The Patterson Foundation (TPF) created its Digital Access for All (DA4A) initiative to explore the efforts of multiple sectors working to enhance access to technology that connects people in ways that foster inclusion and well-being.

Digital Navigation Takes Off at Goodwill Manasota
By Maribel Martinez

Ivette Gonzalez, community connection specialist at Goodwill Manasota, was quickly identified as the organization's first soon-to-be digital navigator when the agency volunteered to join The Patterson Foundation's Digital Navigator Pilot in July 2021. "Ivette is absolutely the right person for this job," said Margie Genter, vice president of Mission Services at Goodwill Manasota, "...and I know she will be great!"

Gonzalez was trained for four hours using a course designed and facilitated by Maribel Martinez, a consultant with The Patterson Foundation's Digital Access for All initiative. "I can't wait to get started!" said Gonzalez, "I know there are so many people who need my help."

Since beginning her work as a digital navigator, Ivette meets weekly with Martinez, who helps her talk through solutions and remove roadblocks.

"While this work isn't difficult, each client is different. Their life circumstances present challenges for digital navigators to find the best solutions to affordable broadband and computers and free digital literacy training," said Martinez about supporting the digital navigators she trains.

Manatee Broadband Summit Seeks Local Input
By Cheri Coryea

The University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee Campus hosted the first regional broadband summit on behalf of the Manatee County Government on August 26th. Welcomed by Dr. Karen Holbrook, USF Regional Chancellor, and Dr. Scott Hopes, Manatee County Administrator, a lineup of eight subject matter experts presented to 50+ attendees while talented USF student Ambassadors served as master of ceremonies throughout the event. Stakeholders focused on the first step of developing a community plan to expand broadband access to unserved residents and businesses in the Manatee County area under the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Susie Bowie, Executive Director, Manatee Community Foundation, provided details of the grant award from the Miami-based Knight Foundation which served to bring the county and university together to engage USF students in collecting community input. John Shaw, Ernst and Young, provided the timeline, requirements, and process required for the local ARPA plan development. Katie Smith, Director of the State of Florida Office of Community Partnership and Broadband, walked the group through the status of the legislatively required statewide broadband mapping project scheduled to be completed by early 2022.

The Patterson Foundation’s Digital Access for All team shared the year-long collection of resources and conversations they have facilitated in Charlotte, Desoto, Manatee, Sarasota. This work emphasized the importance of providing the three essential elements, connectivity, devices, and skills/support for ALICE
Navigators she trains. "My clients always take advantage of extra time with me post-training, and that tells me they care deeply about the responsibility they have to their clients," added Maribel.

One such client arrived at Goodwill Manasota seeking assistance on multiple fronts as the result of a relocation to Florida from Texas. Currently residing at the Salvation Army with her three children, Beaux Peterson falls into one of the most challenging digital divide categories of end-beneficiaries: those without a permanent home address. While Peterson was able to find a job, she was told she needed a computer and an internet connection to keep it. Gonzalez got down to work right away to find Peterson a broadband connection she could afford and a computer on which to do her work. Today, Peterson has everything she needs to start anew, including a workspace at Goodwill Manasota she is welcome to use for her new job until her housing situation becomes more permanent.

We wish Beaux Peterson and her family much success. We thank Ivette Gonzalez for her dedication thus far to the Digital Navigator Pilot and her clients at Goodwill Manasota.

Learn more about Goodwill helping low-income community members connect to the internet here!

The Federal Communications Commission Announces Second ECF Application Window

On August 25, 2021, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that it had received requests for $5.137 billion to fund 9.1 million connected devices and 5.4 million broadband connections as part of the $7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund Program. The first filing window, which closed on August 13, 2021, attracted applications from all 50 states. In view of outstanding demand and the recent spike in coronavirus cases, the FCC will open a second application filing window for schools and libraries to request funding for connected devices and broadband connections for off-campus use by students, school staff, and library patrons for the current 2021-22 school year.

During the second application filing window, which will run from September 28 to October 13, eligible schools and libraries can apply for financial support to purchase connectivity, devices, and skills/support for ALICE families (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed).

Suzie McGuire, Manatee County IT Interim Director, and Vincent Hoaglin, Infrastructure Services with the Manatee County School District, presented important current locational mapping of school broadband conduit and creative ways to utilize community parks in unserved areas providing free public wifi.

Sharon Hillstrom, President/CEO Bradenton Area EDC and Josephs Starks, ECC Technologies, detailed the concept of a BAAT (Broadband Aggregation and Adoption Toolset) study. BAAT is a web-based application documenting demand for broadband that can include speed tests, locations, and other aspects of broadband for residents and businesses in an area.

Closing out the session, Ernst and Young measured reaction, gathered observations, and suggested areas of focus for the future development of the Manatee ARPA Plan. Development continues through 2022.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Update

On August 27, 2021, the FCC Acting Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel announced that over five million households have enrolled in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program since its launch in mid-May. The FCC released new data to increase transparency and improve outreach, including enrollee demographic information such as age breakdown, eligibility category, type of broadband service, and enrollment numbers by five-digit Zip code area.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Fraud Alert: Recently, the FCC issued a consumer advisory warning to the public about an Emergency Broadband Benefit imposter website (wifi Freedom USA) that was collecting personal information from consumers and falsely claiming to provide free devices and services related to the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. Consumers are reminded only to use the official Emergency Broadband Benefit website, GetEmergencyBroadband.org, to enroll in the program.
and libraries can apply for financial support to purchase suitable equipment and services for students, school staff, and library patrons with unmet needs.

LEARN MORE

It's not too late to register for the Emergency Broadband Benefit. Eligible households can enroll through an approved provider or by visiting GetEmergencyBroadband.org.

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Enrollments and Claims Tracker

| Total Households Enrolled Weekly Nationally (as of September 5, 2021) | 5,355,886 (20.84%↑) |
| Total Households Enrolled in Florida (September 8, 2021) | 353,389 (24.62%↑) |

This tracker is updated on a weekly and monthly basis. You can find more current numbers here. The FCC now provides more granular data on the total enrolled households by the first three digits of a ZIP code and the full five-digit ZIP code as of the first of the month, starting with August 1.

Do you have a resource or idea to share with the community? Is there a national, regional, or local effort you'd like us to know about or feature in future publications? Contact DA4A at digitalaccess@thepattersonfoundation.org to be considered.

@ThePattersonFdn
#DigitalAccessforAll