

## One Vision. Two Goals. Infinite Opportunities.

In 1995, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had a vision. Create an initiative that would accomplish two goals—promote self-sufficiency and deliver computer access to low- and moderate-income residents living in privately owned HUD-insured and assisted multifamily housing.

The result of this vision was the Neighborhood Networks Initiative, and since its creation more than a decade ago, Neighborhood Networks has connected residents to infinite opportunities.

### ***The Need for Neighborhood Networks***

To understand why Neighborhood Networks is important, it is important to first understand how employment skills, access to technology, and academic achievement effect one's level of self-sufficiency and future success. Consider:

- The U.S. Department of Labor projects that some of the fastest-growing jobs in the years from 2000-2014 will require some degree of computer literacy.
- Americans earning less than \$30,000 a year are online less than Americans with higher annual incomes.
- Low-income youth are less likely to use computers at home than their peers.
- Youth who regularly attend high-quality after-school programs have better grades and conduct

in school; more academic opportunities; better peer relations and emotional adjustments; and lower incidences of drug use, violence, and pregnancy.

When creating Neighborhood Networks, HUD took all of these factors into consideration and developed an Initiative that provides residents with access to:

- Computer technology that increases exposure to employment opportunities, improves academic performance, and enhances communication.
- Educational and job-training programs that enhance their skills so they can take advantage of employment and homeownership opportunities.
- Healthcare information and other social services that improve the quality of life for themselves and their families.

### ***Growth Is Good***

Neighborhood Networks started quietly, with a few community technology centers scattered across the country. By the end of the first two years of the Initiative, more than 200 Neighborhood Networks centers opened. It expanded rapidly, building a national presence and impact. Between 1997 and 1999, the number of centers more than doubled. Today, there are more than 1,300 Neighborhood Networks centers in urban centers and rural towns in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands that are placing the power of technology into the hands of the people.



## **HUD Offers Support**

HUD encourages property owners and managers to open onsite technology centers and provides support to develop and sustain these centers. HUD supports Neighborhood Networks stakeholders by:

- Providing onsite and remote technical assistance on topics critical to center development and sustainability.
- Maintaining the Neighborhood Networks Web site that includes news, success stories, online publications, and contact information.
- Identifying regional and national funding opportunities that provide owners, managers, and center staff members with additional sources of revenue.
- Providing access to the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool (START) that allows center staff to develop online business plans to better manage their centers.
- Assisting with the development of partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, government and social service agencies, educational and health institutions, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, and foundations that can provide cash and in-kind support.
- Hosting monthly conference calls on a wide range of subjects, such as grantwriting, fundraising, resident involvement, partnership development, and staffing.

- Providing the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free hotline that is staffed by information specialists ready to provide additional technical assistance and program guidance.
- Producing print and electronic publications, such as newsletters, brochures, and technical assistance resources, including *TARGET: Technical Assistance Resource Guides and Educational Toolkit*, a comprehensive guide that provides centers with detailed information on a variety of topics ranging from opening a center to program planning to working with the media to promote center activities and accomplishments.
- Offering learning opportunities, such as workshops and national conferences.
- Sponsoring special events, such as Neighborhood Networks Week, a weeklong celebration held each summer that allows centers to highlight their achievements and recognize partners, staff members, residents, and volunteers.

## **For More Information**

For more information on Neighborhood Networks, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org), or call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743. The hearing impaired may access the number via TTY by calling the Federal Information Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.