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HANO Announces Successful Completion of First Phase of ConnectHome Initiative

*Three-Hundred Public Housing Residents Now Connected to Enhanced Broadband Services
in Partnership with HUD, City of New Orleans and local providers*

New Orleans, LA (August 3, 2016) - The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) in partnership with the City of New Orleans today announced the successful completion of the first phase of an initiative to connect public housing residents to enhanced broadband services.

ConnectHome, an initiative launched in July 2015 by President Barack Obama and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, expands high-speed internet services to more families across the country, removing exclusionary barriers for low-income residents. As a part of this initiative, 300 public housing residents in New Orleans with school aged children now have access to affordable broadband services and digital literacy training in partnership with local internet providers.

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said, "In today's world, the Internet is essential for work, education and so much more but many people still do not have access to broadband services. With our partners at HUD, the Housing Authority of New Orleans has successfully connected 300 public housing residents through the ConnectHome Initiative. We have a responsibility to ensure that Internet access is broadly available. Through this effort, which is in-line with our Equity Strategy, we have helped 300 more New Orleans families get online."

"HUD's ConnectHome initiative is about access to information and making sure our youth are learning on a level playing field," said Tammye H. Treviño, HUD Regional Administrator. "Bridging the Digital Divide is a primary focus of the Obama Administration, and I want to commend our partners at Cox, AT&T, and T-Mobile for stepping up to deliver, at \$10 or less a month, broadband to those in need. The Housing Authority of New Orleans has partnered with those providers to bring 300 families high speed service so far. A great milestone, with much more to come."



Twenty-seven (27) cities nationwide and one tribal nation were selected through a competitive process to participate in the program. The communities and housing agencies partnered with local internet service providers, non-profits, and the private sector to offer broadband training, digital literacy programs, and, in some cases, devices to public housing residents. HUD established a baseline goal of connecting 35 percent or 297 of the 850 eligible families with school-aged children living in HANO communities by the end of the summer. This would include the installation of internet connectivity, home-based computer equipment and software needed for the connectivity, or through the use of a mobile device.

"HANO has always been an advocate for broadband inclusion of the most vulnerable citizens in our city," said Executive Director Gregg Fortner. "This agency welcomes the opportunity to bridge a growing gap of accessibility to online resources, and to encourage residents to utilize this partnership with local internet providers for low-cost internet services and basic computer skills training necessary to perform daily activities."

Through a series of local stakeholder meetings, extensive community outreach, and the submission of surveys completed by residents in four (4) housing communities, the agency discovered extreme barriers faced by this targeted population. Without broadband connectivity, residents are rejected access to resources used to complete college and/or job applications, interacting with healthcare professionals, researching information for homework assignments, and paying utility bills.

To bridge the digital divide, the agency partnered with AT&T, Cox Communications and T-Mobile to host a series of Connect Days for publically assisted households with children in grades kindergarten through 12. Each provider presented participating residents with a low-cost internet service, and residents were encouraged to sign-up for basic computer skills and internet usage training provided by HANO's Information Technology Department.

HANO is currently working with private entities, local universities, and non-profit organizations to secure computer hardware and software donations for program participants. Last month, Whitney Bank donated 115 home-based computers, laptops and desktops to HANO in an effort to provide broadband internet connectivity for ConnectHome program participants.

"Whitney Bank was founded 133 years ago to help create opportunities for people who call our Greater New Orleans communities home," said Whitney Bank Senior Regional Market President Gary Lorio. "In today's world, computers and the internet are so integral to everyday life-and mainstays in the educational system. We are proud and honored to have been given the opportunity to partner with the Housing Authority of New Orleans in a joint effort to provide local families with the access they need to live, work, and learn in the digital era."

This month, HANO will partner with GitHub, the world's largest open source software community, to offer four (4) digital inclusion trainings for thirty-five (35) high school students



who currently reside in HANO communities. The free digital literacy class is designed to encourage ConnectHome program participants ages 14 to 18 to pursue their interests in the technology field. As part of their participation in the class, attendees will also receive a portable tablet to continue their digital literacy education.

HANO's Information Technology Department encourages residents to participate in the upcoming digital literacy trainings through the HANO Connect Day events at participating communities. Qualified students can also sign up online at <https://ti.to/github-events/connectingneworleans>.

For more information on HUD's ConnectHome initiative, visit www.HUD.gov. For more information on HANO, visit www.hano.org.

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