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JB Pritzker, Governor

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State of Illinois Joins PCs for People to Announce Computer Distribution Events Planned for Metro East in February

Series to provide computers for to those in need; part of statewide call to action to address the digital divide for families in Illinois

METRO EAST – The State of Illinois today joined PCs for People and officials from Cahokia, Belleville and East St. Louis Public Libraries in announcing four computer distribution events that will be held to distribute refurbished computers and mobile devices for those in need. These planned events aim to distribute as many as 250 computers to low and moderate-income residents, with the first of these events kicking off this past weekend in Cahokia.

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, the Illinois Office of Broadband is putting equity at the forefront of our efforts to provide universal access to broadband for all our Illinois communities,” **said Matt Schmit, Director of the Illinois Office of Broadband.** “The onset of COVID-19 has made this mission even more urgent, and that’s why we launched the Illinois Computer Equity Network last year to help bring more reliable access to the internet for families depending on it for school, work and health. We’re proud to partner with officials from the Metro East area Library districts and PCs for People, who are working hard to bring these essential tools to those that need them most. To bring more resources to bear for communities across Illinois, we continue to urge our corporate partners and residents who have additional devices to consider donating them to the Computer Equity Network to help more families out there who are still in need.”

This past Saturday, 80 families in the area were provided a newly refurbished computer and hotspot through the Cahokia Library’s sponsored event with PC’s for People and the Illinois Office

of Broadband. Three additional community distribution events will be held in the Metro East area throughout the month of February to put refurbished devices into the hands of low to moderate income families.

“The impact that the State of Illinois, PC’s for People and the library generated for the community is uplifting, as this initiative is providing computer devices to enhance digital access for those in need,” **said Curtis McCall Jr., Mayor of Cahokia.** “Today’s event connected area families with the tools necessary to help with schoolwork, doctor’s appointments and just staying connected with today’s pandemic’s challenges.

These area events are being coordinated through the Computer Equity Network – a joint initiative led by Governor Pritzker, the Illinois Office of Broadband, PCs for People and local leaders to help close the digital divide for an estimated of 1.1 million families in Illinois.

During these challenging times, it is our aim to ensure that the community, ‘our community’ has what they need to bridge the digital divide,” **said Dr. Jaison K.D. McCall the PCs for People, Metro East, Executive Director.** “We are thrilled to be partnering with so many officials, community-focused organizations and stakeholders to provide access to low-cost reliable technology. With every computer distributed, a life is enriched.”

“Addressing the digital divide now couldn't be more urgent as residents across our state and here in the Metro East community continue to face barriers to school, work and in their everyday lives as a result of lack of access to working computers,” **said Illinois Sen. Christopher Belt, (D-Centreville).** “Thanks to the leadership of Governor Pritzker and PCs for People - and through the hard work of our local libraries and municipalities who are coordinating events like these - the Computer Equity Network is expanding access to devices that will provide internet access and make a difference in the lives of thousands of residents in our area.”

“With support by Gov. JB Pritzker, and PC’s for People, we’re proud to kick off these computer distribution events – the first step in getting resources in place to help all of our residents access high speed and reliable internet,” **said Rep. LaToya Greenwood, (D-East St. Louis).** “For community members who have struggled to find reliable access to computer and internet service, I encourage you to register to participate in any one of the three upcoming events February throughout the area.”

For those who missed last weekend’s event in Cahokia, it’s not too late to register to attend for additional events to be held in February in the Metro East area. Upcoming community distribution events for Metro East include the following:

- [February 13, East St. Louis Public Library](#)
- [February 20, Belleville Public Library](#)
- [February 27, Power of Change Christian Church, Cahokia](#)

“COVID -19 has perpetuated an underlying challenge of ensuring the community has access to reliable computers and internet,” **said Leander Spearman, Director of the Belleville Public Library.** “I’m thrilled to be working alongside other area library directors and the State of Illinois to promote this resource in the greater St. Clair county area to bridge the digital divide.”

Since launching the Computer Equity Network with the State of Illinois last year, PCs has deployed thousands of devices at community distribution events held throughout the Metro East area in the month of January alone.

Additional events will be held throughout the state this year, and residents are encouraged to review upcoming events in their area and register on the PCs for People Illinois website at: <https://www.pcsforpeople.com/illinois/>. For more information on how to donate used devices to the Computer Equity Network, please visit the Illinois Office of Broadband please visit www.illinois.gov/connectillinois

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