2020 ConnectHomeUSA - PCs for People and the Roxboro Housing Authority, 7/21/20

Caila Prendergast: Thanks. So again, good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining today's installment of the ConnectHomeUSA webinar series, featuring PCs for People and the Roxboro Housing Authority.

My name is Caila Prendergast, and I'm one of your hosts today, along with Dina Lehmann-Kim, HUD ConnectHome program manager. Before I pass it over to Dina, I just want to quickly review a few housekeeping items that if you've joined the webinar before you're familiar with, but if you're new to the webinar today there's a few ways that we -- that we ask people to pose their questions.

First in the right hand navigation panel, you'll see a hand-shaped icon. If you'd like to verbally share your question, you can select this icon and I'll unmute your line so you can ask your question aloud. And then second, if you don't have a microphone capabilities or aren't comfortable sharing your question aloud, feel free to type your question in the chat box in the lower right hand navigation panel and I'll read your question aloud in the order received.

If we're unable to address all questions, we'll send an email reply after to address these. And we -- each presenter from PCs for People and Roxboro Housing Authority will present for the first part of the presentation, and then all the remaining time that we have will be allotted for questions. And so, as you probably noticed, you are all muted upon entry.

And like I mentioned, I am able to unmute you if you have a question that you want to ask it that way. This session is being recorded and will be available on HUD exchange immediately following the webinar. And as soon as you X out of the webinar, close out of the webinar, you'll get a little pop up of a survey. And we just ask that you fill out that survey. We look at this feedback and we're always trying to incorporate it into our webinars. So really appreciate that. And with that, I'll pass it over to Dina.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Great. Thank you so much, Caila. And thank you everybody for joining today. I'm really excited about our session because I think you'll learn really interesting things about how to provide digital equipment and information to your residents during these challenging times. So I'm going to introduce our speakers and then pass the baton to Annie, our first speaker.

Annie Graham has worked in the housing field for over 35 years, including work with grassroots organizations, community action agencies, and public housing. Over the past 15 years, she has worked in various positions in the public housing arena. For the last eight years, she has worked for the Roxboro Housing Authority first as a family proficiency coordinator and now as a ROSS coordinator since 2017, and she is the lead on ConnectHomeUSA for her THA.

Tony Frank is the director of business development for PCs for People. He's based in the Denver office, where he develops partnerships with affordable housing organizations, schools, and other community groups to ensure PCs for People is maximizing the impact of providing affordable

computers and low cost internet across Colorado and the United States. Tony has more than 18 years of experience in community program development, policy evaluation, and market analysis in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Prior to joining PCs for People, Tony was a digital inclusion director and fund development manager for the Denver Housing Authority, where he established the ConnectHome Denver initiative, providing 11,000 households with access to high speed internet, computer devices, and technology training. So Tony really understands the work that you all are doing. And with that, I will turn it over to Annie to take it away.

Annie Graham: Thank you, Dina, and thank you all for the opportunity to present today. The Roxboro Housing Authority is a 50 year old development. And as such, we're always looking at what dollars are available, what can we do, but the majority of our dollars are spent in brick and mortar. And so we're always trying to think out of the box and come up with other avenues and other sources of finances to help support our programs and our residents. We believe in revitalizing housing, transforming communities, and enriching lives.

Just to give you a little bit of background on the housing authority, it's located in Roxboro, North Carolina in a mostly rural community with a population of 8,303 prior to 19 -- 18 census. We have 210 units of public housing. So you can see we're really small, but as we began to think about the concerns with residents and being connected, not only with our kids, older adults and seniors, we began to think a lot -- think about what becomes our vision. And so we narrowed our vision to -- for our program to be -- we wanted to narrow the digital divide for residents who live in HUD assisted housing.

We joined ConnectHomes in 2018 and our initial goal was providing in-home connectivity to 25 elderly and disabled populations in public housing and provide them with a free device. And not only the device, but agency supported Wi-Fi. If you live in larger communities, you understand there's a lot more support in those communities that housing authorities can take advantage of. You have more companies, more agencies, more resources that can help us -- that can help people with lowering the digital divide. So, because we knew that kids and households and probably older adults had some form of connectivity just because the kids were in school, we wanted to target our elderly and disabled population.

And we wanted to do that by trying to reduce the isolation that they so often experienced and we wanted to improve their overall health and wellness. So we used our ROSS program to leverage this activity. And for those of you who maybe may not be familiar with the ROSS program is designed to link families, particularly seeing used in those with disabilities to supportive services and programs, which will help them to maintain their independent living status.

