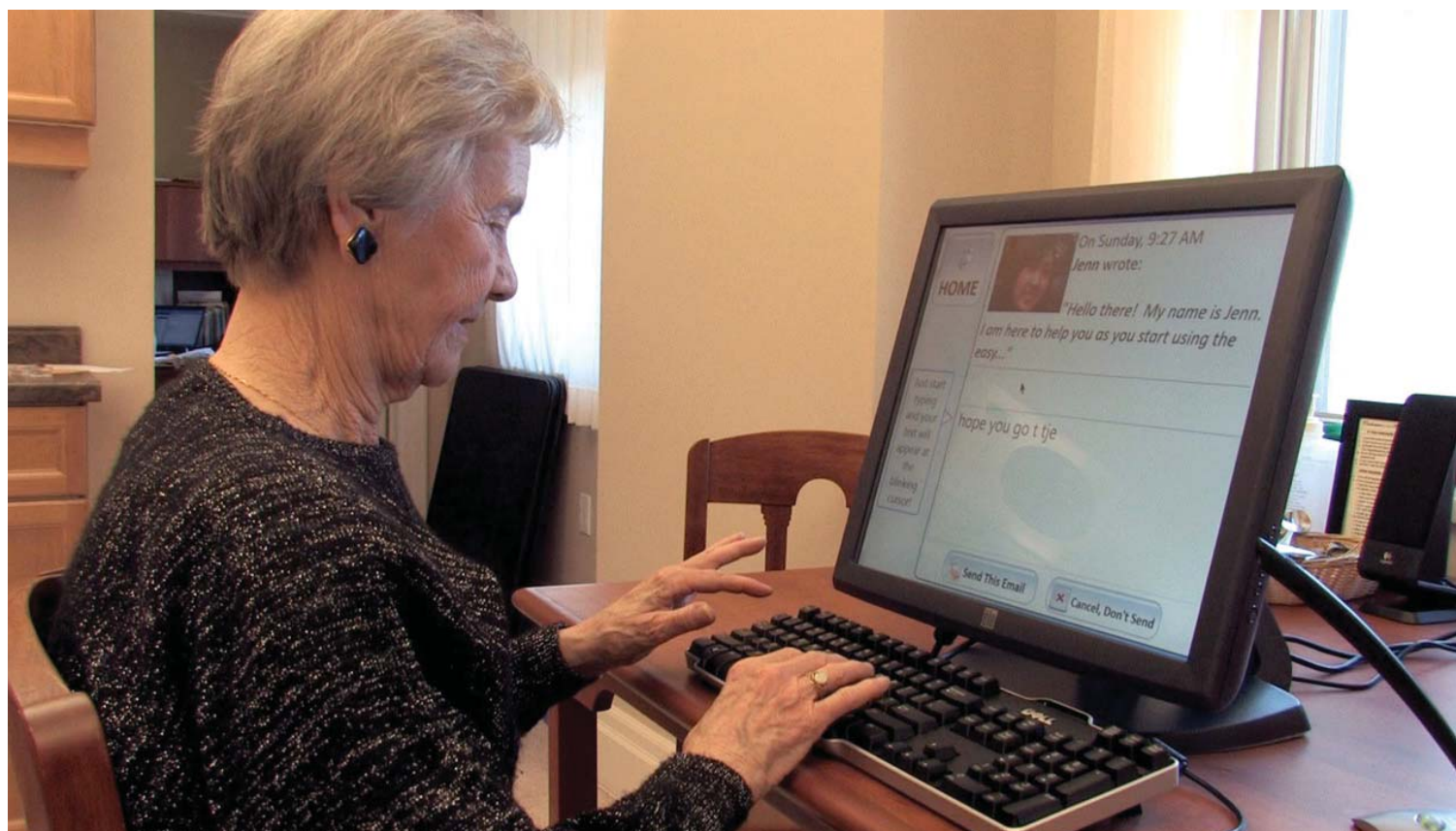# When's The Last Time You Stopped Worrying If Your Loved One Is Okay?
PointerWare – The Bridge To Peace of Mind

At a Glance. . .

PointerWare is a simple to use computer platform that makes it easy to get online and stay connected to the wider world.
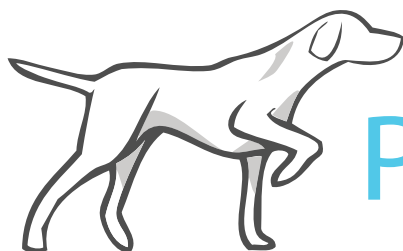
Users easily send and receive email, play brain-fitness games, view family photos, browse the Internet and enjoy video chats with family no matter where they are.

PointerWare is ideal for seniors, children with special needs and special populations with Macular Degeneration, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and other physical and mental disabilities

It runs on any Windows PC and is easily downloaded and installed over the Internet.

"$8 per month is well worth some peace of mind and being able to communicate with my grandmother." Kathryn L., caregiver.

Try PointerWare for free. Family Caregiver readers can try PointerWare for free for the first three months. Visit **www.pointerware.com/familycaregiveroffer** to start your free trial.

