Connected Tennessee Awarded Recovery Act Funding to Advance Sustainable Broadband Adoption in Tennessee

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Grant will encourage broadband subscribership and provide computers and training to more than 60,000 at-risk youth across the state

Washington, DC – Connected Tennessee's Computers 4 Kids program will receive $2.3 million in federal funding in an effort to increase sustainable broadband adoption and provide computers and training to over 60,000 disadvantaged youth across the state.

Computers 4 Kids joined 93 other Recovery Act investments in broadband projects announced today by Vice President Biden that will create jobs and expand economic opportunities within 37 states. These investments in high-speed Internet infrastructure will help bridge the technological divide in communities that are being left in the 20th century economy and support improvements in education, healthcare, and public safety. Today's announcement, an investment totaling $1.8 billion, is part of a nearly $7 billion Recovery Act initiative.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) matching grant is awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). BTOP provides grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, enhance and expand public computer centers, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.

The Computers 4 Kids "Preparing Tennessee's Next Generation for Success" project intends to focus on economically vulnerable youth in Tennessee by deploying laptops, academic support programs, and workforce training to two different, but especially at-risk populations: those "aging out" of the state's foster care system (as they turn 18) and youth who are active in the state's 76 Boys & Girls Clubs. The project plans to provide younger children in the Boys & Girls Clubs with broadband access in a safe environment via its Club Tech program, supported by software provider Microsoft.

"This project is going to connect thousands of Tennessee young people who would otherwise not have access to the vast resources afforded by a high-speed Internet connection," said Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen. "The project will create new educational opportunities and provide vital career training that will empower youth with the tools they need to achieve their goals in a way not previously available to them."

Computers 4 Kids also proposes to:

- Encourage broadband subscribership and train as many as 58,000 youth over the life of the project, offering approximately 9 million training hours.
- Provide older youth in the foster care system with laptop computers and support with high school completion and workforce training through the state's network of Career Centers.
- Organize community events to build awareness of the program and the benefits of broadband access for education and career preparation at all ages.

"Through this two-fold approach, we will be able to target two of Tennessee's most vulnerable populations and engage them in both online and classroom-based training in order to equip them for a technologically savvy workforce," said Connected Tennessee's Executive Director, Michael Ramage. "This project has the potential to impact more than 66,000 vulnerable youth across the state, creating a positive ripple effect on job growth, economic development, and broadband adoption that may well be felt for years to come."

Connected Tennessee is an independent non-profit organization that works with assorted Tennessee private- and public-sector entities to decrease the cost of technology expansion and increase the ease of doing business in Tennessee. Connected Tennessee aims to accelerate the availability and use of technology statewide to create a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, enhanced education, and more efficient government. Connected Tennessee will be facilitating this project with assistance from: Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, CIBER, Inc., and the Internet Keep Safe Coalition.

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About Connected Tennessee: *As a public-private partnership, Connected Tennessee partners with technology-minded businesses, government entities, and universities to accelerate technology in the state. For more information about what Connected Tennessee is doing to accelerate technology in Tennessee's communities, visit www.connectedtennessee.org.*

Computers 4 Kids: Preparing Tennessee's Next Generation for Success: *Connected Tennessee's Computers 4 Kids project is helping to prepare Tennessee's most vulnerable youth for success by providing them with connectivity. The program promotes economic, career and educational development through the provision of computers and broadband Internet, online technology training, career training and community awareness that highlights the benefits of technology adoption.*