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Honorary office

## **Mouse Mobil: Volunteers provide support in everyday digital life**

### **Volunteer portraits: New series from the volunteer agency // Introducing Mouse Mobil**

The Mouse Mobil initiative supports senior citizens in Bocholt with questions about smartphones, tablets and the internet. As the demand for personalised advice is constantly increasing, the volunteer group is now looking for more helping hands to strengthen the team. The free service enables older people to play an important role in an increasingly digitalised society.

The world is becoming increasingly digital. Our everyday life, our lives. We may not like it, but there's no getting round it. Anyone who hasn't grown up with it, who doesn't learn how to use a mobile phone, tablet and all the new means and forms of communication, is often overwhelmed and quickly left behind, left out. Fortunately, there are people who help - on a voluntary basis and free of charge. The group is called Mouse Mobil.

It has been providing counselling support for senior citizens in Bocholt for 17 years. "It started with PCs", says Mouse Mobil member Franz Klein-Vorholt. That's how the name came about. A lot has happened since then and the smartphone is omnipresent. It is the subject of around three quarters of all the group's consultations. You wouldn't think so, given that you now see many older people using mobile phones - when shopping or in the doctor's waiting room. In fact, however, the number of people seeking advice is not decreasing, but actually increasing. While Mouse mobil recorded 218 of them in 2018, the number rose to 318 in 2024 and even 420 in 2025 after the coronavirus phase.

One reason for this is that people are constantly being confronted with new terms in rapid succession, especially in English, which are difficult to understand and memorise, especially for older people. "Many people can't do anything with browsers", says Burkhard Jocks, another member of the 13-strong Mouse Mobile team. And then you keep hearing or reading about new apps and being wooed by providers with new technology. Younger people, children and grandchildren can help. However, they don't always have the time or patience to explain things that are simple and obvious to them. It's similar in the mobile phone shop.

But you want to be able to make calls, send photos and be part of the WhatsApp group. And in many cases, there's no getting around it: home banking, making doctor's appointments via Doctolib, electronic patient files, digital ID, Deutschland-Ticket - "some people feel driven", says consultant Stefan Niehuis.

And then there are people with support needs who are limited in their ability to communicate and for whom technical aids to communication are of great importance. Mouse Mobil is also there to help.

You can attend courses that impart general knowledge. The advice from the people at Mouse Mobil is more than that, it is personalised and addresses specific individual requirements. And with patience. "Some people come to us again and again", says Stefan Niehuis. On Tuesdays between 10 and 11.30 a.m. in the Apollonia-Diepenbrock-Haus retirement home at Moltkestraße 4 and on Thursdays from 3.30 to 5 p.m. in the room next to the foyer of the Stadtparkasse bank on Neutorplatz, the helpers from Mouse Mobil are ready to listen. There is no need to register. And: the exchange takes place completely "undigital".

There are certainly various reasons why there are more women than men among those seeking advice "from 60 plus to over 90" (Franz Klein-Vorholt). In the Mouse Mobile group, it is the other way round. Regardless of whether they are men or women, the helpful counsellors are happy when there are more of them. In view of the high demand, it would be good if two or three supporters could be found - for a valuable voluntary commitment that helps to enable people to participate in society.

If you would like to contribute to this, come to one of the consultation hours or contact Sarah Bußmann at the Bocholt senior citizens' office, Tel. 02871/953-2342.

**Text and photo: Joachim Freund, editorial office of the Bocholt Volunteer Agency**

Further portraits of voluntary work in Bocholt at [www.wir-fuer-bocholt.de](http://www.wir-fuer-bocholt.de)



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*The volunteer team from MouseMobil helps when it comes to PCs, tablets and smartphones*