And in order for them to be eligible for the program, they had to complete a free 10 week digital training course, which was provided by our local community college, which is Piedmont Community College, here in our community. So the first step for us was do we open it up to everybody? Do we isolate it to just the seniors? Who would be willing to actually attend the 10 week course? Because of course they had to put time aside to be able to do that.

And while we targeted our elderly and disabled population, we soon realized that there were families who were willing or have head of households who were willing to come in, take the class all for the opportunity to get a free device. So we opened it up. And once we started our conversation with our local conveners Piedmont Community College quickly stepped up and said that they would provide not only space, but they would also provide an instructor for this particular activity.

And they provided two -- two hour sessions each week for those who were participating. So the next hurdle for us became, well, how do we find some financial support? Our funding for agency operations were already earmarked. And I tell you those -- the thing that became most valuable, for me anyway, was connecting with everyone on Maribel Martinez.

And I know she probably got tired of hearing my name, but she suggested that GitHub might be one of the best resources for us because we actually tried other funding avenues and they just didn't produce for us. GitHub provided us with a grant. And so we were able to order enough computers for those that were in the class. And we actually had 15 of our residents to complete the course, 11 of those residents actually received a perfect attendance certificate. So we were able to hold our first digital inclusion graduation in February of this year, where each resident actually received their device. And we did that during our annual residential, digital inclusion meeting with our conveners.

So once we had the graduation, our first graduation class, then of course, we had to think about what our year two goal would be. And in keeping with conversations that I had with Maribel, she said, keep your numbers low. You don't want to start out with numbers that you may not be able to achieve.

So we were keeping them numbers low, we were in conversations with Piedmont Community College about our second class and how -- what that would look like, how that would be structured and in the middle of it COVID-19 struck. So then we had to regroup because we knew they couldn't be in class. We did want to carry forth our program, but how they was going to look, we weren't sure, but I tell you COVID-19 has, in some ways, been a blessing because -- because of it, our board of directors, we see CARES Act money, and they approved of our agency ordering computers for all school aged kids that were in our communities.

So that ended up being 25 laptops and 50 all-in-ones. And again, Anthony with PC for People's came to our rescue. And in this particular case, there's going to be -- somehow fellows will receive more than one -- one computer. So our distribution process then became another concern for us. We really couldn't have the class. We really couldn't have any training sessions. So we had to come up with strategies, not only to keep our community engaged, but also a process for visual learnings, for our kids and adults in our communities.

So the goal became to provide the devices and internet accessibility. And in order for us to do that, we wanted to make sure that our computers came with Wi-Fi adapters already installed on those devices, that those -- that they were web cams and that they had microphone capabilities for each and then Wi-Fi accessibility became the other concern. And because we know that we're working with low income families, our director with the approval of our board, agreed to provide

Wi-Fi accessibility for residents, and recently signed an agreement or contract with Spectrum to provide free Wi-Fi access for each household in each of our four communities.

Once we received our computers, our IT consultant added virus protection. She created a log in, username, and password. She created Outlook email accounts for agency -- for ongoing agency communications and community engagement strategies. Our process is actually planned to be a scheduled household appointment with the particular pickup time and date with 30 minute intervals in between.

The computers are going to be distributed from our local community centers and each household that picks up a computer will receive a computer training guides and computer login packet. They will have to sign a user agreement indicating what our expectations are for the usage of that computer. And hopefully giving them an avenue whereby they will continue to have a learning and continued learning environment.

Once they come in to pick up their computer, there's only going to be a few minutes where we actually going to be face to face with them. We're going to make sure that they can actually open up their computer and login in. They will be given their computer training guides and any initial questions that they may have, we'll answer during that session. They will have to wear a mask. They will have to sanitize their hands coming in and going out.

And then after each visit, of course, we going to have to sanitize the area and clean it and get it ready for the next visit. So our digital inclusion training guide it's going to look something sort of like what's on the side of your screen. And I'd like to thank the City of Phoenix department, Mindy Davis and Patricia Averett [ph] for their support, they provide -- they shared their training guide with us. And so we were able to use that and retrofit it for our residents and their particular needs.

So our partners for this particular activity, digital inclusion or reducing -- including as many of our residents as possible has only been made possible by a PC for People, our residents who agree to and volunteer and came to those classes and completed the 10 week course. Piedmont Community College, of course, who -- and anytime that we asked for their assistance, they're ready to provide as much support and training as they can possibly do in their particular training sites.

And what I didn't have here was one of the things that was very significant for our residents was that the local transit authority actually provided free local visits, one way visits, for our residents who were attending the class. So we were very, very appreciative of that, and of course GitHub who provided us with our initial grant.

As a result of our first graduation class, we were able to get donations from Roxboro Savings Bank and as well, another local support or from the community to help us with our next computing distribution process. So we were very appreciative of that. And for those who believe in the fact that our residents can learn that they are valuable members of our community and that they can help to open up that possibility for them.

