

Social networks such as **Facebook**, **MySpace**, **LinkedIn** and **Twitter** have moved rapidly into the mainstream; **61% of Americans now participate on a regular basis.** Teens and young adults are still the heaviest users, but many others are now following their lead—social media use among those 50 and older has nearly doubled in the past year alone.<sup>1</sup> For many families, social networking has already become a central aspect of everyday life, often serving to bridge geographic and generational gaps.

# how well are you connected?

## A New Take on Togetherness

Family members and circles of friends can create and manage online profiles and then communicate or interact with each other in the same virtual space whenever they choose. Put simply, it has become much more convenient to stay in touch and maintain relationships across the miles. Many people document the key milestones and highlights of their lives with stories, status updates, photos and videos uploaded on their profiles. It seems natural that parents, other relatives and friends are often eager to follow their progress and respond to the postings.

*7 out of 10 people have used social networks to reconnect with friends or business colleagues from the past.<sup>2</sup>*

Sources: 1) Pew Research Center  
2, 3) PC World, August 2010

## Building Virtual Villages

Social media has also become a common tool for professional networking, political participation and continuing education. Individuals can ask for and receive advice or offer their own knowledge when they join online communities and discussion groups that speak to their personal needs and experiences. There are countless groups available for those who share the same hobbies, interests or health concerns.

## Just for Fun

Online communities like Facebook and MySpace offer easy access to popular social games (such as FarmVille and Bejeweled) played among circles of friends and family.

*Game play isn't only for the young; it also appeals to the young at heart. Believe it or not, 38% of social gamers are age 50 or older.<sup>3</sup>*

## The Facebook Nation

Launched just six years ago, Facebook's membership was first limited to Harvard students. Facebook is now the world's largest social network and the most visited site on the Internet. 50% of Americans have Facebook profiles. **If Facebook were a nation, it would be the third largest in the world.**



China  
1.35 billion



India  
1.21 billion



Facebook  
500 million



United States  
310 million



Indonesia  
232 million

The community's population grew to exceed half a billion worldwide in July of 2010—at the same rate it would surpass the 1 billion user mark by late 2011.

Sources: United Nations, US Census Bureau, Facebook