

LINC Commission Meeting

September 17, 2012

Google fiber



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education

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The digital divide in Kansas City was illustrated in the map of neighborhoods registered for the new Google Fiber network. Many areas east of Troost Ave. were dramatically slower to sign up for the new service. A community effort helped many of those neighborhoods qualify for free Google Fiber at their community centers and schools.

google.com/fiber



LINC

Local Investment Commission
www.kclinc.org

Local Investment Commission (LINC) Vision

Our Shared Vision

A caring community that builds on its strengths to provide meaningful opportunities for children, families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency, attain their highest potential, and contribute to the public good.

Our Mission

To provide leadership and influence to engage the Kansas City Community in creating the best service delivery system to support and strengthen children, families and individuals, holding that system accountable, and changing public attitudes towards the system.

Our Guiding Principles

1. **COMPREHENSIVENESS:** Provide ready access to a full array of effective services.
2. **PREVENTION:** Emphasize “front-end” services that enhance development and prevent problems, rather than “back-end” crisis intervention.
3. **OUTCOMES:** Measure system performance by improved outcomes for children and families, not simply by the number and kind of services delivered.
4. **INTENSITY:** Offering services to the needed degree and in the appropriate time.
5. **PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT:** Use the needs, concerns, and opinions of individuals who use the service delivery system to drive improvements in the operation of the system.
6. **NEIGHBORHOODS:** Decentralize services to the places where people live, wherever appropriate, and utilize services to strengthen neighborhood capacity.
7. **FLEXIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS:** Create a delivery system, including programs and reimbursement mechanisms, that are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to respond to the full spectrum of child, family and individual needs.
8. **COLLABORATION:** Connect public, private and community resources to create an integrated service delivery system.
9. **STRONG FAMILIES:** Work to strengthen families, especially the capacity of parents to support and nurture the development of their children.
10. **RESPECT AND DIGNITY:** Treat families, and the staff who work with them, in a respectful and dignified manner.
11. **INTERDEPENDENCE/MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Balance the need for individuals to be accountable and responsible with the obligation of community to enhance the welfare of all citizens.
12. **CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** Demonstrate the belief that diversity in the historical, cultural, religious and spiritual values of different groups is a source of great strength.
13. **CREATIVITY:** Encourage and allow participants and staff to think and act innovatively, to take risks, and to learn from their experiences and mistakes.
14. **COMPASSION:** Display an unconditional regard and a caring, non-judgmental attitude toward participants that recognizes their strengths and empowers them to meet their own needs.
15. **HONESTY:** Encourage and allow honesty among all people in the system.



Monday, Sept. 17, 2012 | 4 – 6 pm
Kauffman Foundation
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, Mo. 64110

Agenda

- I. **Welcome and Announcements**
- II. **Approvals**
 - a. **July minutes (motion)**
- III. **Superintendent's Reports**
- IV. **Google Fiber**
 - a. **Google**
 - Rachel Hack (Community Manager Kansas City)
 - Ken Carter (Google Fiber Policy Counsel)
 - b. **Google community outreach partners**
 - Aaron Deacon (Social Media Club of Kansas City)
 - Airick Leonard West (Kansas City Public Schools)
 - Rick Chambers (Center Education Foundation)
- V. **Other reports**
 - a. **Summer school**
 - b. **Summer food**
 - c. **Other**
- VI. **Adjournment**



THE LOCAL INVESTMENT COMMISSION – JULY 16, 2012

The Local Investment Commission met at the Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, Mo. Chairman **Landon Rowland** presided. Commissioners attending were:

Bert Berkley
Sharon Cheers
Steve Dunn
Herb Freeman
Tom Gerke
Rob Givens
Anita Gorman
Richard Hibschman

Judy Hunt
Rosemary Lowe
Sandy Mayer (for Mike Sanders)
Mary Kay McPhee
David Ross
Gene Standifer
Bailus Tate
Marge Williams

LINC commissioners **Landon Rowland**, **Adele Hall**, **Bailus Tate** and professional cabinet member **Oscar Tshibanda** were recently interviewed about LINC for the Profiles Series, an educational television series featuring the work of businesses and non-profits throughout the country. Clips from the interviews were shown.

A motion to approve the June 18, 2012, LINC Commission meeting minutes was passed unanimously.