So if there's anyone who needs more information our agency address is 500 Mt. Bethel Church Street, PO Box 996, Roxboro, North Carolina. The address is here and feel free to contact me. You have my contact information on the screen as well. If you have any questions following this presentation.

Lastly, but not least, you can check us out on our website, www.roxboroha.com and you can also find us on Facebook. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you, Annie. I just -- pass the presenter privileges over to Tony so go ahead.

Anthony Frank: Thank you so much. I have many people think as well, just as Annie shared, Dina and Caila with ConnectHomeUSA and Maribel with everyone on for this opportunity and Annie, so great to work with you and thanks for sharing your presentation. Everybody hear me okay? I want to make sure I sound okay.

Caila Prendergast: Yep.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Sounds good to me. Yeah.

Anthony Frank: Great. Thank you. Excellent. Okay. Ss PCs for People, we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that was incorporated in 2008 and we serve individuals and families that make up 200 percent of the federal poverty level. That's 25,500 for a single person, and that's 52,400 for a family of four. But we also serve -- we can also serve -- as Annie shared with her experience, we can sell directly to a household or to another nonprofit or to a school. So that's something that we can do. And then that organization distributes computers to the participants and clients within that organization.

We have two websites, one website will give you general information, PCsForPeople.org. It can show all of the eligibility. Someone can just simply be a part of an income based government assistance program, and they could show that document to qualify. And a list of that eligibility is on that site as well. And then we have an online store PCsRefurbished.com, an individual or an organization can go there and do online shopping and do some customization of what they purchased. We are now in five cities.

And so there are things that we can do locally that are a little different than what we can do nationally and I'll explain that. Denver was the first expansion city. That's where I'm based in Denver, Colorado. We're established in St. Paul. We've been in Cleveland now for close to two years and we've grown just recently. We're now working with connecting for good and they now we're a PC organization in Kansas city, Missouri.

And and also in Baltimore, just in the last month, we've expanded to Baltimore as well, and very excited to have these new offices and opportunities. We've distributed more than 120,000 computers during that time and we have provided mobile internet hotspots to nearly 40,000 families as well. And that's through our partner system, Mobile Citizen, but we also partnered with other ISPs and I'll talk about that as well. Let me make sure I press the right button.

So what do we do? The key to what we do is source. What we primarily provide are refurbished computer devices, and those are coming from now about 1,500 companies that we provide recycling services for.

Key to that work is our certifications. One is NAID, the National Association of Information Destruction. That's the highest level of certification for data destruction and data sanitization in the industry and it's a HIPAA compliant, allows us to work with hospitals. And we've worked with banks and city governments and many others. And we're R2 certified many organizations have environmental goals. And this falls in line with that, ensure that what we are picking up the electronics are not are -- are diverted from landfills and they're and they're repurposed.

So not everything that we pick up gets refurbished. Some computer equipment is too old and that's okay. We want to provide a no cost recycling service for the community and for the businesses where we do work, we can also work nationally with companies and support the logistics of having them shipped directly to us. And then we refurbish the computer devices that we get, they are tested. A new software is put on those.

We are a Microsoft refurbisher, allowing us to put new Windows 10 Pro software on, Microsoft Office as well. And we can put those on for a lower cost, showing that we support low income families and nonprofits. And then we look for ways to distribute those computer devices. Like I mentioned, we're in five cities, those cities have a retail location. But we also work across the country to do distribution events both locally and in other parts of the country where we actually go to that site, go to that housing authority, go to that school and provide the computers on site.

Things are changing because of COVID-19; we're having to come up with some new safety protocols to do that. And Annie did a great job explaining some of the protocols that she's doing with Roxboro. Another district type -- type of distribution is we simply ship the computer devices to the housing authority, and you can distribute those, and we'll talk more -- a little bit more about what -- work order shipping. And as I mentioned, an online portal PCsRefurbished.com, and that allows you to do online shopping. And an individual organization can simply take a picture of their qualifying document and upload it to that site to create an account.

We also provide repairs, and again, this is going to be where we're where we're located with our retail stores. And we will look at a computer issue for our customers for no cost. And if we think it can be repaired, we try to keep the cost at $25. If there is a part that we have to order, we will add that additional part costs onto it. The average cost of repair is $35 for the customers that we serve.

We provide phone support as well on the PCsRefurbished.com under contact us -- has the phone number, the email and we also have Facebook and social messaging as well that we can be contacted that way as well. And what we're excited about is digital literacy and education that we're beginning to expand upon, Connecting for Good in Kansas City. That's been much of their focus on the education aspect, and we're going to be learning a lot from them.

