



NEWS RELEASE

City of Houston

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CITY OF HOUSTON ANNOUNCES MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR PARTNERSHIP WITH MICROSOFT FOR DIGITAL LITERACY AND WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS Houston Public Library Digital Inclusion Initiative to Benefit from Large Microsoft Corp. Donation

April 20, 2009 (Houston, TX) – Mayor Bill White, Microsoft Corp., and the Houston Public Library (HPL) today announced a \$4.5 million grant benefiting WeCAN Works, an innovative digital literacy and workforce preparedness effort recently launched as part of the Houston Digital Inclusion Initiative Wireless Empowered Community Access Network (WeCAN), www.houstonwecan.org. The Microsoft Unlimited Potential grant awarded to the Houston Public Library Foundation for WeCAN Works represents one of its largest U.S. donations. This public/private partnership includes participation by local community organizations to offer training in digital literacy and job readiness to Houstonians.

The Microsoft Unlimited Potential grant includes \$4.3 million in software and \$200,000 in cash over a two-year period. The Houston Digital Inclusion Initiative estimates that more than 160,000 underserved and unskilled Houstonians will be impacted by this program over the two-year period. WeCAN Works will offer digital literacy training, job readiness training, internships, GED programs, career counseling, and job referrals and placements. Additionally, hundreds of city and community organizations citywide will benefit from a host of licenses and educational and productivity software provided through the grant.

“The ability of all Houstonians to access and use digital technology is important if our city is to remain at the top of the list at attracting business,” said Mayor White. “Just as importantly, the ability to stay in touch with loved ones, to learn, or to browse the market place is important to us all and adds to the quality of life here. Through the Digital Inclusion Initiative and the WeCAN Works program, Houston has just that much more to offer.”

“Microsoft has a long-standing relationship with the Houston community,” said Microsoft’s Gail Thomas-Flynn, General Manager of State and Local Government. “We believe that digital literacy tools and resources will help to unlock the career potential of all Houstonians.”

WeCAN Works partners include the City of Houston, the Houston Public Library, Microsoft Corporation, the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the Houston Community College System (HCC), Workforce Solutions and the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP). The program will create a digital literacy and job readiness workforce model for the city of Houston.

WeCAN Works will offer three Tracks of programming in cooperation with partner organizations. **Track I** will target, place, and train at-risk high school students to prepare them to enter the workforce in a high-demand, high-growth field. These high school students will receive digital literacy training, MOS and A+ certifications, career counseling, apprenticeships, and mentoring. **Track II** will target unemployed and underemployed youth and adults who do not have a high school diploma for classes to prepare them for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) Certification test; in addition, these participants will receive digital literacy training, career counseling and job placement assistance. **Track**

III will provide digital literacy and workforce skills training, to underserved populations in high-need communities to improve quality of life. These services will be offered at HPL locations, established WeCAN community access locations, and on-site at partner organizations. WeCAN Works will establish this innovative program as a model in workforce readiness for other cities to emulate. For more information about WeCAN Works, call 832-393-1313 or visit <http://www.houstonwecan.org>. For more information on Microsoft's Digital Inclusion initiatives, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/industry/government/digitalinclusion.mspx>.

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