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Innovative Program Teaches Dearborn Youth Digital Literacy and Leadership Skills



Twenty Dearborn-area teens received a Dell net book as a part of a celebration honoring them for their graduation from the Digital Connectors Program. The celebration was held at ACCESS in South Dearborn.

Comcast and One Economy today celebrated the success of a major technology learning and service initiative that teaches young people about broadband technologies and how to put that knowledge to work to serve the Dearborn community. The program, Comcast Digital Connectors, was conducted during the 2009-2010 school year at the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in Dearborn and will continue next fall throughout the academic year.

In the Comcast Digital Connectors program, 23 Dearborn-area high school students from diverse and low-income backgrounds were selected to gather at ACCESS two evenings a week throughout the year to learn digital literacy skills. The young people then volunteered their time at community-based organizations, senior centers, religious-based organizations and even in their own homes to help improve digital literacy.

A number of community leaders joined Comcast to celebrate the program's success, including U.S.



Congressman John Dingell, among others.

“Our next generation needs the technological skills and knowledge to not only compete for jobs globally, but to also strengthen our communities through service locally,” said Congressman Dingell. “I thank Comcast and One Economy for working together to advance this program that has helped provide young Michiganians with the tools to do both.”

“This is a really exciting and extremely important initiative for Comcast and the Comcast Foundation. Developing digital literacy skills in young people is essential to their future,” said David L. Cohen, Executive Vice President of Comcast Corporation. “Along with digital education, young people from diverse communities will experience a unique opportunity to improve their lives and the lives of others by cultivating leadership skills, impacting their neighborhoods through community service and preparing for their bright futures in the workforce.”

As the nation’s largest residential Internet service provider, Comcast is contributing to One Economy’s mission to maximize the potential of technology in cities and towns across the country. Comcast’s commitment to the Digital Connectors initiative, developed in 2001, will also help One Economy increase the number of youth who will benefit from the program. To date, nearly 3,000 young people have contributed more than 77,000 hours of community service through the Digital Connectors initiative. The One Economy-Comcast partnership aims to double the number of participants in the program and the hours of service they contribute to their communities.

“The Comcast Digital Connectors program has been a great opportunity for young people in Dearborn,” said Tom Coughlin, Senior Vice President for Comcast’s Michigan Region. “It has taught them the technology skills needed to advance in education and in the workforce, and instill the importance of passing on that knowledge to their neighbors, friends and family in order to improve their lives and community.”

The curriculum for Comcast Digital Connectors covers several broad areas to help the program participants learn real world applications for broadband technology. Modules include leadership principles, real world learning opportunities, digital technology skills development, community service, financial literacy and civic journalism. The students learned how to network computer labs, connect wireless access points and create video documentaries. Additionally, they were given instruction in entrepreneurship, healthy living, career and character development. The program also included creative media projects intended to inspire the Digital Connectors to put broadband and Internet technology to their greatest use.

Through grants from the Comcast Foundation totaling more than \$40,000, ACCESS was able to set up a computer lab at its newly constructed youth center in South Dearborn, as well as fund the Comcast Digital Connectors program costs to ensure the students had access to state-of-the-art



equipment and technology as they developed their digital literacy skills. The new computer lab has also benefited area youth of all ages that visited the ACCESS facility since opening last year.

“Comcast has been an invaluable partner to One Economy and our mission to empower underserved communities through the use of technology,” said Rey Ramsey, Founder and Chairman of the Board of One Economy. “This partnership will help us further tap into the great potential of young people and ensure that our youth have the resources and tools they need to develop, grow and lead in a digital economy.”

“ACCESS is very grateful to have been given the opportunity to offer the Digital Connectors Program to students from multiple high schools in our community,” said Hassan Jaber, Executive Director for ACCESS. “Due to the generosity of Comcast and its partner, One Economy, youth at ACCESS have been given the chance to develop leadership, citizenship and healthy lifestyle skills through the effective use of technology. The Digital Connectors Program has provided us the essential tools and resources to better teach our children how the positive uses of technology can improve the quality of their lives and the community in which they live.”

In addition to Dearborn, the Comcast Digital Connectors program has launched in Washington, D.C.; Houston, Texas; Springfield, Massachusetts; Morgantown, West Virginia; Burlington, Vermont; and Tallahassee, Miami and West Palm Beach, Florida. Other sites expected to kick off by the end of 2010 include: Denver, Colorado; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Atlanta, Georgia; Tacoma, Washington; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Portland, Oregon; and others.

Comcast powers dreams in the communities it serves by providing access to innovative technology, volunteering time, giving financial support and partnering with organizations to make communities stronger. The company focuses its community investment initiatives on building tomorrow’s leaders, promoting community service and expanding digital literacy. Since 2001, Comcast have provided \$1.8 billion in cash and in-kind support to national and local non-profit organizations in 39 states and Washington D.C. The company has made a \$1.2 million commitment to sponsor the Digital Connectors program for three years, beginning in 2009.