In Denver, we are expanding to a community technology hub in Northeast Denver in the North -- Northeast Park Hill neighborhood, and very excited to have a classroom there. Again, COVID-19, we'll probably modify how we do it, but we're hoping to create educational content online as we go forward as well. And they work with many partners to provide educational content. So that that's going to grow for us in the near future.

So this is just some opportunities to partner with us. Locally where we have a retail store in our presence, we provide a special coupon for a housing authority residence, a special deal. And I'll show you a couple of examples there. You know, like in Denver, if you purchase a computer for $50 or greater, or you would get a free installation of Microsoft Office, but we're also open to other ideas.

So we've worked with many to come up with other kind of special deals. We'll create shipping offers. There's a sheet that I have that I sent to ConnectHomes housing authorities that provides a special offer of $68. And then there's some other offers that go above that. And we can look to have add-ons that go on that we'd like to look for shipping in a bulk order of 20 laptops at a time or 50 desktops at a time to keep those lower rates. We can work with you if it is lower than that, but just -- the price might be slightly higher.

Holding computer distribution events with technology literacy training. That's something that we look to do. We look to have at least a hundred people -- a hundred residents involved before we go out to hold an event like that outside of one of our main cities, but we really look for those opportunities as well, and I'll share some on that. That, as I mentioned, our online store, you can have a nonprofit account.

If you have a housing authority account and purchase online, they are some bulk order offers there as well. And then we partner with Mobile Beacon and we have a program called bridging the gap.

Here's a website that gives you more information on that, where you can create your more branded website that is part of PCs for People but your logo would be there. It would allow you to help people purchase devices on that site. And it would also allow you to kind of have a dashboard of any mobile hotspots that have been purchased to see when those made their -- their subscription may end and to kind of track that for your residents. You can help them purchase online there.

And I'll get into some more career development and internship opportunities that again are expanding and we're looking forward to those opportunities to grow. As I mentioned, we're currently in our five locations and in those locations here are just some examples of coupons that we could offer for housing authority residents in those communities. I'd be interested to see kind of how far away housing authority might be from us to make the coupon work. We're very much interested in speaking to you if you're near one of these retail store locations.

So the career development and internship programs that we're creating include -- in Denver, we've been focused on high school students and community college students. We've worked closely with, for example, Denver public schools career connect and other local high school

programs for youth ages 15 to 18. We find that 50 hours is kind of a critical number to really become comfortable with working with all the hardware, familiar with it, and then also building a computer at the very end where they also install the operating system as the final project and becoming part of the team as we -- as our projects that providing devices across the country.

Many community college programs we find that we're a great compliment. We provide the hands on experience to help them with certifications programs, specifically the CompTIA USA assistance certification programs, that's been a plus certification is one. And oftentimes the participants are then who become our staff. And it's a great way to see who wants to stay involved with our organization as well.

And then more recently in Ohio -- in our Cleveland offices has begun a partnership with the Department of Rehabilitation Corrections and Mobile Beacon, and that's a program in which they are refurbishing mobile hotspots. And since March, we've refurbished 2,000 devices them to sell them at a lower cost. These are the mobile hotspot devices. It's currently 10 individuals at this time. I'm hoping to continue to grow that. It also provides those individuals that are in a reentry stage of their life to look for employment opportunities and make connections. And so with [inaudible] as well.

So computer distribution events, prior to COVID-19, we had a great formula. You could have a lot of people together and provide training in terms of what software is on the computer, to be a part of a great event. The events are still great, but we're having to look at how COVID-19 is kind of shaping the events. There's a picture there on the far right, that's sort of distribution of it near Cleveland, and which they came up with a way in which people are able to be pre-registered and the computer is actually put into the car. If there's any kind of payment, that can be done online as well.

And so we've begun to get very creative with the partners that we're working with. And as I mentioned, looking for a hundred residents to kind of have that size to allow us to come to that location and work with other partners that will be part of the event. So it's a great way to bring other businesses and civic organizations to support the event. They can act as sponsors to lower the costs to something like $25. And sometimes the event could have no cost for the computer device. We have found that if there is a cost for the computer device that does sometimes turn -- make the turnout higher.

These devices -- if it's an event sort of outside of our main markets, there's a 90-day warranty and we work closely -- we try to work closely with a local computer repair organization that will provide support locally. And it's a 90-day warranty generally with that support team there, if someone does purchase kind of outside of a national event, our computer devices do have a one year warranty. It's also a great opportunity to bring the local ISPs and it's gift them to begin to share information on their low cost internet options and to create awareness in the community about low cost internet options.

