

Program provides Habitat residents with Internet access

BY BRETT BENNETT

February 12, 2008

Misty Griffith and her three sons can now connect to a whole new world.

They are one of 15 families in Washington County eligible for a new partnership between Habitat for Humanity and AT & T that provides a free computer and two years of free Internet access. Eligible recipients are families who bought homes through Habitat for Humanity from 2006 to 2008.

Griffith moved into her new home last spring.

“Habitat has been great to my three boys and me,” she said. “Before, we were living in a small duplex with my mother and brother and did not think we would be approved for a Habitat home. Getting approved was great news for our family, and receiving the computer and Internet access from AT & T has been a wonderful gift, too.”

Griffith said she hasn’t had a computer of her own before, and she used to search the Internet using a computer at her mother’s house. Her three sons, ages 9 to 12, use the new Dell computer frequently for their homework and to keep up with University of Arkansas sports.

“I get to do my homework on it and get to play games,” said Justin Griffith, 9.

The AT & T-One Economy program is designed to help promote student success. Through a home computer and AT & T Internet service, students can access homework help and online learning resources. Older students can research college and scholarship opportunities, and parents can access community and career resources.

“I think this is a fabulous program. It gives the family a real chance to connect to the world in a way they would not otherwise been able to,” said Patsy Brewer, executive director, Habitat for Humanity of Washington County.

Brewer said 10 families have received computers so far, and the rest will receive them by the end of the year.

Sherri Fry, Habitat family services manager, said the organization started installing computers last summer. The program will also provide local families with technology training.

Cathy Foraker of AT & T said the program is part of a national effort by the company to provide Internet access to low-income families. She said AT & T has committed \$ 100 million over three years to help provide service to low-income residents in 138 communities.

Habitat for Humanity provides zero-interest mortgage loans to families who might not otherwise be able to afford a home. The organization has built 39 homes in Washington County and is working on its 40th home.

The local affiliate was chartered in 1992 and sold its first home in 1993.