



Using Technology to Advance People Economically

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During my first year as a VISTA, I was assigned to the AccessAll Program, which is a partnership between AT&T, One Economy, and Habitat for Humanity. The AccessAll program offers a free computer and two years of free AT&T Internet service to all Habitat for Humanity homeowners who qualified for the program.



Giving Access: Holly with homeowners and volunteers at a computer installation for new Habitat for Humanity homeowners in Tulsa, Okla., in December 2007.

My service assignment was to build the capacity of Habitat for Humanity affiliates by developing resources within their organization to implement the AccessAll program. This included recruiting volunteers to install computers in the Habitat homes. Also, I set up computer classes at Habitat for Humanity, and I recruited volunteers to teach and assist these classes. As a VISTA Leader, I support One Economy's VISTA program and The Hive, a charter school in Windsor, N.C., that focuses on recovery for hard-to-reach students.

Since its founding in 2000, One Economy has worked to maximize the potential of technology to help low-income people improve their lives and enter the economic mainstream, which means joining the rest of the world with the technical tools and resources needed to survive successfully. We use innovative approaches to deliver the power of technology and information to low-income people, connecting them to valuable tools for building better lives.

One Economy differs from other finance-focused programs by offering people technology solutions as a means to succeed economically. While providing the technology tools such as a computer and Internet access to low-income families, One Economy also provides resources such as www.theBeeHive.org, which has financial education and tools such as a free tax tool, budget builder, financial coaching, free credit reports and home buying guidance.

I was immediately drawn to One Economy due to their unique approach to combating poverty. While service has always been a part of my life, I never realized the power of technology when it comes to someone's ability to escape poverty. I was also impressed by more than 50 communities across the country that One Economy works in and the freedom I had to choose a location for my service. I decided to serve initially as a Summer Associate to get to know the program and then take on a year of service as a VISTA. I was empowered by what I was able to accomplish through this program, and I gladly took on yet another year as a VISTA Leader for One Economy.