

# Tech Tuesdays

A collaboration with the Franklin County Technical School  
Programming and Web Development shop and the Gill  
Montague Senior Center



No appointment needed!

Come in with questions about your  
laptop computer, tablet or cell phone  
... and we'll help!

Starts January 9th, 2024, and following Tuesdays.

## Tech Drop-in:

• TUESDAYS • 12:30 – 2 PM •

Gill Montague Senior Ctr. • 62 5th Street, Turners Falls, MA





FCTS Seniors Dakota Santos and Matt Richards helping out a Tech Tuesday customer. Dakota is interested in pursuing a career in hardware, Matt is planning on becoming a programmer



Seniors Theo Shahan and Danielle Walker helping a customer with a smart phone issues. The students take on any problems that walk through the door, from setting up laptops and cell phones, fixing setup issues, and researching hardware problems.





Students having a good time while helping a customer with a clogged charging port!







Montague  
Reporter,  
April 11, 2024



# Tech Support for Seniors Tip of the Service Iceberg



WICKS PHOTO

Franklin County Technical School students Theo Shanahan of Orange (left) and Danielle Walker of Vermont (right) help a patron at the Gill-Montague senior center.

By LEE WICKS

**TURNERS FALLS** — These days we're awash in bad news about teens who reportedly lack focus and ambition as they stare at their little screens, playing violent video games. This stereotype doesn't hold up if you take a close look at some of the teens in our community.

When I went to the Gill-Montague senior center to meet some

of the students from the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) who are participating in the digital equity program, I encountered soft-spoken, serious young people who were delighted to be helping older adults. They said they appreciated the opportunity to practice the professional skills they were learning at school.

Theo Shanahan from Orange was

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helping someone learn how to use her iPad. "It makes me happy to help people stay in touch with family," he said, "and share news and pictures."

I watched students take apart a computer, locate a dead battery, check all connections, and more. Two showed a woman how to operate a notebook, and then wrote all the directions out in case she needed to reference them when she got home.

They were caring, professional and kind.

When I visited the Northfield senior center, director Colleen Letourneau showed me the raised planters that students from the tech school had built near their outdoor pavilion, and described a recent cooking demonstration from students in the school's Culinary Arts program. The culinary students also practice their skills at the Bernardston senior center.

According to the FCTS annual report, the Culinary Arts program gave a presentation on *crêpes* for the Northfield senior center, and provided a holiday luncheon for the Montague Housing Authority.

They served the Erving Ladies' Red Hat Society for a Valentine's Day luncheon, created ice carvings for the annual Winter Festival in Greenfield, and hosted the annual Chamber of Commerce breakfast, a regional school resource officers' breakfast, the Superintendents' Award Dinner, the Light Up the Fairgrounds breakfast, and the annual National Honor Society's luncheon.

And they run the Apprentice Restaurant on the tech school campus. Want to sample their cooking? Go to [www.fcts.us/apps/pages/Culinary\\_Menu](http://www.fcts.us/apps/pages/Culinary_Menu) and make a reservation for breakfast or lunch. The menu is tempting, and the prices are reasonable.

And while you are on the website, check out the photos of the different shops.

"We currently have 13 shops, with the new Aviation shop coming on next year," Cyndi Bussey, M.Ed., instructor of programming and web design at FCTS, told me, "and community service is an important aspect of them all."

A list of all of FCTS's service initiatives would be too lengthy for this



Franklin Tech programming and web design instructor Cyndi Bussey (top) and student Matthew Richards of Turners Falls help out at the senior center last month.

column, though they merit stories of their own. For now, I'm concentrating on direct services for older adults. I hope readers remember these students and their good work when daily news leads to despair or a conversation about young people becomes negative. These young people are all over Franklin County, lending a hand and making a difference:

- The Programming and Web Design students working with the Montague senior center helped to develop a website for the UCC Church in Conway. One student is also working with the First Congregational Church in Ashfield, and coordinates the video and audio for their online services.

- The Landscaping and Horticul-

ture department worked with the town of Shelburne in the consultation and design of a pocket park, the Source to Sea annual cleanup, tree planting at the Franklin County Fairgrounds, beautification design projects, and fence repair.

They made wreaths for the Conway covered bridge, worked at the Shelburne Hills Cemetery for fall cleanup, consulted on design for Veteran's Memorial in Pelham and the Peskeomskut Park signage in Turners Falls, and planted trees in the villages of South Deerfield and Turners Falls.

Elsewhere in Montague, they are working with the planning department on the Millers Falls trail modification.

