

AARP MEMBERSHIP: JUST \$16 A YEAR

JOIN

RENEW

EN ESPAÑOL

**AARP**  
Real Possibilities

HELP | A to Z

Search AARP.org

MEMBER BENEFITS HEALTH WORK & RETIREMENT MONEY HOME & FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT FOOD TRAVEL POLITICS GAMES

Dating Family & Friends Sex & Intimacy Caregiving Your Home Personal Technology Getting Around Discounts

HIGHLIGHTS AARP® Prescription Discounts Provided by Catamaran | Need a New AARP Card? | AARP® Vision Discounts | Black Community OPEN

JOIN AARP TODAY!



Join for Just \$16 A Year

**AARP VIVA**

AARP Home » Home & Family » Personal Technology » Tech Makeover

**Innovations**

**Tech Makeover**

A gadget guru connects and streamlines one chaotic family.

by: Erika Milvy, from: AARP VIVA, Fall 2010

Text | Print | Comments | Email | Recommend (13) | +1



— Matt Herring

**En español** | When she got her cell phone, Ileana Hesquijarosa, 71, couldn't tell its "talk" from its "end call" button. Now she uses e-mail, Facebook and video chat to connect with her children and five grandchildren flung throughout the Northeast and relatives and friends in Cuba. Still, there's more she and the younger generations want to do—and more they can do within their budgets, says tech expert Jose Andrade, of *Engadget en español*. Here he offers a prescription for the whole family with an eye toward portable, wireless and intuitive solutions.

**GRANDMA**

**The situation**

Ileana and her husband, Albert, 70, live in New Jersey, but stay and care for son Alex's 14-month-old toddler, Max, in Connecticut during the week. Soon, Ileana will head to New Hampshire to care for daughter Liza's 5-month-old baby, Kara.

**The wish list**

Ileana wants to get onboard with Twitter and texting. And since she'll be on abuela-related travel, she'd like to upgrade her flip phone to a smart phone so she can check Facebook, e-mail and Skype from playgrounds and her kids' homes.

**High-Tech Prescription**

Andrade suggests smart phones with large keyboards and front-facing webcams, like Apple's iPhone4, for voice-chatting. Motorola's Backflip or the BlackBerry Curve 8520 can make Skype voice calls, and Skype To Go allows for cheap overseas calls. A "tablet" or "slate" computer would allow her to read books, connect to TV and radio, share photos and use Facebook. The iPad scares her, but Andrade says these devices are hassle-free and by December, hundreds will hit the market, lowering prices. Netbooks with webcams, like Dell's Mini 10 or an Asus Eee, are good choices. Finally, spring for a technical-support service.



**KIDS**

**The situation**

In Connecticut, Alex and Patty Hesquijarosa share an old HP desktop computer, which Caleb, 12, often hogs. Liza Hesquijarosa and her husband, Joe Lohndorf, are set technologically, with four computers for four people, including a baby.

**The wish list**

Patty and Liza each want a terrific camera and a high-definition camcorder to use for taking great pictures of their kids. Joe, on the other hand, specializes in home automation and is looking for a way to consolidate his many electronics.

**High-Tech Prescription**

Parents love portable pocket-sized camcorders, but Andrade suggests cameras with good video and easy sharing capabilities. With the Flip from Flip Video, a tiny flash-drive device with a pop-out USB connector, posting videos to Facebook or YouTube is a breeze. Sharper Image's look-alike U-Video Camera is less than half the Flip's price. Kodak's EasyShare series helps with tagging and sharing photos. And wireless memory cards let you beam photos from almost anywhere.

For organizing Joe's collection of electronics, try universal remotes like Harmony's, the Philips Prestige SRU8015 or the Sony RM-VL600.



**GRANDKIDS**

**The situation**

Ileana's 4-year-old granddaughter Kaleni video-chats, Caleb has more than 200 Facebook friends and produces YouTube videos, and Isa, 4, loves pbkids.org. Max and Kara, the youngest, enjoy playing up to the camera when Skyping Grandma.

**The wish list**

Liza isn't ready for her kids to have their first cell phones, but she likes the GPS features, which could help her keep up with their whereabouts. Caleb, an aspiring rock star, is angling for a Mac with sound-mixing software capabilities.

**High-Tech Prescription**

For the parents, Andrade says the Insignia Little Buddy Child Tracker lets them locate children via smart phones or computers. For the kids, Andrade suggests touch-screen educational toys like LeapFrog's Leapster Explorer, recommended for children 5 through 9. Not all experts agree. "There's a ton of products for kids, but not a lot based on research," says Carly Shuler of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop. Budding musician Caleb may not need Mac's pricey GarageBand; he can create on Microsoft's less-expensive SongSmith.

All of which Grandma can watch from her hip new smart phone.

