

\$20K gift funds Kindle donation at Glen Eddy

Resident wanted to help others

Tuesday, November 9, 2010

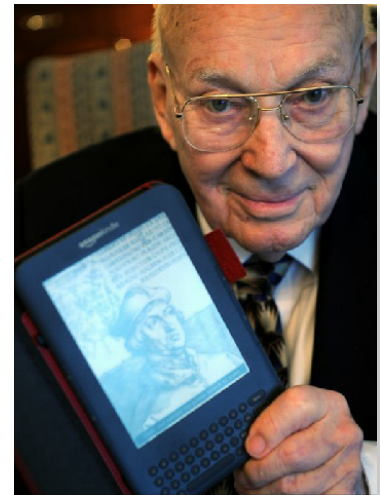
By Bill Buell
Gazette Reporter

NISKAYUNA — Gutenberg gave us the printing press, and Ben Franklin helped out with our reading glasses. Then, there was Myron Nichols.

That might be overstating things a bit, but to his fellow residents at the Glen Eddy in Niskayuna, Nichols rates that kind of high esteem.

A 96-year-old retired Presbyterian preacher who spent much of his life in California and Oregon, Nichols has lived at the Glen Eddy, an assisted- and independent-living facility on Consaul Road, since it opened in 2001. Earlier this year, Nichols donated \$20,000 to the place so that every resident could have his or her own personal electronic book reader, and last week 15 of the machines — Amazon Kindles — showed up. More are on the way.

“Us seniors are in a spot,” said Nichols. “It’s a problem for all of us here. We get to the point where our abilities are limited. I thought giving this gift was a really neat way to help people read.”



Nichols proposed the idea to the staff at Glen Eddy and a committee made up of seven residents was formed to begin searching for just the right e-book reader.

“We looked at eight different units over about four months before we settled on one,” said Al Gilbert, a resident who chaired the search committee. “It was a lot of work, but everybody thought it was a great idea and we were all enthusiastic about doing it.”

There are currently 45 of the approximately 170 Glen Eddy residents who have signed up to receive an e-book reader, and at around \$150 a unit, Nichols’ \$20,000 gift is more than enough to pay for every resident to have one.

“Just like everyone who moves in here gets a refrigerator in their kitchen, we’d like to be able to offer everyone an e-book reader,” said Glen Eddy Director Scott Flagel. “We give out computers to all our residents, but they remain our computers. These e-books are due to Myron’s generosity. They belong to the residents.”

“Each of us were offered a computer when we moved here, so everyone had access to their family, and I hadn’t ever heard of a retirement center doing that,” said Nichols. “So we got a computer and a refrigerator, and that’s part of what makes living here so special; the quality of living. I think my gift adds a little something to that, and if somebody has to go to a nursing home or a hospital, they can take their e-book with them. They belong to the resident.”

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Nichols was born in Iowa and moved to the San Diego area in high school. He went to UCLA and studied business administration, but then changed gears and decided to go to seminary and become a minister instead. He began preaching in North Hollywood, then moved to Pasadena and then Pendleton, Ore., where he lived for nearly 40 years. Nichols and his wife moved to the Capital Region because his son Byron, recently retired, was a political science professor at Union College.

“My wife and I wanted to be near family so it was either here or Southern California,” said Nichols, whose wife Phyllis died soon after they moved to the area. “I visited the Glen Eddy before they were done putting up the building and we really liked it. It’s a very nurturing place. We really appreciated what we found here.”

His fellow residents feel the same way about Nichols.

“It’s a great thing that he’s done,” said Gilbert. “He’s one of the most positive people I’ve ever had the pleasure to work with. When anybody ever says anything negative, he just turns it around and comes right back at you the other way. He’s a great guy.”

Nichols, who was given an e-book reader by his family a few weeks ago, puts aside a few hours each night to read.

“I decided I would turn off the TV at 9 each night, get ready for bed and then read until 11, and it’s worked out pretty well,” he said. “With this Kindle I’m reading more and reading better than I have in a long time.”

Most of Nichols’ reading material consists of daily newspapers, like the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times.

“Our friend from Australia [Rupert Murdoch] has bought the Wall Street Journal and Fox News and everything else, but I still subscribe to the newspaper even though the editorial position is not to my liking,” said Nichols. “It’s got business news in it and it tells me when business ventures go awry, so I read it.”

About a year ago, Nichols began struggling to read newspapers, particularly the Wall Street Journal.

“I had been having trouble with the small print in the Journal, and I was doing what I call speed reading,” said Nichols. “I was reading but I wasn’t getting the depth of the text. Oh, to be 95 again. But this little machine is great. I’ve also added The New York Times to it, and it’s wonderful to read a newspaper, be able to make out everything, and not have to squint. I really enjoy it.”