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North American Savings Bank (NASB) Partners with PCs for People to Bridge Digital Divide by Providing 403 Computers to KC Community Members in Need

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (May 3, 2021) NASB announced today the delivery of 150 refurbished computers and laptops to the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council as part of a larger, year-long donation initiative of 403 computers and financial support to PCs for People, a nonprofit that provides refurbished computers, equipment and low-cost Wi-Fi access to low-to-moderate income (LMI) families.

Last March, millions of American school children, parents and teachers faced the first of many technical challenges of online learning—yet many households faced an even greater hurdle; lack of home computers and Wi-Fi access. In addition to school challenges, individuals and families could no longer rely on public spaces like libraries for internet access to work remotely, utilize virtual healthcare, pay bills, search for employment, or stay socially connected.

“The pandemic further highlighted the gap in digital equity within our communities,” said Natalie Rowe, NASB’s community development manager.

Last April, in response to this need, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (FBA) launched the [Employer Laptop Challenge](#), a community development program that encouraged companies and other organizations to donate used devices to nonprofits, schools and refurbishers.

According to Jeremy Hegle, senior community development advisor at the Kansas City Fed, more than 30% of low-income households lack a computer. To date, more than 5,000 computers have been donated through the [challenge](#), but the gap persists.

NASB’s VP of Residential Lending Compliance Officer Sarah Baharin read Hegle’s report, [Disconnected: Seven Lessons on Connecting the Digital Divide](#), co-authored by colleague Jennifer Wildings, Community Development Specialist, FBA KC, and recognized an opportunity for NASB to help.

“As a parent in the Kansas City Public School System, I know how vital it has been to each child’s academic success that school districts were thankfully able to provide access to computers and Wi-Fi for each student. At the beginning of the pandemic, supply of computer equipment was scarce, but it was amazing to see how businesses, individuals and refurbishers stepped-up to help meet that need in our community,” said Baharin.

Through her role as NASB’s Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Officer, Baharin manages community donations. To best serve the community, Baharin and Rowe identify and nurture partnerships with Kansas City nonprofit organizations whose goals align with NASB’s philanthropic mission and whose efforts are making a significant, positive impact on improving the lives of low-to-moderate individuals and families in the Urban Core.

Like most organizations, NASB made a quick shift to a work-from-home model last March that left hundreds of desktop computers unused. Baharin and Rowe worked with Tom Esselman, executive director of PCs for People, to donate 403 decommissioned computers along with more than \$8,000 to cover the cost of new hard drives.

“The effects of the Covid-19 crisis quadrupled the demand for our services,” said Esselman. “NASB’s response to our call for help came at a time when so many in our community were overwhelmed by the challenges of the pandemic.”

“In working with our community organizations and neighborhood partnerships across Kansas City’, said Rowe, ‘we saw a need to provide technology and Wi-Fi to youth, family and seniors in our community and were thrilled to be in a position to help’.

To help support distance and web-based education and skill building programs for Ivanhoe residents, NASB allocated 125 of the 403 computers for the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council. Seventy-five of the computers and accessories will be allocated for three neighborhood community centers, and 50 computers will be delivered directly to residents. In addition to the in-kind donation, NASB donated \$3,750 to Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council to purchase 25 refurbished laptops.

“To say that the donation is important to this community is an understatement,” said Dr. Karen Boyd, Executive Director of Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council. “These computers will change lives by bridging the digital gap for our residents.”

For more information on how to donate to PCS for People, visit www.pcsforpeople.org.

North American Savings Bank (NASB) is a local bank and national mortgage lender headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri. Since 1927, NASB has served the financial needs of customers by providing a wide range of personal banking products along with competitive residential and commercial mortgages. For more information, [visit nasb.com](http://visit.nasb.com). NASB is an Equal Housing Lender. Member FDIC. NMLS ID# 400039.