

News Release

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Microsoft Awards More than \$491,000 to WinstonNet for Community Computer Labs

Winston-Salem, N.C. – In an effort to promote technology literacy and help bridge the digital divide, Microsoft today announced a grant to WinstonNet for more than \$491,000 to increase the number of community computer labs in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. The grant is part of Microsoft's Unlimited Potential (UP) program, the company's global program focused on promoting digital inclusion and increased access to technology skills training in underserved communities.

“One of WinstonNet's goals is to bridge the ‘digital divide’ that exists in our community,” said Harold L. Martin Sr., Ph.D., chancellor of Winston-Salem State University. “This project is establishing Winston-Salem as a national model for how corporations and community organization can work together to harness the benefits of information technology.”

The grant was announced yesterday at a public event hosted by WinstonNet and Winston-Salem State University at Winston Lake Family YMCA, site of WinstonNet's newest computer lab. WinstonNet, a non-profit community partnership, currently powers 41 local community computer labs that offer free access to email, training and high-speed Internet. With the help of the grant, WinstonNet will work toward a goal of powering more than 50 centers with more than 500 computers for local residents.

“Increasing the availability of this powerful technology is one step toward ensuring that local residents will be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow,” said Richard Dean, M.D., president and CEO of Wake Forest University Health Sciences. “A community collaboration dedicated to technology is a real recruiting tool for the Piedmont Triad Research Park.”

WinstonNet labs are open to all ages and are located in libraries, churches and recreation centers across Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. The newest lab at the Winston Lake Family YWCA is one of 13 Community Knowledge Centers (CKCs) operated by Winston-Salem State University. The community computers share software through centralized servers, and each computer terminal has access to homework helpers, Internet-based learning tools and standard word processing and other software, as well as connections to employment, health, and social services information. Computer users can log on to any computer in the network and access their personalized accounts. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County is the first community in the country to offer this standard community desktop.

“Microsoft is proud to partner with WinstonNet to provide the local community with the technological and educational resources to unlock their potential and transform their lives,” said Microsoft Southeast District General Manager Kirsten Kliphouse. “By combining WinstonNet's model for community technology education and Microsoft's Unlimited Potential program, we truly believe we can help make technology accessible, useful and meaningful for even more of North Carolina's citizens.”

The first five Community Knowledge Centers (CKCs) were established by WSSU in the spring of 1999. Today, WSSU Centers are housed in these churches and agencies: St. Benedict the Moor, St. James A.M.E. Church, Union Baptist Church, Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Zion Memorial Baptist Church, New Jerusalem

Baptist Church, Green Street United Methodist Church, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Salem Gardens Complex, and the Bethesda Center for the Homeless.

Additional WinstonNet computer labs can be found in 10 locations of the Forsyth County Public Library and 18 Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Recreation Centers. For a complete listing of the sites, go to www.winstonnet.org.

"This is a very exciting announcement for the citizens of Winston-Salem," said Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines. "The partnership between Microsoft and WinstonNet helps transition our economy from manufacturing to technology. The future would not be so bright if we did not have the support and dedication of this exceptional public-private partnership to make this transition a reality."

WinstonNet is part of !dealiance, a non-profit organization of education, government and business leaders with a shared vision for diversified technology-led economic development. WinstonNet's board of directors includes representatives from the City of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, Forsyth Technical Community College, North Carolina School of the Arts, Salem Academy and College, Wake Forest University, Wake Forest University Health Sciences, Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County Schools and Winston-Salem State University. Other non-profit partner organizations include Catholic Social Services, Experiment in Self Reliance, One Economy/N.C. Digital Bridge, Project Hope and United Way of Forsyth County.

"This significant grant from Microsoft will allow WinstonNet to provide even more Forsyth County residents with computer access and training," said Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC). "As the North Carolina economy continues to shift, computer skills are essential to preparing people for the specialized, high-demand jobs of the 21st century. Both Microsoft and WinstonNet are to be commended for making these resources available to communities."

Through Unlimited Potential, Microsoft works closely with local organizations to identify community-based centers where information technology skills training are a primary focus. The UP grants will provide these organizations with funding to help hire and train technology instructors, enabling local citizens to obtain the skills needed to succeed in today's knowledge-based economy. Microsoft has also developed UP curriculum that emphasizes real-world technology applications in several languages, and in the near future, Microsoft will work with partners to launch a global support network to deliver technology research, tools and services to training centers worldwide. A complete list of grant recipients can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/mscorp/citizenship/overview/uprecipients.asp>.

"Partnerships like this are essential to the success of our nonprofit community," said Sen. Linda Garrou (D-32). "I applaud Microsoft for continuing to demonstrate its commitment to Winston-Salem and North Carolina. Leadership like this from our corporate citizens serves as an example for all to follow."

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About WinstonNet

Founded in 2001, WinstonNet is a non-profit organization directed toward building a community-based technology infrastructure in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. The organization is a joint effort to prepare the residents of Forsyth County for a technology-rich future. WinstonNet aims to provide job preparedness for local residents by providing basic high-speed networking connectivity within the county, delivering technology services across the digital divide to broadly support K-12 education and investing in next-generation computing technologies to support workforce preparedness. For more information, visit www.winstonnet.org.

About Winston-Salem State University

Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina, is a public university founded in 1892 in Winston-Salem, NC. WSSU is a historically black university that today is a recognized regional institution offering baccalaureate and graduate programs to a diverse student population. U.S. News and World Report has ranked the university number one among Top Public Comprehensive Colleges in the South for the last four years (2002-2005). WSSU currently offers 40 baccalaureate and six master's degree programs to a student population of more than 4,800.

About Microsoft Community Affairs

Microsoft and its employees have long recognized the importance of being engaged in supporting communities around the world. Last year the company donated \$48 million in cash \$362 million in software to 8,000 nonprofit organizations. While a majority of the company's community investments are made in support of Unlimited Potential, a global program that supports community technology centers in IT skills training, the company also makes software available to improve the use of technology by nonprofit organizations. Microsoft products are available to qualified organizations at <http://www.techsoup.org>.

More information on Microsoft's community investments can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/unlimitedpotential/>.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (NASDAQ "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and Internet technologies for personal and business computing. The company offers a wide range of products and services designed to empower people through great software — any time, any place and on any device.