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RALEIGH HOUSING AUTHORITY, CITY OF RALEIGH, AT&T, AND ONE ECONOMY CONNECT
SOUTHEAST RALEIGH FAMILIES TO TECHNOLOGY AT HOME
Partnership provides free broadband Internet to Chavis Heights and Heritage Park

RALEIGH — AT&T* and One Economy Corporation have partnered with the Raleigh Housing Authority and the City of Raleigh's Community Services and Information Technology departments to bring free broadband Internet access to up to 290 families in the communities of Chavis Heights and Heritage Park in Southeast Raleigh.

Residents of the two Housing Authority properties will receive three years of free broadband access, plus training and technical support.

Chavis Heights residents will celebrate at a Fall Fest from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 17, at 750 Bright Creek Way. U.S. Rep. David Price of the 4th District, U.S. Rep. Brad Miller of the 13th District, Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker and AT&T North Carolina President Cynthia Marshall are scheduled to be among the speakers.

The program starts later this year at Heritage Park.

The initiative aims to overcome the barriers to broadband use by people in low-income areas: accessibility, affordability and adoption.

"This project is a pioneering step toward bridging the digital divide," Rep. Price said. "Improving access and computer literacy empowers those in underserved communities by opening the doors to a multitude of job training, job access and educational opportunities. All of our citizens should have access to these tools."

AT&T is providing the free service, so that the 168 units at Chavis Heights and the 122 units at Heritage Park can connect to broadband Internet. The City of Raleigh, the Housing Authority and One Economy are providing residents with training and access to affordable computers.

"The City of Raleigh is committed to seeing that each resident, regardless of income level or educational background, is leveraging technology to improve his or her life," said Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker. "We as a city must make sure that adoption occurs, through access to broadband, affordable subscription programs and digital literacy training. With each of these technical resources in place, we will be able to truly create a sustainable foundation for digital adoption."

Gail Roper, CIO of the City of Raleigh, said the project will help people obtain resources to make their lives better. "Providing this kind of access improves the quality of education, helps identify social service resources and eventually promotes workforce development. I have seen these kinds of partnerships work all over the world to improve the quality of people's lives," she said.

Members of AmeriCorps VISTA surveyed the Chavis Heights neighborhood to determine residents' familiarity with computers and the Internet. Information from the survey is being used to design digital literacy training for the residents.

Young residents, between the ages of 14-21, in Chavis Heights and the surrounding area will be enlisted as "Digital Connectors" to receive intensive training; in turn, the Digital Connectors will teach their adult neighbors how to access and take advantage of the Internet. The Digital Connectors will be a key element of the program to ensure widespread adoption.

"In today's world, access to broadband is not a luxury, it's a necessity," said Cynthia Marshall, President of AT&T North Carolina. "AT&T has the capacity and infrastructure to provide the technical backbone required to advance broadband adoption. We are proud to leverage that on behalf of communities, but our interest in this program extends further. Ultimately it's about helping to make North Carolina a better place to live and expanding opportunities for people to transform their lives."

The program is part of a national partnership between One Economy and AT&T, which has provided broadband access to 50,000 low-income families across the country. Raleigh was selected as one of the sites because of the commitment of core civic partners.

"Accessible, affordable broadband should be a non-negotiable component of 21st century housing," said Steve Beam, Executive Director of the Raleigh Housing Authority. "24/7 access to information at home is a difference maker in terms of a person's ability to compete and thrive, and we're especially proud to be a part of a collaboration that will bring far-reaching benefits to our communities."

The partners have also joined forces to apply for the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program (BTOP) funding under the federal economic stimulus package, which would greatly expand Internet access to residents of Raleigh. The program would provide up to 3,000 low-income housing units, mostly in Southeast Raleigh, with free Internet access for two years, train 90 Digital Connectors and create 15 computer labs.

"The City of Raleigh has proven to be at the forefront of providing one of the world's most economically powerful tools to their community," said Rey Ramsey, CEO of One Economy. "To really see economic transformation, we must facilitate opportunities to leverage digital resources. Whether applying for a job, finding accurate health care information or improving educational opportunities, meaningful access to technology and online resources empowers individuals to make informed choices on their own behalf."

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About One Economy

One Economy is a global non-profit organization that uses innovative approaches to deliver the power of technology and information to low-income people. More than 17 million people have used One Economy's online tools and resources to build better lives. To date, One Economy has launched on-the-ground programs in 42 U.S. states, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Learn more at www.one-economy.com.

About the Raleigh Housing Authority

The Raleigh Housing Authority owns and manages nearly 2,000 public housing units and administers more than 3,500 Section 8 vouchers. A HUD report card known as the Public Housing Assessment System rates the Raleigh Housing Authority as a "High Performer." The Housing Authority received its third HOPE VI grant in 2003 to demolish and revitalize the Chavis Heights public housing complex. The mixed-income, mixed-use community constructed at the site has sparked a renewal in the surrounding neighborhood. The access to the Internet offers support to low-income families as they work toward self-sufficiency.

About Raleigh

Raleigh, the Capital of North Carolina, is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation with an estimated population of 390,000. Part of the Research Triangle area, Raleigh is home to a number of high-tech and medical corporations as well as North Carolina State University, Shaw University and St. Augustine's College. The city has won numerous accolades, including No. 1 "Best Place to Live in the U.S." from MSNBC and No. 2 "Best City to Live, Work and Play" from Kiplinger's. To learn more, visit www.raleighnc.gov.

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