New Program Aims to Put 'Every Community Online' in Texas

Connected Texas, the Texas State Library, and Intel Join Forces to Offer Free Internet Training and Computers

Austin, TX – Connected Texas, in partnership with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) and Intel, announced Tuesday the launch of the Every Community Online *(*ECO) program. The program offers free computer and Internet training and leaves participants eligible for free computer giveaways as well as discounted home broadband services.

"The Every Community Online program focuses on improving broadband access, adoption, and use across the entire state," said Connected Texas Executive Director Don Shirley. "One million, four-hundred thousand Texas adults say a lack of digital skills and knowledge of how to use a computer and broadband is the main reason they don't have broadband at home. The ECO program promises to change that by offering Texans a free way to learn life-changing digital skills through their local library and then be rewarded with discounted broadband services and a chance at a free computer."

ECO training sessions introduce new users to basic computer functions, how to access the Internet, and how to access and utilize sites on the Internet. The goal of this program is to showcase the many educational, healthcare, economic, and communication benefits of broadband use, and to encourage residents, especially in rural communities, to subscribe to and use broadband Internet service.

"TSLAC is excited to share ECO with Texas librarians who are teaching basic computer and Internet skills to their patrons," said Peggy D. Rudd, director/librarian of the Texas State Library

and Archives Commission. "This is an exciting opportunity for librarians to utilize proven curriculum that is located in one, convenient online location. Also, we believe the ECO incentives such as the computer sweepstakes, will encourage more patrons to sign up for classes and get online."

About 40,000 people are expected to receive ECO training in the first year at more than 350 libraries across the state. Participants will be offered a new user starter kit consisting of a basic computer and basic broadband service (where available) packaged at a discount to encourage immediate adoption and long-term broadband subscription.

Current Connected Texas research shows that computer ownership and Internet adoption rates in Texas correlate directly with educational levels.
- 45% of Texans with less than a high school diploma own computers and only 22% adopt broadband
- Those numbers jump about 30% each for high school graduates, with a 75% computer ownership rate and 50% broadband adoption rate

The biggest gap is among low-income rural Texans.
- Only 28% of low-income rural Texans subscribe to broadband and only 47% have a computer at home

"Intel Corporation recognizes that a strong foundation in computer and Internet skills is necessary for personal and professional success in the twenty-first century," said Intel K-12 Education Manager Paige Johnson. "That's exactly why Intel is directly involved in education programs – like Every Community Online – that enable the next generation of workers to be positive contributors to the economy."

New computer sweepstakes winners will be selected from participants in the ECO program who are new adopters to computing and broadband.

For more information about the Every Community Online program or the expansive work of the Connected Texas initiative, please contact Connected Texas at info@connectedtx.org or Program Coordinator LaTanya Tatum at (512) 461-4159.

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About Connected Texas: Connected Texas is a subsidiary of Connected Nation and operates as a non-profit in the state of Texas. The Texas Department of Agriculture is leading the initiative to increase broadband Internet access, adoption, and use across the state. Connected Texas was commissioned by the state to work with all Texas broadband providers to create detailed maps of broadband coverage and development of a statewide plan for the deployment and adoption of broadband. For more information visit: http://www.connectedtx.org.

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