And so there's frequently a internet resource guide provided and working with the local partners to provide that. For example, in the case of Austin, we worked with the City of Austin had computers to donate for us to refurbish. Austin Out -- the Austin Housing Authority was a big

part of looking at supporting residents and programs that they were part of to get a computer. Austin Independent School District was very much involved. And Google Fiber provided some sponsorship funds and lowered the cost of that computer -- that event.

And then as I mentioned, like in the case with working with Roxboro Housing Authority and Annie, and many others that I think are on this call, we have looked at what kind of devices you need and then creating a bulk order in which we can ship it to you directly. And you will then create ways of which you are able to distribute those to your participants that are part of your programs and other residents of the community that may need support.

At this time there has been such a surge in demand that we do ask for a few months of lead time for us to begin to create a bulk order for you. It's very helpful just to know what your goals are. And I can put that into my system to see, as we do get more devices from the companies that we work with, is that going to match up with your goals? So working with you to identify those goals and kind of get a profile of what you're looking for will help me a lot.

We have an online store and there are some bulk order options there under categories where you could purchase more than one device at a time and get just kind of on that as well. And then I mentioned that the bridging the gap platform where you can create your own account, it would be at PCsRefurbished with a special kind of unique website for you that would be kind of forward slash and then your organization name. And as I mentioned, it has those tools in which you kind of have a dashboard to see what -- to oversee the hotspots that have been purchased and help your residents with the purchase of devices.

So I think maybe I spoke to fast and we went to fast. I apologize for that. I know we want to open up some questions here. That's my email, that's the best way to get ahold of me. And again, I really appreciate this opportunity and it's been great to work with Annie and I know there's some on this call that I've worked with and great to work with you on the floor if you ever need to provide support in the future.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Thank you so much, Annie and Tony, and I know that Caila is going to be handling the question, so I'm going to turn it over to Caila.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Thanks, Dina. So yeah, we have one that came in, Annie, during your presentation. What was the learning curve for those involved in the opportunity to learn about devices?

Annie Graham: I'm not quite sure about the learning curve, but I can tell you that the characteristics out of the 15 who went through the class, I think about half of them had not completed high school. The other's had only a high school education. So I'm hoping that I'm answering the question for the person who asked it?

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. So he provided some more context just now. So when I say learning curve, how many actually are comfortable using the computer daily, following the class?

Annie Graham: Oh, each of them are. Several of them, as I indicated, were not high school graduates. So they were using their laptops to do online adult basic education classes and the others, based on my conversations with them, they used it to stay connected with family -- emails, I think a couple of them have even used it to connect with their pro- -- health providers offices, but for the most part they've used it to stay connected or to stay in connect -- stay connected with family or to stay and participate in online classes and homework.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Great. Thanks, Annie. And so I see a few folks have their hands raised. I know sometimes this can be an accident, but I'm going to go through and just check. So Edward a -- oh, he removed his hand. Okay. Sharon Mays [ph], I unmuted your line. Do you have a question for us?

Sharon Mays: Oh, yes. It's more or less a compliment for compliment. We are --

Caila Prendergast: Oh, so you're cutting out a little bit.

Sharon Mays: Can you hear me? I got the problem yesterday. Can you hear me now?

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. It's a lot clearer now. Yep.

Sharon Mays: Okay. I'm sorry. Let me get closer.

Caila Prendergast: No worries.

Sharon Mays: From the Kansas Housing Authority, we've worked with Connecting for Good, who is now with PCs for People. We're excited because we just actually provided a new spot for them and we're going to do [inaudible] with them for their new spot on the 28th of this month. So I'm looking forward to meeting some of the staff. [inaudible]

Anthony Frank: Thank you. I just want to say thank you so much. I look forward to getting over there soon. It's not that far from Denver.

Sharon Mays: And it is not.

Caila Prendergast: Thank you. Okay. So a few other questions. One for you, Tony. Are there any warranties on the computers and software installed?

Anthony Frank: Yes. Well, the warranty applies to the hardware. It's a one year warranty. And would do provide support if there are software issues, but it's a one year warranty covering all of the hardware.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. And Greg, I see you have a hand up for question. I'm going to go ahead and unmute your line and check. Hi, Greg, can you hear us? Do you have a question? Okay. Must've been an accident. No worries. We have a few more in the queue. Okay. How did you leverage -- I think this is for Annie. How did you leverage the ROSS grant? Did you use ROSS money for computers?

