



2006 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Kansas City KS 66121  
(913) 730-0677

Midyear Report - July 9, 2015



## **A. Current Programs**

Connecting for Good has been bridging the Digital Divide since 2011 with wireless networks, community technology centers, low cost refurbished PCs and free digital life skills classes. It is the only Kansas City area nonprofit organization that has digital inclusion as its core mission. That's because we are convinced that connectivity equals opportunity. Access to the Internet brings with it a chance to apply for jobs online, connections with family and friends, access to virtual library shelves, information about medical and health issues, educational success education and much more. Governed by a community-based board of directors, our mission is to enable organizations and individuals to use technology to connect with one another in order to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

In our digital inclusion efforts, Connecting for Good focuses on those parts of the Kansas City urban core where the 2013 US Census found that only one in five households has a computer and Internet service; NE Wyandotte County on the Kansas side and, in Missouri, neighborhoods East of Troost Avenue.

- **Community Technology Centers:** We operate centers at 2006 N 3rd Street in Kansas City KS and 3101 Troost in Kansas City MO. Located in two of Kansas City's most under resourced neighborhoods, we offer a variety of programs to promote technology use and access, including regular free classes in computer and Internet use.
- **Free Digital Life Skills Classes:** We help people in under-resourced urban communities learn to access online resources and create a brighter future for themselves and their families. The basic class is an introduction to the PC, e-mail and the Internet. Our class sites have evolved into computer clubs where older adults come weekly to improve their computer skills. We also use our portable computer lab to partner with other organizations to offer the basic class in key locations in our targeted communities in order to introduce residents to the online world.
- **Inexpensive Internet-ready Refurbished PCs:** We collect used computer equipment and, through our own refurbishing operations, provide them to low income individuals for as low as \$75.00 for those who qualify. Our focus on reuse is good for the environment and equipment that is not useable goes to a certified recycler so nothing ends up in the landfill or is shipped overseas.
- **Internet Access for Low Income Families:** As we teach digital literacy, we also assist students find the most affordable option to connect to the Internet. In some cases, it is by choosing a low cost plan from one of commercial Internet service providers. Additionally, Connecting for Good operates free Wi-Fi networks at four low income housing facilities; Glanville Towers and Juniper Gardens in Kansas City KS, as well as, Amethyst Place and Posada del Sol in Kansas City MO. In all, free in-home Internet access is now available to about 400 low income households. We've also offered a \$10 a month plan using Sprint's CLEAR 4G network. This network will move to faster LTE service later this year.
- **Technology Assistance for Nonprofit Organizations:** Connecting for Good supports other local organizations in their efforts to close the Digital Divide. We provide inexpensive refurbished computers to local nonprofits. They use them in their own operations and provide these PCs to people they work with. Staff members and volunteers from other agencies have learned from us how to teach digital literacy and we've installed computer networks, community access computer labs, and public access Wi-Fi hotspots in their facilities.

Throughout 2015, we are conducting at least three digital literacy training sessions each week at 31st & Troost and 2006 N 3rd Street in KCK, as well as additional classes throughout the urban core. We anticipate that at least 1,000 unique adult participants will learn basic computer skills and how to do Internet tasks such as e-mail and web searches. Those who complete the class and demonstration proficiency in basic computer skills will get a desktop PC for \$75.00 or laptop for \$150. These computers are refurbished using donated equipment in a workshop operated by the organization using paid staff members, high school interns and volunteers.

The primary participants in the training program are adults from our target neighborhoods. Among the 2,106 people who took advantage of the program last year, 80% are minorities (primarily African-Americans) with 75% having annual incomes of under \$20,000 a year. 75% are over fifty years old, two-thirds are women, half of whom had a child eighteen years or younger living with them. 25% of the participants had never used a computer.

At the N 3rd Street center, the public access, twenty-five seat computer lab has served 1,100 adults since March 2014. African American women are the most frequent user. They most search for employment and are involved with career development activities. Approximately 700 teens and preteens have also used the facility for school work, games and social networking. We see about 40 children and teens using the center every weekday afternoon. A weekly Minecraft club has been started to engage these young people in some basic STEM-oriented activities.

### ***B. Staffing Update***

The most significant change since the beginning of the year is that Michael Liimatta, co-founder of Connecting for Good became full-time CEO in May. He has served for the past three years in a volunteer capacity while working as Chief Academic Officer of City Vision University. Michael has worked in the nonprofit sector, in higher education and in association management for over 30 years. His visionary leadership and fund development experience will bring financial resources to the organization and contribute to its growth and sustainability.

Chris Wiley, who has experience and formal training as a PC technician also joined the Connecting for Good staff this year. He has brought great efficiency to the computer refurbishing workshop and has supervised and trained a number of high school interns and volunteers.