- Students from the Welding

program repaired the iron gate at Highland Cemetery in Millers Falls. They are also making a bench to be located at the French King Bridge in Erving, and are in discussion with the High Street Cemetery in Greenfield to restore their gates.

- The Health Technology program has run public blood pressure clinics and a nail clinic at the Erving senior center, volunteered at the Arbors and Regal Care in Greenfield, collected items for a hygiene drive, worked at the Ja'Duke preschool observing child development and the creation of activities, and helped serve holiday meals at the Stone Soup Cafe in Greenfield.

- The Cosmetology program continues to provide services for residents of the Poet's Seat nursing home, Linda Manor, the Quabbin Valley Nursing Home, and the Bernardston senior center.

That's an impressive list, and it only partially covers all the services. Everyone worries about taxes — especially older adults living on fixed incomes — so it is great to know that FCTS is growing, educating, and helping towns save money.

According to the annual report, these shop programs saved towns an estimated \$100,000. "FCTS has the advantage of utilizing vocational students and licensed instructors from carpentry, electrical, plumbing, landscaping, and advanced precision machining to provide maintenance and repairs to the school grounds and facility," the report says, "saving member towns tens of thousands of dollars annually. And FCTS has received more than \$6.2 million in grants over the last six years without using tax dollars from member communities."

I didn't start out wanting to write a PR piece about the tech school — I went to the Gill Montague senior center to observe a few students in action, and they captured my interest. After living in Montague for more than 30 years, I still didn't realize the scope of FCTS. Now I have a better idea.

What an amazing resource for everyone, especially older adults who sometimes need help — and hope. These young people are providing both.



Tech Tuesday  
Anniversary lunch,  
January 7, 2025

Honoring those who make

Tech Tuesday a SUCCESS

January 7, 2025 11am – 12:15pm



FRANKLIN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL

**Marcus McLaurin**

Programming and Web Instructors

**Cynthia Bussey**

**Maggie Nugent** CTE Director

Sophomores

**Sebastian Carlo**

**Douglas Coulsey**

**Seamus Collins**

**Angel Luna Torres**

**Kaylynn Lupien**

**Eli Messer**

**Kaiden Price**

Juniors

**Matthew Bashaw**

**Tristan Bliss**

**Adam Felle**

**Summer Goewey**

**Kaitlyn Lively**

**Benjamin Waring \*\***

Seniors

**Matthew Richards \*\***

**Theo Shanahan \*\***

**Dakota Santos \*\***

**Danielle Walker \*\***

**Roberta Potter**, Director Gill Montague Council on Aging

**Maureen Pollock**, Planning Director, Town of Montague

**Rachel Stoler**, Community Health Program Manager, FRCOG

**Eileen Mariani, Eileen Dowd**, Montague Mass in Motion Committee

**Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs**

**Senior Tech Time Customers**

*Special thanks to Helen, Joanne, and Erin for help with event!*

In partnership with The Gill Montague Council on Aging, Franklin County Technical School's Programming and Web Programs, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs

\*\* Comments from students

One Year  
Anniversary  
Celebration  
of Tech  
Tuesdays at  
the  
Montague  
Senior  
Center



## The Importance of Tech Tuesday to me

*As a senior citizen, I become more conscious of our vulnerabilities as we age and I'm reassured to have resources like AARP and the Gill Montague Senior Center in my life. A word we have all been hearing and reading about more and more is "agency" in terms of "control over actions and their consequences."*

*Avoiding technology is no longer tenable as a response as our culture expects us to navigate and communicate online i.e. banking, healthcare portals, streaming entertainment, and more. How can we detect the difference between an authentic email from Medicare and a phony one? How can we keep our computers free of "phishing" expeditions, spam, and computer viruses?*

*Thanks to a partnership with Franklin County Technical School and the Gill-Montague Senior Center, we senior citizens can gain some "agency" in digital literacy.*

*Students with specialized knowledge in social media and the Internet are able to answer questions and supply solutions (when possible) to questions we all have about how to keep our private information safe and secure, about how to best communicate over the Internet via (email? Text? Other?), how to use YouTube for instructional videos about almost anything (including the Internet), learning about streaming, about data storage, about free sites and services versus those with a fee, and the lists goes on; including "what do all these technical terms mean?"*

*These students look forward to being challenged by your questions! And by the way, what a great way to build community by conversing with curious, intelligent young adults! Being a thrifty senior, I have done the math and evaluated the value versus the cost of students who are free and honest brokers. In other words they are not trying to sell us anything! I have attended many of these helpful and informative one-on-one tutorial sessions and plan to continue on as I still have many questions.*