Annie Graham: No. We have not had to use ROSS grants to actually purchase computers. Our first distribution, we were fortunate enough to get the GitHub grant, excuse me. And then we also were provided with donations to help support the purchase of computers. So we've not to this point have had to use our ROSS grant. And then of course, with COVID-19 and the CARES Act dollars, we were able to purchase enough for each of our households with kids who are currently in school.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: This is -- this is Dina. Can I -- can I just add onto what Annie said that I say I also work on the ROSS program and I know there are admin funds available, but those funds should really only be used to support the work of the service coordinator. And there is some limited support that it allows for residents. But I would say purchasing computers for individual residents would not be something that would be covered by the ROSS grant. So -- and so now, luckily, there is CARES Act money, as Annie said, that can be used for that purpose. I just want to make that point. Thank you.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Thanks Dina. And Annie, so the next question, we have a large seasoned population in the Monroe County area. Many has difficulty navigating using -- or navigating a PC. Were there any steps that made seniors feel more comfortable using a PC in your experience, Annie? Or Tony, either one.

Annie Graham: In my experience, the Piedmont Community College, a local community college, had a great instructor. And so a lot of it had to do with him making them feel comfortable enough in their particular setting, not only to just want to learn, but make it interesting and fun for them.

So he was a great help in their particular situation. And then I only had the answer, maybe a few questions after that, but he led that particular activity for us and it made it fun. It was easy learning for them. And as a matter of fact, they requested that he had to be the instructor for the next advanced session that we were putting together through the college.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. And a follow up question for that. Does the housing authority have an MOU with the local community college? A Memorandum of Understanding?

Annie Graham: Yes. Because we have several activities that we partner with the local community college with, that's just one example. They also provide an instructor for adult basic education program -- adult basic skills, I'm sorry, program. So there are several activities that we are in partnership with them. It's not just the computer digital learning program.

Caila Prendergast: Got you. And I saw you unmute your line, Tony, did you have anything to add?

Anthony Frank: Just on the senior program -- I know we've had some work recently with senior companion programs where they are matched up with somebody to help work through some of the technical challenges. And so I know in this time -- working through how to use FaceTime

and some of these other online platforms, having that companion matched up with each person has been helpful.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: That's a great idea. I could see that being something that the youth of our housing authority could be involved in. You could match a youth -- a young person with a senior. This is Dina.

Anthony Frank: Yeah. Yeah. That sounds great. I mean, I just -- it's been -- so yeah, it's developing new social connections that we haven't seen before with technology -- create some new opportunities.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. So next question. So it looks like on your website, there are currently no laptops available. Do you know when you will be restocked with laptops?

Anthony Frank: So what's happened -- yeah. They're going up quickly and they may -- like, you may see some folks there today and you see 30 or 40 be sold out very quickly within hours.

But what I can do is working with the ConnectHome Housing Authorities, once I kind of know what you're -- what we're having to do is sort of set some aside to serve some of these orders. So as you work with us, you are looking for maybe a larger order, then I can help plan to make sure that we have some ready for you as our supplies increases, and they don't go up onto the online store. So we're doing the best we can. These are unprecedented times and you will likely see some laptops come up there very soon, but they just go very quickly.

And there's also kind of the issues as we work with companies and some are closed. We know the laptops are there and the computers are there for us to get, but they just may not have that staff that's onsite for us to go get them. So we're working through these times right now, but yeah, continue to check back if it's a smaller order. But please reach out to me by, again, on my email and let's see if we can create kind of a full order for you.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Great. The next question, I think for Annie and maybe Dina, you can add some stuff in here too. Can you elaborate a little bit more on what the GitHub grant was and kind of what that entails?

Annie Graham: Okay. So I was made aware of the GitHub grant through every one on one. So if you have partnerships with every one on one, if you need more information on how to connect with them, they are one of the partners that -- they are one of the national partners, as I understand it, with the everyone on program and by connecting with them, I was able to connect with the GitHub grant possibilities.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. Thank you, Annie. This was Dina. So there is an update. GitHub is a stakeholder for the ConnectHomeUSA program, meaning they they've worked to support the work of ConnectHomeUSA communities. So if you're part of this initiative, their resources were available to ConnectHomeUSA communities. Having said that, that grant possibility has now sunsetted, unfortunately, we were sad to see it go, but we -- on the plus side, we know that it did a lot of good and Annie is one of the examples.

So they provided many grants to many of our ConnectHomeUSA communities, but that is no longer happening at this time, unfortunately. But I should say, having said that, that we have a goal of reaching a hundred communities in ConnectHome. Right now, we're at 87. So if you're interested in becoming a ConnectHomeUSA community and you haven't joined, be on the lookout, we will be extending the offer to join soon. So thank you.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks, Dina. I was mute for a second. Sorry about that. So next question for you, Annie, sort of related to the MOU with Piedmont Community College, is that something that you would be willing to share with the housing authority that was interested in just sort of how you built that relationship? And obviously you guys could connect offline, but just wanted to see if something that was possible.