Superintendents' Report

- **Ralph Teran** (Superintendent, Grandview School District) reported the district's summer school program is underway. The district is carrying out bond-funded construction enhancements and planning for the changes resulting from the No Child Left Behind waiver received by the state of Missouri.
- **Phillip Hickman** (Principal, Genesis Promise Academy) reported summer school is finishing up and the school is totaling preliminary Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) scores.
- **John Tramel** (Family Services Director, Independence School District) reported a new school, Little Blue Elementary, will open in the fall; another new school, on the west side of Independence, is expected to open next summer. Over 1,000 volunteers participated in Project Shine school improvement projects last Saturday.
- **Marge Williams** (former Superintendent, Hickman Mills School District) reported the district will be moving forward with Project Shine next weekend at two schools.
- **Marge Williams** (Superintendent, Hickman Mills School District) reported 400 students will graduate from Ruskin High School tonight. Summer school begins June 4.
- **John Ruddy** (Assistant Superintendent, Fort Osage School District) reported the school year ended and summer school will begin this week. LINC will provide summer childcare for the district in July. Over 10 weeks this summer the district will carry out \$5 million in bond-funded improvement projects.

LINC Communications Director **Brent Schondelmeyer** introduced **Mike Burke** and **Ray Daniels** of the Mayors' Bistate Innovation Team, which is coordinating the efforts of Kansas City, Kan., and Kansas City, Mo., to work with Google on development of Google Fiber, which promises to bring internet speeds 100 times faster than currently to neighborhoods in the two cities.

Burke reported the team has developed a Mayors' Playbook analyzing opportunities for the

community to build on Google Fiber in the areas of education, business, art, government and healthcare. The playbook is available at www.googleconnectskc.com.

Daniels reported the team is meeting with schools, churches, businesses and other groups to address the “digital divide” and ensuring access to the service is accessible to all. He reported that as schools become wired, they will need to prepare teachers to adjust how they teach.

Aaron Deacon of the Social Media Club of Kansas City reported that neighborhoods will need to approve of bringing Google Fiber. There will be a large pre-registration effort that will involve engaging and educating neighborhoods around the opportunities Google Fiber will bring to residents.

Discussion followed.

LINC President **Gayle A. Hobbs** introduced **Lori Ross** of the Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (MFCAA). Ross reported on “extreme recruitment,” an approach to find foster families for children using investigators to locate family members and recruiters to engage families. A video on extreme recruitment was shown – the video will be used at the MFCAA Gala on Aug. 4.

LINC Chief Financial Officer **Robin Gierer** reported the following items:

LINC will establish a community fund to accept donations for the girl known as **L.P.** who was the victim of child abuse.

LINC has hired **Dana Shelton** as controller.

LINC ended FY12 in good fiscal condition, having received \$1 million from the state of Missouri. LINC has opened a line of credit in order to deal with the need for cash arising from its new status as a subrecipient. Work on the FY13 is underway.

LINCWorks Director **Tom Jakopchek** reported the first contract period for LINCWorks ended June 30. Over the 21 months of the contract period LINCWorks work participation rates have risen, an improvement attributed to LINC’s decision to assume all case management responsibilities.

Schondelmeyer reported LINC has mailed a flyer reminding families to use the children’s food benefits made available through the Summer EBT program. LINC also produced maps showing the location of families who have not used benefits; site coordinators and data staff are contacting families to remind them to use their benefits.

The meeting was adjourned.

Posted on Mon, Sep. 10, 2012

Google Fiber offers neighborhoods a second chance to qualify for service

By SCOTT CANON
The Kansas City Star

You know how sometimes you search for something on Google and you don't get the right response on the first try? So you try again. It turns out so does Google Inc.

The Star learned Sunday night that the company's first try at signing up prospective customers for its first real-world, door-to-door service will involve a second search.

As the Google Fiber project wrapped up its first rally to register neighborhoods for its ultra-fast Internet service by midnight Sunday, the company said it will give those neighborhoods that fell short of its goals a second chance to qualify.

Google also said it would give local grants to help more people understand ways to make use of the Internet.

The company wouldn't say when that next push to pre-register homes will come. It could be when south Kansas City or parts of town north of the Missouri River get a shot bringing the fiberoptic cables-to-the-home service to their neighborhoods. Or before then. Or after.

Yet the company said it's adjusting its now-or-never strategy for enlisting those neighborhoods to account for lessons learned from its first-ever attempt at pitching subscription services directly to consumers.

"We've learned a lot from this process," said Carlos Casas, who was leading Google's Fiber division in its push to sign up customers. "A lot of it was expecting people to come to us. We realized that we have to go out to the community."