*I'm hopeful that this worthwhile program continues as it has become essential for me to keep up with ever-changing technology and have fun at the same time!*

**Jim Cosgrove** Turners Falls, MA 12/15/2024



## Empowering Older Adults to Utilize Technology

**Celebrating a Partnership Between the Gill Montague Senior Center Digital Equity Program and The Franklin County Technical School Web and Programming Students and Instructors**

### Tech Tuesday

**One Year 151 Appointments**

January 9, 2024 – December 10, 2024

## 151 Appointments

39%

### Smart Phones

*Operate my new phone; Work Google translator; What is RCS and Gemini?; Connect to email and change PIN; Set up new Insta after being hacked; Stop phone from dictating conversations; Silence my I Phone 15; Activate parking app; Install tracking app; Delete unwanted operations; Transfer sim to new phone; Use Facetime and Bluetooth*

38%

### Computer/Laptop

*Do I need a new device????; Upload from the Cloud; Download Adobe to submit unemployment appeal; Help with Jury Duty application; Update Windows XP Media Ctr, using 2002 browser; Better SPAM filter; Set up my new tablet/laptop/kindle; Voice diction app; What is cookies?; Not able to get DVD out; Someone hacked my Facebook page; Problems with Zoom; Transfer data to USB; Help with Audacity software*

23%

### Multiple Devices

*Printer not working, can you help me over the phone?; Sync Fitbit watch with phone; Swap Kindle games to Galaxy tablet; Can't connect to WIFI; How to connect pictures from phone to show on TV; More storage space on all devices; Restore phone and sync with tablet*

# Tech Tuesday's year in statistical review



At the Tech  
Tuesday  
Anniversary  
lunch, Senior Matt  
Richards is  
solving a Stump  
the Student tech  
problem asked by  
a Tech Tuesday  
participant!



# The Montague Reporter, January 9, 2025

# Tech Helpers Hear Praise At Program's One-Year Mark

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – “What is Gemini, and do I really need it?”

Stump the Students started off with a banger, but Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) sophomore Kaylynn Lupien rose to the challenge.

“Gemini is not necessary,” Lupien told the audience of senior citizens, government functionaries, and her peers in FCTS’s Programming & Web Development shop gathered Tuesday morning at the Gill-Montague senior center. “It is an AI assistant, sort of like if you have Siri on an iPhone – it used to just be Google Voice, where you could just ask Google, ‘Hey Google, here’s my question.’ It’s not necessary.”

Lupien’s instructors both gave thumbs-ups to this answer, and her table had 200 points out of the gate.

The quiz game was intended to showcase the sort of questions the FCTS students have faced over the last year from the “customers” attending Tech Tuesday, a biweekly support session at the center intended to help older residents keep pace in a wired world. Tuesday’s lunchtime event, which came with sandwiches, commemorated the end of the partnership’s first year – and an announcement of continued funding for another.

In between Stump questions Colleen Doherty, coordinator of the Mass In Motion grant committee for the town of Montague as well as

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Deerfield resident Helen Ostrowski (left) told the student tech support workers that thanks to their help, she no longer had “that fear of touching my iPad.”

**TECH** from page A1

Digital Equity for Older Adults programming at multiple senior centers in the area, recapped the initiative’s history and prompted attendees to speak on its merits.

“We’re all working together to try to really combat that digital divide,” she said.

Montague appointed its Mass In Motion group two years ago under a state-structured program that encourages municipalities to gauge local seniors’ most pressing needs before taking steps to fulfill them.

“One of the things that was loud and clear was improved digital equity,” Doherty recounted. “[Volunteer] Eileen Mariani was very keen on eliminating social isolation for seniors... We know person-to-person socialization is the best, but we’re now in an age where we rely on technology for socialization.”

Mariani, a retired kindergarten teacher who has also been active in building the Montague Villages organization, was on hand Tuesday.

“I was taking care of little kids for 26 years, and now here we are, old,” she said, “trying to figure out living in your community as you watch your friends and peers not have access to technology, not have a cell phone, or panic at the thought of somebody calling them with a scam.”

Doherty credited town planner Maureen Pollock and Council on Aging director Roberta Potter for securing the original \$22,000 in digital literacy funding last year from the state Executive Office of Elder Affairs. “Within less than two days these two women hammered out a grant, and that’s where we’re here today,” she said.

A major piece of the town’s strategy has been the Tuesday afternoon tech-support partnership with budding experts from FCTS.

“What do I do when my computer screen freezes?” Pollock asked the nearly 20 patient students.