Annie Graham: Of course, I'd be willing to share how we began to build our relationship with Piedmont Community College. And it -- we had for several years, it's just each time we beginning to elevate what we do, Piedmont Community College has continued to be a valuable partner in all of that, but my contact information is on the slide, so feel free to call me.

Caila Prendergast: And Annie, can I ask you about that? Did you find that they are helping you, but you are also helping them meet their goals and their mission? Do I have that right?

Annie Graham: Yes. Correct.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: So that's an important point for communities. I know a lot of times you feel like you're asking for something, but you also are helping them. So just keep that in mind.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks. But that's the fun thing. My key right now, Dina, I know you usually have a few questions for all the attendees out there. Just go ahead and send your questions in and we can get them answered. We have about 10 minutes left.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: You're right, Caila, I always have questions. So I have a question for Tony. If Tony, you could talk a little bit more about your -- the hotspots that you offer, how they work. And yeah, that would be great.

Anthony Frank: Sure. So it's a mobile hotspot device. I know sometimes there's a kind of confusion as to what is the hotspot? So this is a mobile hotspot. Sometimes people will call it like a hockey puck. It's something that you can carry around and it uses the Sprint mobile network at this time.

There is kind of an understanding that it will eventually use both [inaudible] but right now it's on the Sprint network. It's unlimited data. So we know that there are other deals in which there's some education programs that will have kind of a data cap on and these do not have that data cap. We work with Mobile Beacon and Mobile Citizen. Those are the two partners that we work with that provide these devices, as well as then the unlimited data.

You do not go into a contract. You pay for one month of service, three months of service, six months of service, or 12 months of service. You pay for that all at once. And they -- there's a map on our website. We'll have a map on our website so we -- it's not going to work in every location. And I do work closely with housing authorities to see what's the address of that property.

And that mapping is available for the partners that we work with as well. It's -- well, we can put in those addresses and see is it going to be high quality 4G to get speeds that might go up to 40 megabits per second. So the rate -- it's going to have a range. So it provides an option for some -- a good option, but it's not going to work in every location.

And we are allowed to -- there is a cost for the device and that costs kind of ranges from 60 -- some of the other mobile hotspots might sell as high as a hundred dollars. So there's that kind of upfront cost to buy the device. And then you're paying for that service, about $15 a month, or for unlimited data. There are some discounts locally, if you sign up for more than a month, that that may bring the price down to below $15 a month.

We are allowed to provide that to an individual household account. We can connect you to our partners that could create a way in which you might purchase mobile hotspots and then have a mobile hotspot lending program. And then we can point you to the right people to talk to the stuff that up. We can sell it directly to a qualifying family.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Great. Thanks, Tony.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Yeah. We're still all set. No more questions from the attendees.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: All right. So then I have a question for Annie. Oh, go ahead.

Caila Prendergast: Just based on your last statement, Tony, what is a qualifying family?

Anthony Frank: Again, it's that income up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. It is simply showing income with the latest taxes or enrollment in those income based government assistance programs and our website PCsForPeople.org has a list of kind of all of those income assistance programs -- income based government assistance programs that are eligible, including like national -- the national school lunch program, Medicaid, and there's a list there as well as being in federal public assistant housing and section eight housing who qualify as well.

Caila Prendergast: Thanks. And go ahead, Dina with your next question.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Oh, thanks. Annie, I was really interested to hear you say that when you were distributing the computers, your IT director created an Outlook email account for ongoing agency communications.

Annie Frank: Yes.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Annie Frank: Yes. So as we've continued programming throughout this COVID-19 period, and even before, when we did the initial distribution, we wanted to ensure that residents would continue to be able to connect with us. And so our agency uses Outlook as its major account for all employees, and we wanted the residents to be able to connect with us through Outlook, not only just to -- it would serve as a training function, a communications function, and the connectivity with our website and Facebook.

So we wanted everybody to have that account already set up at the point that they received their computers. And that was one of the functions that our IT consultant handled for us. And so everybody has their own Outlook email address, as well as any other personal email address they may already have. But we knew that that was a way for us to maintain a connection, if you will, through internet and through email communications.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Great. That's awesome. Thank you.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. We had a few more questions come in. So Tony, do you see connecting with Spectrum for internet connectivity with mobile hotspots?

Anthony Frank: Say that again, Caila, what's it? So mobile hotspots with Spectrum?

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. Is that connectivity a possibility?

Anthony Frank: So we -- and that's in terms of Spectrum, the internet company; is that right?

Caila Prendergast: Yes. Yes.

Anthony Frank: Got it. Yes. So we -- I mean, so we certainly look to, like for example, we like to provide information on all the low cost internet options. We've held events with Comcast internet essentials, Starry is another affordable housing internet provider here in the Denver Housing Authority community that we're working with. And we work with Cox and their connect to compute program providing computers.