In late July, Google gave its first clear picture of what it would be selling: a combo TV-and-high-speed Internet service for \$120 a month; stand-alone high-speed Internet service for \$70 a month; and conventional broadband for seven years to customers who paid a \$300 installation fee.

It then revealed a map that broke up Kansas City and Kansas City, Kan., into tiny "fiberhoods." It asked would-be customers to put down \$10 to pre-register. If enough households signed up in a fiberhood — Google set thresholds ranging from 5 to 25 percent of a neighborhood depending on the cost of hooking up different areas — all the residents in those areas would qualify to buy service.

Neighborhoods with the highest percentage of pre-registered homes would see Google's "rocket trucks" of installers showing up first. The company initially said those that fell short of the Google-established goals would not be able to buy the service — at all. Google is chasing density to keep down its costs. So people who pre-registered in a neighborhood that missed the threshold were told they'd just get their \$10 back.

Google continues to say that its strategy of creating urgency with that policy will be in force in subsequent signup periods, saying the second chance given to neighborhoods that missed out will be a one-time thing. People who pre-



Carrie Madden (left) talked with Kathleen Medina about pre-registering for Google Fiber on Aug. 20, at St. Elizabeth School in Kansas City's Waldo neighborhood. The Google Fiber truck made a stop at the school, which can expect free Internet wiring after enough residents in the surrounding neighborhoods pre-registered for Google service.

registered in neighborhoods that didn't qualify after Sunday's deadline will get their \$10 deposit back and a chance to register as some yet-determined time.

The Internet giant had been taking increasing heat in recent weeks because scores of neighborhoods in the poorest sections of Kansas City — particularly east of Troost Avenue — were falling short of the goals needed to get wired.

That not only meant people in those areas would be left further behind residents in wealthy sections of town when it came to high-speed Internet, it meant their neighborhood libraries and schools would miss out on free service or even the chance to buy connections from Google.

Late Sunday, more than 170 of 202 fiberhoods had met Google's targets. Nearly all of Kansas City, Kan., topped the goals. In Kansas City, nearly every neighborhood west of Troost had qualified. Roughly half the area east of the city's traditional racial divide had pre-registered enough people to guarantee service.

That's a much rosier map than existed just a week earlier. The gap had driven complaints that Google's presence might actually widen the digital divide — the difference between Internet haves and have-nots.

"We've made great strides in terms of the digital divide," said Google spokeswoman Jenna Wandres. "That's a step in the right direction, but there are still a lot of people who don't see the value of the Internet" and were reluctant to sign up, she said.

She credits much of the progress to neighborhood organizations and community organizers who have canvassed neighborhoods, raised money to cover pre-registrations and evangelized on behalf of light-speed Internet service as a civic asset.

Late Sunday, Aaron Deacon worked on a computer spreadsheet in a downtown office while others poked at laptops in their campaign to qualify more neighborhoods. Their Paint the Town Green campaign, an offshoot of the Social Media Club of Kansas City, planned to work through the midnight deadline to pre-register more neighborhoods.

The early stages of the effort incorporated town hall meetings to tell people about the Google service and door-knocking walks to pitch pre-registration. In the final days, it deployed robo callers to encourage signups.

"We're sticking at it to the end," Deacon said.

Google has run into logistical hiccups in signing up customers, evidence that this a venture unlike anything the multi-billion dollar company has tried before. Apartment buildings and condominiums proved vexing, and the company still expected to be counting registrations for those places by hand this week — slowing final results on which neighborhoods will qualify and which will get the first installations.

Google has also insisted that payments be made by credit or debit card, creating particular problems in poorer neighborhoods where fewer people carry them.

Volunteer groups like Deacon's and Google representatives said that despite wide media attention given to Google's experiment — more than 1,100 communities had lobbied to be the company's test bed — many people didn't understand what Google is offering or why faster Internet might be valuable to a neighborhood.

So Google is announcing it will award grants to community groups to help people better understand how to use the Internet for schooling, job hunting and various other tasks. Wandres said the grants would be aimed generally at improving digital literacy.

To reach Scott Canon, call 816-234-4754 or send email to scanon@kcstar.com.



On Saturday, Joey Jaramillo sampled ice cream from a Google Fiber truck with his wife, Dawn Payne, and daughters Nina (left) and Olivia.