“What you do if your screen freezes, or crashes, is that you hold down the power button until it completely turns off,” junior Adam Felle told her. “And then you turn it back on.”

Felle was awarded the round’s points, though Programming & Web instructor Marcus McLaurin had one key step to add: “Wait 10 seconds before you restart it.”

Later in the event, Eileen Dowd shared a success story. “My husband was having trouble with his phone – we thought it was totally gone,” she recalled. “He was just getting more and more frustrated and we thought we had to go and buy a new phone.... We came to Tech Tuesday. “There was a group of people,

and one young man found that the charge area was nasty – he kept digging and digging, and finally asked John what he did for a living: “There’s a lot of dust in here, what do you do?” And, of course, John does everything dusty.”

After a good charger-port clean-out, Dowd said, the phone “came alive – and probably saved our marriage.”

The whole room cracked up. Local sculptor Jack Nelson, who had serendipitously arrived during his wife’s story, then announced that he’d brought a micro-vacuum cleaner as a thank-you gift, and tossed it across the room to the student who’d discovered the dust.

The catch was good, and spirits were high.

“We’re always here on Tuesday, and then the second Thursday of every month we go to the Erving senior center with the same program,” FCTS instructor Cindy Bussey told the *Reporter*. “It’s been a lot of fun – it gets the kids out, gets them meeting people.”

“This has been an astounding program,” said Potter. “The students have been amazing – they have solved all sorts of problems on a huge spectrum of devices, and they have also been remarkably personable, and polite and professional, and kind, and non-judgmental. All of the customers have raved about their experiences.”

“I didn’t know anything about my iPad, but all the students – I don’t remember all your names – really helped me out a lot,” Helen Ostrowski of Deerfield testified. “I’m thankful for that. I don’t have

that fear, now, of touching my iPad. I’m still learning, but it’s a good thing!”

In October Montague was awarded \$26,110 by the state agency MassTech to continue its digital literacy programming. Among other programs, the funding will ensure that the drop-in hours – every Tuesday from 12:30 to 2 p.m., no appointment necessary, free of charge, and open to all residents over 60 – can continue.

Potter said Tech Tuesday is the first intergenerational programming the senior center has hosted.

“My favorite part is generally helping people out,” senior Theo Shahan reported. “I like when I can help solve people’s problems, because it gives me a sense that I’m doing what I’m supposed to do.”

The most difficult problem he encountered during the past year at Tech Tuesday, he said, involved a website: “Somebody wanted to add links to their site, and social media, and they were using a program we haven’t used yet. It was quite difficult, but we did actually end up figuring it out.”

Shahan says he is considering going into web development.

Seamus Collins, a sophomore who is thinking about becoming a software engineer, said he enjoyed coming to the senior center drop-in hours. “It gets me out of class,” he said, “and actually helping people and being useful with my time.” Collins also cited a website issue as the biggest challenge he has seen thus far.

“Someone was hosting a website and couldn’t get into it, because they were hosting their email

through someone else, and that someone else had passed away," he explained. "And they were using a weird hosting service. So they had to go through this whole thing to get her website back – it took a while."

The real challenge, according to McLaurin, is often "interpreting what the customer needs." In the case of the website whose password had been brought to the grave, for example, it turned out that what the owner really wanted was to retrieve all the photos from the site – a problem with an easier solution.

McLaurin said the types of problems many seniors are bringing to the center have been "less new [technology] than people wanting to know how to keep their old stuff going – like, 'Do I really have to upgrade?' Often the answer is no, depending on what they want to do, but sometimes the answer is yes."

Junior Summer Goewey said she was stumped by a customer who wanted to transfer all his data from an old phone to a new one. "But he didn't use a cloud," she said. "I was confused as to what his issue was.... If he wanted to transfer everything, he'd have to memorize it and log into all of it."

Bussey and McLaurin alternate weeks supervising the senior center hours. According to Doherty, participation typically ranges from two to eight participants each session. "We get a fair amount of repeat customers," she said. "The needs are getting more complex."

Though bringing a group of students downtown each week for Tech Tuesday means a trade-off with regular instruction time, McLaurin said, working with the public was "a form of instruction" as well.

"That interaction is something

that we didn't have an opportunity to do on a mass scale," he said. "We'd have people working on a team with clients, but that's two or three people a semester, as opposed to the entire class.... I think it was something that was needed."

"There's students that have been very, very hesitant to come," McLaurin told the *Reporter*. "So we made it a rule that you gotta go to one, and see what it's about.... The students who do go always want to keep going."