So as we work -- as we work with housing authorities, we are certainly very open and look for those kinds of collaborations and partnerships in which other low cost internet options are part of -- part of the event or part of the program that we helped create. So Spectrum would certainly be -- I don't work directly with them at this time, but I would certainly look to them to provide a low cost internet option where we work with other housing authorities.

Caila Prendergast: Okay, thanks. Do you have any final recommendations on starter laptops for seniors? Dell or HP or other suggestions?

Anthony Frank: Is that?

Annie Graham: Who's the question for?

Caila Prendergast: Just anyone. No specific -- no one specific.

Annie Graham: When we started our initial project, we gave our seniors, at least those program participants an option of whether they wanted tablets or laptops, they felt that they could better navigate and use the functions of the laptop better than they could the tablet. So that's why we chose laptops in the end.

Anthony Frank: I would add, we've kind of heard it both ways. We've heard it like in terms of we have received some iPads and some of the navigation to create an Apple account has been kind of interesting to track and then you need that to then download apps and and then trying to figure out which apps will work on iPads, iOS versus the laptop what's with the Windows 10 Pro.

And it allows some of the platforms to work more smoothly, but there's also a preference for some of the smaller iPad devices too, but yeah, there's -- just with everything right now, the starter device needs to have a webcam is kind of what we're focused on, and we've been working to ensure that a new external webcam can be included with any kind of device, if it's on a webcam involved. We just think that that's what we're hearing is key to any kind of purchase.

Caila Prendergast: Okay, thanks. So this next question -- I think we'll start with Tony and then Dina and Annie can also contribute. So we have many -- or we have secure PCs, but we have an issue with internet access. How can we get free internet access for residents? And if there's not a free option for internet service, have you worked with any housing authorities where they were billed for residents' internet service?

Anthony Frank: We worked with housing authorities in which they've provided internet in the common spaces for no cost. And so you might have a lobby area and a community room, and they may work with a particular internet service provider that will allow you to have some type of tech technology to allow that to happen in which they -- and then they can also then provide that lower cost internet option into the actual unit.

So part of it is to look at where the housing authority is located and who the ISPs are, and some of the technologies require a building that might be 60 feet taller or higher to allow for some of those high speed internet connections to be made and then provide some common space Wi-Fi options.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Yeah. This is Dina. Thank you, Tony. There are some housing authorities that are entering into agreements with some ISPs that -- so the PHA will do a bulk purchase, thinking T-Mobile, and a two year -- a purchase of two years of internet service for a certain number of residents. And then so the cost to the resident is free. It's the housing authority that's assuming the cost.

There are other models too, where the Wi-Fi -- there's a very good example from St. Louis. They will be offering Wi-Fi -- in-unit Wi-Fi for free. Well, I can't say if it's for free now. I don't think it's for free, but it's low cost. So they're working with a local internet provider who will -- has its own proprietary technology that they -- that the housing authority is purchasing through CARES

Act funding actually, and that will allow Wi-Fi to be distributed at a very affordable rate to residents. So that's an option too. And if you're interested in learning more, you can send me an email and I'll put it in the chat box.

Caila Prendergast: Okay. Thanks, Dina. Just going to get some space -- I know we're right at 3:00 o'clock. If you have to log off, definitely do that. We only have two more questions, so hopefully we'll be able to cover those quickly. I'm going to unmute your lines, Milstein [ph]. Did you have a question?

Milstein: Oh, I put it in the chat box. You -- it winded up getting answered.

Caila Prendergast: Oh, okay. Great. And then Sharon, did you have another question?

Sharon Mays: I just have one question. For some reason I couldn't get the chat to work, but is there any way we can get a copy of these slides or emails to us if we're wanting one?

Caila Prendergast: Sure. Yeah. I am going to email the slides around to everyone who attended after the webinar, and then they'll also be posted on HUD exchange in the next week or so.

Sharon Mays: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

Caila Prendergast: Yeah. Thank you. Okay. And I think with that, it's -- we're right at 3:01 so we're going to close this out. Thanks again everybody for joining. Thanks, Annie. Thanks, Tony. This was really great. And then I'll pass it over to Dina for some final comments.

Dina Lehmann-Kim: Oh, sorry. I was on mute. I want to thank you all for participating and for all the great questions. This was a super interactive session so thank you so much and thank you to our presenters for the great work they've done and their commitment to our cause and our residents.

So thank you so much. And everybody please take good care and we will be in touch soon with the August webinar, which we haven't figured out what it is yet, but it'll probably be around education. So stay tuned. Thank you.

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