

Comcast grants enhance digital learning

Written by
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Comcast announced it is providing \$50,000 in grants to non-profit community organizations in St. Paul to create Internet Essentials Learning Zones within the community.

Honoring the efforts of its community partners, Comcast has established a Gold Medal Recognition Program in which it is making more than \$1 million in grants to non-profit partners in 15 communities across the country. The Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation will be receiving one of those grants totaling \$50,000 to distribute to its non-profit partners including CommonBond Communities, Neighborhood House, Project for Pride in Living, Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation – Liberty Plaza and West 7th Community Center.

Also, Internet Essentials-eligible families in St. Paul who are not currently customers can receive six months of complimentary Internet service if they apply for the program by March 18 and are approved. To apply, families need to call (855) 846-8376 or visit www.InternetEssentials.com. For Spanish, they may call (855) 765-6995, or visit www.InternetBasico.com.

According to Comcast, grants in St. Paul will enable these communities to create a continuum of connectivity that begins in the classroom with wired schools, follow the students to wired libraries, wired computer centers, wired after-school programs and end in wired homes when the day is done.

Additionally, Comcast also announced it has extended its Internet Essentials national broadband adoption program for low-income families beyond its initial three-year period. In two and a half years, the initiative has connected more than 1.2 million low-income Americans – 300,000 families – to broadband Internet. This includes nearly 6,350 in Comcast's Minnesota and Western Wisconsin service area.

"This generous grant from Comcast will help us reach more families who are not currently participating in the digital world," said Mike Anderson, executive director, Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation. "Comcast's viable partnership and long-term commitment in the Twin Cities area will allow the community to become more digitally literate so they can enhance their education and utilize everything the Internet has to offer."

Announced in May 2011, Internet Essentials is designed to meet the needs of a specific population – low-income families with school-age children who are not currently connected to broadband Internet at home. However, no single program will completely close the digital divide.

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"Comcast's groundbreaking initiative has connected thousands of local families to broadband Internet at home and moved the needle on the important task of closing the digital divide," said Jeff Freyer, Comcast Twin Cities regional vice president. "We believe the Internet has the power to transform lives, strengthen communities and inspire a new generation of leaders, and Internet Essentials plays a key role in fulfilling that vision."

Internet Essentials provides broadband service for \$9.95 a month plus tax, the option to purchase an Internet-ready computer for under \$150 and multiple options to access free digital literacy training in print, online, and in-person. Eligible families must have at least one child eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program, including public, parochial, private, and home-school students.

Comcast is the nation's largest video, high-speed Internet and phone provider to residential customers under the XFINITY brand.