



Urban League

of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc.

Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis
Plan to Address the Issue of a Digital Divide**

Recently, the Urban League received a grant from the AT & T Foundation for \$107,450 to implement a Digital Career Academy. In recognizing the depth of the Digital Divide, AT&T and the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis have developed a multi-level approach to ensure that low-income clients are not only computer literate, but are also able to utilize computers as extensions of their ability.

The Digital Career Academy provides a unique opportunity exists for technically-inclined job seekers to become proficient in the field of Information Technology. Through the Urban League's Business Training Center students can take advantage of a comprehensive training course that prepares them for the CompTIA A+ Certification examination. Upon being certified students become PC technician and can then expand their career horizons to entry-level technician positions or deepen their skills set by extending their IT training from a choice of several programs offered through the Academy.

"We are excited about giving African Americans the opportunity to compete on a level playing field in the I.T. industry. I am truly grateful to AT & T and the National Urban League for investing in closing the Digital Divide in the St. Louis African American community. Through the generosity of AT&T, and the National Urban League, this program will be offered to participants without cost to themselves," said James H. Buford, President and CEO of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis.

The A+ program is a vigorous coverage of the identification, installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting of both the hardware and software aspects of a personal computer.



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Its curriculum is close to collegiate-level study and has been accessible to those that are technically-inclined, scholastically ready and computer literate. In addition, the Business Training Center has adopted a curriculum that promotes and certifies individuals as computer users. The IC³ Certification combines three sets of skills that are quantified as the basics of knowing how to use a computer. Module A covers how to use the computer as a device and Windows as an operating system. Module B introduces Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint as the essential office applications needed for productivity. Module C teaches students about the Internet and e-mail, two premier forms of communication in this time and culture. These subjects are being taught in a low-pressure, low-cost environment. The staff believes that the environment helps to create a computer savvy culture and a more marketable job applicant.

Harriett Levy, an Urban League client, hopes to become an A+ success story. Although Levy has a bachelor's degree in political science, she was never able to find a job, let alone one in her field. She had been unemployed for some time and came to the Urban League for utility assistance, and saw an A+ flyer. She thought the training would be a great opportunity to not just get a job, but have a career in a growing field. The fact that IT is a growing field is especially important to her, as she wants very much to have a chance to find a good job.

Since her daughter is now 18 and finishing high school, Levy has more time to invest in herself and her future, so she decided to take the step of signing up for the A+ class. One barrier she had was the fact that she was unemployed and badly needed money for living expenses and to support her daughter. The Urban League placed her in an internship where she is assisting its IT department. She has become one of the top students currently enrolled in the A+ class, which will finish in February. Ms. Levy hopes to pass both parts of the certification test in March of 2007. After graduation, she looks forward to finding a job in technical support in the medical field.

Another growing concern of the Business Training Center at the Urban League is to grow a culture of people that use, appreciate, and desire computers in their daily lives. There is a large population in the urban community that is exiled from computers for reasons of lack of availability or simple exposure. As a result, The Business Training Center has adopted a curriculum that promotes and certifies individuals as computer users. The IC³ Certification combines three sets of skills that are quantified as the basics of knowing how to use a computer. Module A covers how to use the computer as a device and Windows as an operating system. Module B introduces Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Power Point as the essential office applications needed for productivity. Module C teaches students about the Internet and e-mail, two premier forms of communication in this time and culture. These subjects are being taught in a low-



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pressure, low cost environment, serving to create a computer savvy culture and a more marketable job applicant.

Eugene Dokes-Wilson is currently in the IC3 class. He heard about the class when he brought his mother in for assistance with her utility bills. At that time he saw the flyers for the IC3 class. He signed up for the class because he wanted to be more computer literate. Dokes-Wilson will finish the IC3 class in January, and should be able to take the certification exams in late Jan or early Feb. Then he would like to go on and take the A+ class and possibly even get additional technical training. Dokes-Wilson is not working now, but once he obtains certification, he would like to get a job in the computer field, building PCs, installing operating systems, or removing viruses....services tat he currently have to request from a technician.

With almost 330,000 people, St. Louis City have a large population of citizens in urban neighborhoods that have had limited or no contact with computers. Although the reasons for limited computer contact vary, through the Business Training Center's Digital Academy they can find access and resources to enable them to earn excellent wages and lift themselves to their full economic potential. In St. Louis City, there are thousands of individuals committed to improving their job skills, but cannot do so adequately because of a lack of fundamental education. To the Urban League, this is an obstacle with a simple solution. The Business Training Center recently introduced a literacy and G.E.D. program to aid individuals in their pursuit of higher education and self-improvement. The local school board will also help facilitate this effort by providing materials and staff to teach and test students seeking a G.E.D., or an improvement in their basic literacy skills. This encompasses the multi-level effort of bringing those enrolled in the Digital Academy to a higher level of computer training with the eventual goal of obtaining digital prowess. Through these and other computer-related programs, the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, and its partners such as AT& T, hopes to turn the infamous Digital Divide into ladder for economic opportunity.

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