Seniors fear tech no more thanks to RAIN Bailey class
By Viola Brown
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When Tomasa Ayala received a computer as a gift about two years ago, she did not even open it because she didn't know how to use the technology and was afraid of what would happen.

"I opened it and thought what do I do with it?" Ms. Ayala, 65, said. "I was worried it was going to explode."

Fast forward to 2016, and Ms. Ayala is comfortable surfing the Internet, shopping online and managing her bank account — all thanks to a computer basics class at RAIN Bailey Senior Center.

"It's important to learn it because it's a new technology," she said. "I got to keep up because I have grandchildren. Everything is on computers now and I don't want to be left behind."

RAIN Bailey, located at 2660 Bailey Ave., offers a basics and "beyond the basics" class that meets twice a week for 10 weeks per course. Older Adult Technology Services (OATS) provides the instructors.

"I enjoy teaching and interacting with the students at this age," said instructor Christian Cordova, "I don't know if I have the temperament to teach kindergartners."

During the beginner course, Mr. Cordova teaches how to turn on a computer, use a mouse and keyboard and do basic functions on Microsoft Windows. As students advance to "beyond the basics," they learn how to keep their identity safe while online banking and shopping.

"We need to put our brains to work," said Mirta Matos, 74. "This is the era of technology and we weren't born in this era and it's never too late to learn."

Before starting the class, Ms. Matos said she knew enough about the computer in order to fill out immigration papers and make airline reservations but didn't know what some of the symbols on the keyboard meant.

Program coordinator Frank Edwards started the computer classes at RAIN Bailey in 2006, but then left in order to work elsewhere. When he came back in 2013, the computer classes were not being offered and he decided to start them up again. Mr. Edwards said the class is currently in its eighth consecutive session, with over 100 students so far.

"My experience in computer technology is that it opens a brand-new world, especially for older adults," said Mr. Edwards. "It stimulates the mind and is a therapeutic thing."

The coordinator envisions more courses in the future. He is thinking of offering a digital photography class.