

Startup links families with their independent seniors

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A woman walks in her room on March 18, 2011 in Angervilliers, eastern France. A new way for families to stay close to independent elders that blends modern technology with old fashioned parcel post debuted on crowd-funding website Kickstarter Tuesday.

A new way for families to stay close to independent elders that blends modern technology with old fashioned parcel post debuted on crowd-funding website Kickstarter Tuesday.

The system—the brainchild of a startup called Lively—uses sensors and an online service to keep tabs on seniors without intruding on their lives. "There is some technology here, but the root of what we are doing is building stronger connections between elders living independently and their family members," said Lively's chief operating officer, David Glickman.

Unlike Kickstarter pitches for financial backers, Lively is [raising money](#) with "pre-order pledges" of \$99 each.

Lively provides a set of sensors to be affixed to things such as [pill boxes](#), refrigerators, microwave oven doors, or kitchen cabinets routinely used by seniors at home when they are eating, drinking or taking their medicine.

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A "Lively Hub" that plugs into an outlet picks up signals from sensors and uses a [wireless signal](#) to relay information through [cell phone towers](#) to the San Francisco startup's servers.

Another sensor attaches to a senior's key chain and detects when they come or go from home.

"The general idea is activity sharing," Glickman said. "We created an experience that shares daily patterns in a way that is not too intrusive or over sharing."

Seniors can decide who has access to "dashboards" online indicating how conscientious they are being about eating and getting out of the house.

Arrays of family members or friends can use Lively smartphone applications to upload pictures or musings during daily activities.

Photos and messages shared by people are then printed and sent to seniors by [mail](#) in booklets called "LivelyGrams."

"Studies have shown that living independently encourages successful aging for older adults through improved self-esteem, health and [life satisfaction](#)," said Laura Carstensen, a Lively board member and director of the Stanford Center on Longevity.

"Yet this can be a challenge for extended family who feel responsible for the care of their elders as they're often 'sandwiched' between their aging parents and own children, while balancing jobs and parenting."

The Lively system will be priced at \$149 when it becomes regularly available, and subscriptions to the service will cost \$19.95 a month.

The startup sees itself as a low-cost entry in a market known for costly and invasive elder monitoring systems.

"This category has always been described as Big Brother; fear and monitoring," said Lively co-founder Iggy Fanlo. "We want people to be thinking about loving and caring."

US orders placed at [Kickstarter](#) will be shipped by July, while those in Europe, Canada or Australia will be sent by December, according to Lively. Versions for other markets will be announced late this year.

More information: www.kickstarter.com/projects/lively/lively-der-adults-and-their

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