As the special luncheon drew to an end, a few students – and a few of the older attendees – stuck around for the next event. Among them was Nelson, phone in hand.

"John needs to understand how to change his pin so he can get his voicemail," Dowd whispered to the press. "The voicemail keeps rejecting his pin, but it's the only pin we ever use. We can't figure it out."

Seamus Collins sat down to take a closer look. It was time for Tech Tuesday.



Coordinator Colleen Doherty (far right) said a new \$26,110 MassTech grant will allow the program to continue.



# The Greenfield Reporter, January 7, 2025

# GREENFIELD RECORDER

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## Tech Tuesdays a success for Turners Falls seniors



Montague Mass in Motion Coordinator Colleen Doherty, in black, facilitates the Tech Tuesday one-year celebration at the Gill-Montague Senior Center in Turners Falls on Tuesday. STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

By [ERIN-LEIGH  
HOFFMAN](#)  
Staff Writer

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TURNERS FALLS — Franklin County Technical School students and local senior citizens celebrated their “Tech Tuesday” partnership on Tuesday, marking the first year of tech support that will continue into 2026 thanks to additional grant funding.

Tech Tuesday is a collaboration between the Gill-Montague Senior Center and Franklin Tech. Students in grades 10 through 12 who are enrolled in the Programming and Web Development Program offer free drop-in tech support on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 2 p.m. for senior citizens. Students receive credit for their assistance, and seniors leave with expanded digital literacy skills — something both seniors and students spoke about enthusiastically at Tuesday’s celebration.

Karol Bradford of Turners Falls said she had been attending exercise programs at the Senior Center when she decided to stop in for a drop-in tech help session in the fall to see if someone could help her with a phone issue. For many years, she worked with computers as a bank employee.

“Unfortunately, I’ve lost a lot of my knowledge over the years because there have been so many changes,” Bradford said while giving praise to the students who helped her.

“A lot of these guys have been great. I’ve dealt with several of them. They’re all really knowledgeable and very patient,” Bradford said.

Tech Tuesday is a collaborative effort between the town of Montague, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Montague Mass in Motion Committee, along with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

## FCTS students help seniors with technology

### TECH FROM A1

At the start of Tuesday's celebration, Montague Mass in Motion Coordinator Colleen Doherty said that Town Planner Maureen Pollock and Montague Council on Aging Director Roberta Potter were able to secure \$22,000 in grant funding for increasing digital equity among seniors, which included money for the drop-in tech support. FRCOG also provides funding for this program, in addition to the grant, Doherty explained. An additional \$26,110 grant came from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative that will fund the program into 2026.

The \$22,000 grant paid for 151 appointments in 2024 for smartphone, computer and other device help, according to Doherty. She said those who are seeking assistance range in age from 60 to 90, and many are repeat attendees of the tech support sessions.

As part of the celebration, students and seniors played a Stump-the-Student question game where a senior asks a tech question that a student answers, all while students and seniors had the opportunity to share what they learned from Tech Tuesday.

"This is, without a doubt, one of the best experiences I have ever gone through," Franklin Tech senior Dakota Santos shared with the group. In one instance, Santos said he was able to help

a Tech Tuesday visitor with a laptop issue that a local tech support store could not. "I was really glad to know that I could do something even ... the best professionals were not able to do or wanted to."

While the students take the lead in the drop-in hours, Franklin Tech instructors Marcus McLaurin and Cynthia Bussey offer help where they can. From their perspective, they've seen the impact the service has had for senior citizens over the past year, as well as for students.

"They recount some of the stories and we might talk about a particular thing," Bussey said about the students at Tech Tuesday. "It is definitely something that comes back to our shop and I know it also sticks in their minds for future careers."

For those interested in Tech Tuesday, visit the Gill-Montague Senior Center at 62 Fifth St. on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 2 p.m. No advance registration is needed. A calendar of Senior Center programs can be found at [gillmontaguecouncilonaging.org/](http://gillmontaguecouncilonaging.org/)

calendar.

*Erin-Leigh Hoffman can be reached at [ehoffman@recorder.com](mailto:ehoffman@recorder.com) or 413-930-4231.*



Franklin County Technical School students Seamus Collins and Matthew Richards help Jack Nelson of Turners Falls access his voicemail on his cellphone during Tech Tuesday at the Gill-Montague Senior Center in Turners Falls. The drop-in program marked its one-year anniversary this week.

STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ



Developed by Cyndi Bussey in collaboration with Colleen Doherty for the grant issued to the Town of Montague entitled “Enhancing Digital Literacy for Older Adults,” Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Additional funding provided by Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Thank you for watching