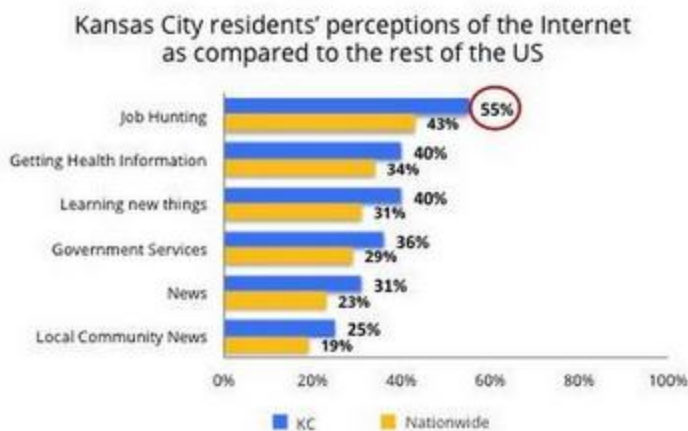
The State of Broadband Internet Access in Kansas City

<http://googlefiberblog.blogspot.com/2012/06/state-of-broadband-internet-access-in.html>

Google is all about building data-driven products. When users of Google Navigation wanted the ability to circumnavigate heavy traffic, we began to use [real-time traffic data](#) to suggest alternate routes. When Google engineers began to tackle the problem of automatic translation online, they [relied on translation data](#) from hundreds of thousands of websites in many languages.

Similarly, as we're in the process of bringing Google Fiber to Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO, we need to first understand how many people here already have access to broadband, and more importantly, how many don't. In order to get a grasp on the situation we partnered with a group that's full of community experts—the [Mayor's Bistate Innovation Team](#) (MBIT)—to commission a study on broadband adoption and digital literacy in Kansas City. Today, we're gathering with MBIT at the Kansas City, MO [Central Library](#) to release and discuss the data that we've collected.

The good news is that a lot Kansas Citians seem to recognize the value of the web. Those surveyed said that the Internet can be helpful when it comes to job hunting, getting health information, and learning new things.



Unfortunately, our study also illustrates that there is a real digital divide in both Kansas Cities. We found that 17% of Kansas Citians are not going online at all, and 8% are only using dial-up or slow speed wireless connections.

These stats lead to a follow-up question: why are one-quarter of Kansas Citians not connected to the web at home? We found that one of the primary reasons is cost. 28% of those who don't use said that they don't go online because they don't have a computer, or because Internet access is too expensive. Meanwhile, 41% of respondents said they don't go online because they just don't think it's relevant to their lives.

This is a big deal. Using the Internet isn't just about checking email and social networking. Access to broadband—and knowing how to use it—has become essential when it comes to jobs, education, business and much more. The web provides a wealth of information and services for Internet users, and people who aren't online are, simply put, at a huge disadvantage. A job search, for example, is much harder today without the ability to review job listings and apply online. Similarly, computer skills and digital literacy have become prerequisites for the majority of job opportunities.