Our current paid staff members are listed below. Click on the name to learn more about him/her:

1. [Michael Liimatta](#), President/CEO
2. [Rick Deane](#), Chief Operating Officer
3. [Karita Matlock](#), Refurbishing Workshop Manager & Trainer
4. [Chris Wiley](#), Computer Technician
5. [Landy Akbar-Junaid](#), Client Services Representative
6. [Lezlie Collins](#), Trainer

### C. Program Accomplishments

Thanks to a larger and more competent staff, we have been able to accomplish the following since the beginning of 2015:

- Four regular weekly class sessions have been held at various inner city locations on both sides of the state line. Approximately 1,000 people have involved with the basic digital life skills classes. 25% had never used a computer previously. In addition to classes at 3101 Troost and 2006 N 3rd Street, we have conducted weekly classes at Avenue of Life in Kansas City Kansas and the Prosperity Center on Troost. Family Computer Days have been held at a number of different neighborhood centers, senior facilities, churches and schools. For these single day, trainers conduct classes and a trailer full of refurbished PCs is available for students to take home.



- We have had high school interns throughout the 2014-2015 school year from Christo Rey Kansas City, which serves economically challenged urban core families. For the summer, we have retained one of these students as a part-time employee. Joining him are three interns from the American Indian Council, two from GreenWorks and one from the Urban Rangers. . These students assist with digital literacy training programs and learn useful job skills in our computer refurbishing operations.
- We have used our digital life skills curriculum to support agencies that focus on workforce development. We have partnered with such organizations as the Full Employment Council, Connections to Success and OneKC for Women. We offer their clients our basic digital life skills classes and help them obtain our inexpensive refurbished computers.

- In June, we brought free in-home Wi-Fi and a small computer lab to Glanville Towers, a ten story, 108 unit facility for seniors and the disabled operated by the Kansas City Kansas Housing Authority. With this additional property, Connecting for Good provides free in-home connectivity to approximately 400 low income households. We are working to add two additional housing facilities to this list before the end of the year; Pemberton Park and Rosedale Towers.
- Major upgrades were made to the 12 block wide Wi-Fi network that reaches nearly 300 households in Juniper Gardens, the area's largest public housing facility. We also made upgrades to the Posada del Sol low income housing facility operated by Westside Housing. There we were able to quadruple the connection speed to all 60 apartments to over 10 Mbps.
- A successful pilot project was conducted using 4G wireless Internet. Offered for just \$10.00 a month, we brought in-home connectivity to 106 households, most of whom could not otherwise have afforded it. This includes a number of homes with high school students who are now able to do their schoolwork online. Made possible through a partnership with Mobile Beacon and EveryOneOn.org, the rollout of Sprint's new LTE service is expected before the beginning of upcoming school year. A major promotion of this service is planned.



*Rick Deane, COO; Karita Matlock, Production Manager; Chris Wiley, PC Technician*

- We could not accomplish all that we do without a team of solid, experienced IT professionals on our staff. All three have formal training in computer repair and networking. Rick Deane, COO and cofounder, has over twenty years of IT experience and ran his own company, NPO Tech Support, before starting Connecting for Good. Along with a bachelor's degree in business, Karita Matlock, our production manager, studied Computer Information Systems at Johnson County Community College. Chris Wiley is a PC technician who joined our staff in January. He was formerly trained in computer repair, data recovery, software installation, computer maintenance, networking, and more through the Kansas City Kansas Community College and the W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center. Besides our computer refurbishing operations and maintaining wireless networks at low income housing projects, our team also provides IT support to nonprofit organizations throughout the Kansas City area.

- Nearly 500 refurbished computers have already gone out into the community to low income individuals and cash strapped nonprofit organizations. This program is made possible by a software grant through Microsoft and their Citizenship License program for registered refurbishers who provide computers to people who are low income and those who live in neighborhoods without ready access to affordable technology.
- Our early experience with Google Fiber for Small Business, has positioned Connecting for Good to help other local nonprofits install their own ultrahigh speed gigabit Internet networks. Fiber can be used to create public access computer labs and to spread Wi-Fi in facilities used by nonprofit organizations. We are advertising these services to enhance our reputation as “KC’s nonprofit geeks.” The goal is to increase earned income. Last year nearly one-third of our operating revenue came through these social enterprise efforts.
- Connecting for Good has continued to support other nonprofit organizations in their efforts to close the Digital Divide among their constituents by supplying training, inexpensive refurbished computers and affordable IT support. Nonprofit organizations we have worked with so far in 2015 include:

After the Harvest  
 Amethyst Place  
 Avenue of Life  
 Black Family Tech Awareness Assoc.  
 Blue Hills Community Services  
 Community Capital Fund  
 Connections to Success  
 Cristo Rey Kansas City  
 Don Bosco Centers  
 Federal Reserve/Econ Avenue  
 First Hand Foundation  
 Friendship Baptist Church  
 Hispanic Economic Dev. Corporation  
 Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council  
 Kansas City Digital Inclusion Coalition  
 Kansas City KS Housing Authority

Kansas City MO Housing Authority  
 Kansas City Public Library  
 Kansas City Public  
 KC Digital Drive  
 Literacy Kansas City  
 Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation  
 Mutual Musicians Foundation  
 Operation Breakthrough  
 Project EAGLE  
 Reconciliation Services  
 St. Sabina Wellness Center  
 Shepherd's Center of KC KS  
 The Whole Person  
 Urban Neighborhood Initiative  
 Victoria Arms  
 W. E. B. DuBois Learning Center  
 Westside Housing

**D. On the Horizon**

Connecting for Good is working on some new strategies to close the Digital Divide for Kansas City’s most vulnerable citizens; inner city students and their families, senior citizens, Latinos (especially recent immigrants) and low income individuals with chronic medical conditions.

