bridged, and new ways of connecting are explored.

Saffron hopes that her film will inspire more seniors to get online, and that the Cyber-Seniors program will expand across North America.
About the Film Makers

Saffron Cassaday  
**Director / Editor**

Born and raised in Toronto, Saffron Cassaday has always been drawn to the creative arts and studied dance and music from an early age. She attended the prestigious Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in New York City whose alumni include Robert De Niro, Scarlet Johannson, and Angelina Jolie.

Upon returning to Toronto, Saffron signed with an agent and soon after landed her first acting gig, a guest role on the W Network sitcom, The Smart Woman’s Survival Guide. Since then, she has been studying Psychology at York University while developing her craft both in front of and behind the camera. Most recently, Saffron had a starring role in the award-winning web series Pete Winning and the Pirates. She is also a core member of Nocturnal Emissions Comedy, a Toronto-based sketch comedy troupe. Saffron was the editor and had the leading female role in the Global TV series, In the Key of Z, which she co-produced with Nocturnal Emissions.

When her younger sisters started the Cyber-Seniors program, Saffron started to film some of the sessions and immediately began to see a fascinating story emerge.

With post-production of Cyber-Seniors now complete, she is currently researching her next project, a coming-of-age documentary about Generation Y.

Brenda Rusnak  
**Producer**

Brenda Rusnak is an entrepreneur with 30 years of business experience. She is the founder and president of Best Part Productions Inc.

A physiotherapist by profession, Brenda has worked most of her professional career as an entrepreneur providing rehabilitation solutions for senior citizens. In 2000, Brenda was awarded the Canadian Healthcare Manager’s Who’s Who in Healthcare Technology Award. The award is presented to winners in the areas of government, group insurance, healthcare provider, hospital management, medical research, pharmaceutical, plan sponsor and technology, and is designed to recognize individuals who demonstrate an exceptional level of leadership and vision, and whose unique approach has made a positive impact in their field.

In 2009 she sold her healthcare company, which she had grown to 30 ml in revenues, to pursue her interest in film production. She has since partnered with several experienced and talented financiers, researchers, filmmakers, and field experts to create and produce compelling films.

Gail Singer  
**Story Consultant**

Best known for her 1991 feature documentary on female comics, Wisecracks, Singer has written and directed in film for over 20 years. She has done everything from co-directing a giant screen IMAX, Destiny in Space, Blue Planet, with the Smithsonian Institute to making her own fiction movie, True Confections (1991) as well as writing and directing dozens of documentaries.

Singer’s films have taken her to several continents and have been seen in festivals and on television throughout the world. She has been honoured at home and abroad including in the U.S., Great Britain, France, Switzerland and Japan, where a book on the impact of her film Abortion, Stories from North and South (1985) was published.

Her subject matter ranges from comedy to challenging social and political documentaries such as Loved, Honoured and Bruised (1980), which explores one woman’s story of leaving a marriage of physical and mental abuse. Her body of work traces turbulent social movements of the twentieth century, displaying the events with compassion, irony and wit.
Meet the Cyber-Seniors

Annette, 77

Shura, 88

Ebert, 87

Ellard, 89

Marion, 93

Barbara, 90
Meet the Mentors

Henri, 17

Julia, 16

Shayna, 19

Max, 20

Anastasia, 16

Mark, 16

Hannia, 15

Roger, 19