It wasn't your typical gathering. The men and women eating sushi and sipping wine were among the world's top scientists, business people and policy makers in the field of aging. It was the end of day one at the Business of Aging Summit in Toronto and attendees were unwinding at the pre-dinner reception. In the room full of Blackberry's and business suits, a crowd was gathered around a computer screen at the far end of the room, watching Cora McCune hold court from her room two hours away in Orangeville, Ontario.

Normally this savvy crowd wouldn't get so excited about something as commonplace as video-conferencing over the Internet but this was different. Far from your typical demo-girl, Cora was 91 years old and up until the previous year, had never used a computer. Yet she had made the leap into the digital world thanks to PointerWare - a piece of software her grandson Stephen had created specifically for seniors. And it was PointerWare that was grabbing this crowd's attention.

**A Grandfather Passing Away
Was The Catalyst**
"When my grandfather passed away, we got worried about my grandmother being on her own," says Cora's grandson, Stephen Beath. "Phone conversations were beginning to get difficult for my grandmother yet my mom needed an easy way to check in with her everyday. And I knew my generation, the adult grandchildren, were much more likely to stay in touch with grandma if we could do it in a medium we're comfortable with, like email

PointerWare™
Computers Made Simple

or video conferencing over the Internet. We decided to get my grandmother online."

Beath knew teaching Cora to use conventional software would be an exercise in frustration for both of them. Instead, the self-described computer geek figured he'd just have to find a senior-friendly software package that made it easy for Cora to send and receive email. Simple, right?

"There was nothing. I searched for general-purpose software geared towards seniors. The closest I came were products that could print emails and seniors computer clubs that helped seniors use traditional software packages."

When Beath, who was working toward a master's degree in medical imaging, mentioned his dilemma to fellow grad student, Raul Rupsingh, he was surprised to discover his experience wasn't unique. Beath and Rupsingh became intrigued by the idea of creating an easy-to-use, senior-friendly software package.

Why Do Seniors Need to Use Computers Anyway?
Connected individuals are healthier and happier than their non-Internet using counterparts. The evidence is compelling. Those who connect with family, friends and the wider community via email and the Internet are less likely to suffer from depression. Age-related dementia can be slowed, and possibly reversed, when seniors take advantage of computer-based brain-fitness games. Self-esteem goes up when individuals learn something new. And some studies suggest that those who take advantage of what the Internet has to offer stay independent longer. The list goes on and on.

Yet despite the numerous reasons for seniors to jump on the high-tech bandwagon, a giant obstacle remains: if someone has never used a computer before, the learning curve is huge. Add to that vision and motor issues

and suddenly, using a computer becomes a Herculean task – unless, that is, the computer is running super easy software. And that is what Beath and Rupsingh set out to create.

It's So Simple
To figure out how seniors use computers, Beath and Rupsingh volunteered and taught computer classes at a local senior's centre. They enlisted Hazel Brunt, a friend's grandmother, to test their user-interface ideas. Because Hazel had never used a computer (or even a VCR) before, she proved to be the perfect beta tester. To accommodate Beath's grandmother Cora, who lived out of town, the software was adapted so it could be updated and maintained remotely. Eventually, their research evolved into PointerWare.

PointerWare is an easy to use computer platform that helps seniors and others get online and stay connected with family and the wider world. Instead of seeing the usual (and often confusing) Windows operating system, users are presented with the simple PointerWare screen. Buttons using large fonts and plain English offer uncomplicated choices –read and send email, play brain-fitness games, organize photos, video-phone family and friends and browse the Internet. PointerWare works on any Windows PC and when used with a touch-screen, eliminates the need to learn how to use a keyboard or mouse.

This innovative technology is also closing the digital divide by providing accessible computing for special populations with Macular Degeneration, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and other physical and mental disabilities.

It's The Caregiver Who Benefits
When Scott Pierce suggested his mother start using a computer, she reacted with a curt, "You've got to be kidding!" She had

never touched a computer before and wasn't about to start now. Her son had other ideas.

"I was desperate to find something to keep her active mentally," explains Pierce. "I work full-time and there was my 82-year old mom, alone at home." He downloaded PointerWare and gave his mother a quick 15-minute tutorial. That was all it took. Now she emails Scott and other family members daily. "If I'm at work and can't talk to her on the phone, we can at least send email. We feel connected and that takes some of the worry away."

"Most of the caregivers we talk to immediately 'get' why someone would use PointerWare," says Rupsingh. "But what they don't initially understand is what this easy-to-use

software will do for them, the caregiver.

"I tell them, 'You need to check out PointerWare because you deserve some peace of mind when you're too busy working or looking after your kids or keeping on top of day-to-day life to squeeze in a visit; because you miss the mother or father or grandparent who was vital and engaged and connected to the larger world; because your kids need a relationship with their grandparents, even if they don't understand that yet; and because sometimes you want to recapture a little of what things were like before caring for someone took over your life.' That's why you need PointerWare."