- Connecting for Good is currently involved in the initial stages of building a community-based Wi-Fi network in partnership with several nonprofit partners. Once the network is running, we will provide digital life skills training and offer our refurbished desktops and laptops to the residents who live there.

- We are participating in the Kansas City Public Library's pilot Wi-Fi hotspot lending program for Kansas City Public Schools students to begin this coming school year. This is being conducted in partnership with the library, KCPS and Literacy Kansas City. If it is successful, the program will become a district wide initiative.
- Work continues on a long-term project with the City of Kansas City, Missouri to create gigabit computer learning labs at all ten of the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department's inner city community centers. The Mohart Center on Linwood is also a part of this effort. These sites have been part of Google Fiber's Community Connections program and will have a free gigabit Internet connection. We have conducted site assessments and are working with the city's IT staff members to finalize the details. Other agencies involved with the Kansas City Digital Inclusion Coalition are collaborating to develop programming for these facilities. One part of the plan is to work with the Kansas City Public Library to make every one of these centers a virtual branch so that the computers in them have direct access to all the resources of the library, just as if they were in their own building.
- The "green light" has been received from the Kansas City Missouri Housing authority to begin a fund raising campaign this summer to bring free Wi-Fi and computers to the residents of the Pemberton Park "grandfamilies" housing project. The facility is unique in that, in order to live there, residents must have legal custody of their grandchildren. At this time, a video is being produced in preparation for a crowdfunding campaign to raise the funds for this project. If adequate resources come in, two other low income high rises can be connected, as well. If we can raise \$15,000 toward this project, 200 new households will receive free Internet.
- We have been meeting for several months with members of Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver's staff as they are exploring ways to expand digital inclusion efforts in Missouri's 5<sup>th</sup> District. Rep. Cleaver is Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance for the US House of Representatives which oversees the affairs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD's new Secretary, Julian Castro, has come out with a commitment to bring Internet access to public housing. We are also in an on-going dialog with his office, as well. At the same time, we have been invited to interact with officials of the FCC as they work on extending the Lifeline program to help low income citizens pay for in home broadband. It is likely that all of this will result in opportunities for our organization to spread connectivity to additional low income housing facilities.
- We have moved toward greater collaboration with the Public Libraries of Topeka and Johnson County. Both systems are interested in repurposing computers they place out of service so they can be given back to the community, as well as possibilities around digital literacy training.
- Plans are underway to create another public computer lab/training center on the Missouri side of the Kansas City metro. While we will continue to offer weekly classes at Reconciliation Services, the shared space is not adequate to keep up with the demands for our services. Extended hours are needed, along with additional class times that cannot be scheduled due to other activities in the building at 3101 Troost. Most of all, there is a need for an additional full-time public computer lab in the area, with the only other similar facility nearby is the Bluford branch of the Kansas City Public Library. We are in the final stages of negotiation with the parties involved with the renovation of the Linwood Presbyterian Church at 1801 Linwood in Kansas City, Missouri.

They are very interested in having a Connecting for Good facility in the building as it would complement other nonprofit organizations there that serve women and youth. It would be an ideal location and would fit in well our current efforts within the Urban Neighborhood Initiative's service area and other plans in the area related to telehealth.

- During our March board retreat, we made a decision to more fully pursue a strategy to bring our services to the Hispanic community. According to the Pew Research Center, 73% of Hispanics who do not own a computer are foreign born. Along with the language barrier, many recent immigrants also fall into the lower income demographic. We know we can make a significant impact on these families by providing them with inexpensive refurbished PCs, affordable connectivity and basic computer and Internet classes in Spanish. Our starting point is to work with a steering committee of Kansas City area Latino leaders to develop a plan to move forward with this effort. We are also actively seeking partner organizations and bi-lingual volunteers to join with us. We have begun a dialog with leaders in the Hispanic community to expand out outreach to their constituents. Plans are being laid to support Latino serving agencies with the technology they need, to conduct free digital literacy classes in Spanish, and to get more refurbished computers and affordable Internet service into the homes of Hispanic families. A bilingual trainer will be hired, along with recruiting Spanish speaking volunteers and an advisory group from that community.
- For too many inner city residents the emergency room physician is the family doctor. Many experience medical complications due and even early death because they do not properly self-manage chronic medical conditions like diabetes and hypertension. Connecting for Good is working to help improve the lives of those who struggle with these issues by providing access to digital resources. Initial funding has been received to begin a collaboration with First Hand Foundation to bring medical testing, exercise programs and wellness consulting to our Kansas center and part of their Health Communities Initiative. Connecting for Good will provide additional assistance in digital literacy training with an emphasis on accessing health and medical resources online and use of a portal to assist participants in self-managing their health. On the Missouri side, we have begun discussions with another health provider to use this model to work with patients managing chronic medical conditions.