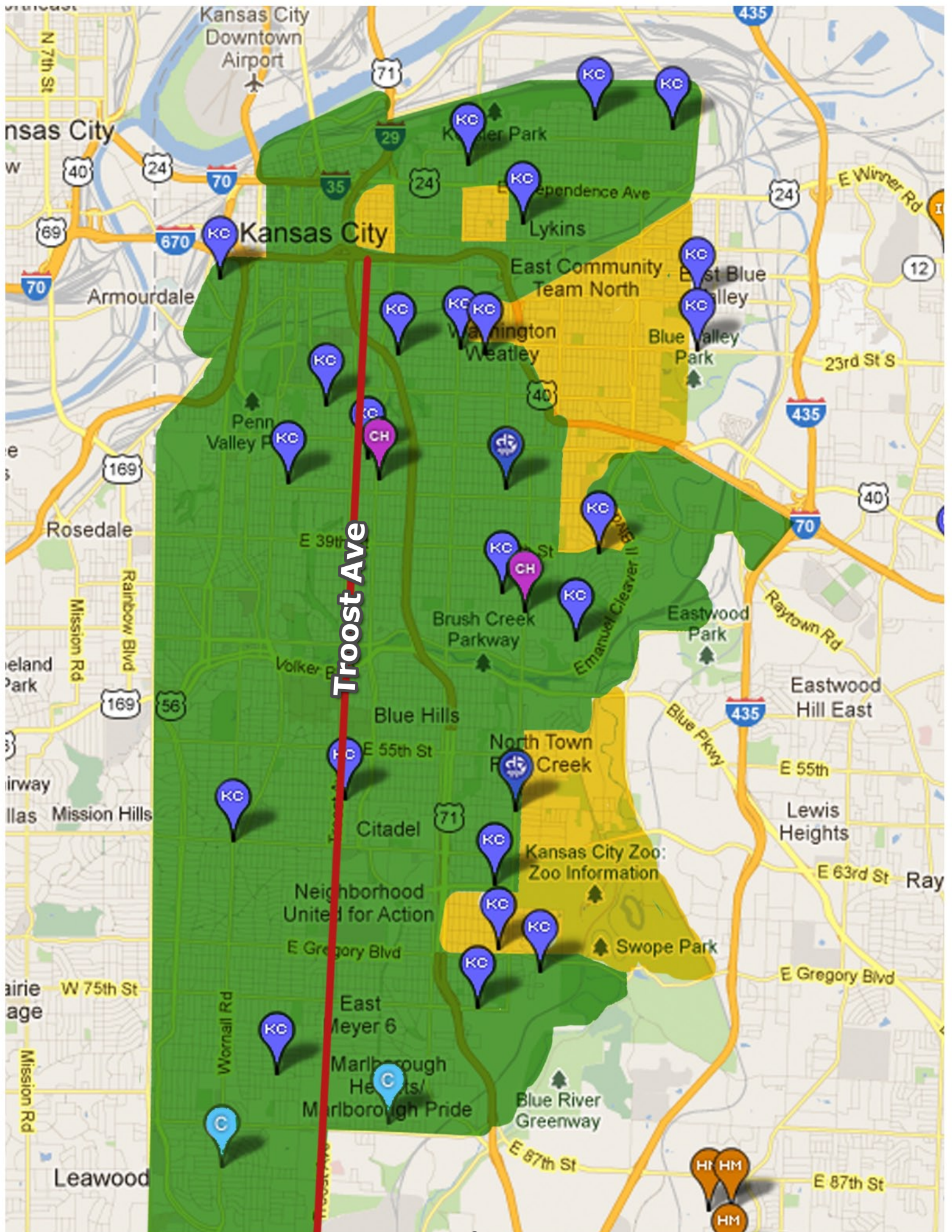
From a policy standpoint, we can try and address these issues by encouraging policies that will make computers and Internet access more affordable, and promote digital literacy initiatives.

But a lot of outreach and education needs to take place on a community level. And that's why this morning we've joined representatives from amazing local nonprofits, schools, libraries, city governments and other community experts in a discussion about how to take action and get Kansas Citians online using broadband Internet access. We'll post the video of our discussion here as soon as it's ready. In the meantime, you can peruse or download [the full results of our study](#).

The Google Fiber project is about making the web better and faster—but it's also about making the Internet more accessible for people throughout Kansas City. Digital inclusion here is a priority for Google, and it's clear that it's also a priority for community nonprofits and the local governments.

Update: We're also sharing our research on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood level. You can [read or download the findings](#) if you're interested!

Posted by Kenneth Carter, Policy Counsel



Google Fiber at LINC Caring Communities



Google fiber
google.com/fiber

Let's do this for education
 with Google fiber
 100 times the possibilities get started at google.com/fiber

LINC Site	Registered	Goal	Needed	Goal Percentage	Fiberhood	Rank
Foreign Language	565	35	0	1614%	Midtown	2
Border Star	196	36	0	544%	Wornall Homestead	5
Hartman	106	37	0	286%	Rolling Meadows	34
Gladstone	115	46	0	250%	Indian Mound West	70
Longfellow	212	90	0	236%	Hospital Hill	43
Boone	205	105	0	195%	Santa Fe Hills	51
Troost	209	111	0	188%	Eastern 49-63	54
Garfield	237	135	0	176%	Pendleton Heights	58
James	66	40	0	165%	Indian Mound East	95
Garcia	149	91	0	164%	West Side North	64
Phillips	83	56	0	148%	Wendell Phillips	68
Crispus Attucks	83	56	0	148%	Wendell Phillips	68
Faxon	37	26	0	142%	Center City	67
Tolbert	37	26	0	142%	Center City	67
Whittier	55	40	0	138%	Lykins South	93
Genesis	54	49	0	110%	Vineyard Northwest	119
Center	146	136	0	107%	Marlborough East	89
Palestine NRC	62	58	0	107%	Palestine/Oak Park	92
Paige	48	45	0	107%	Marlborough Heights	87
Melcher	120	114	0	105%	Vineyard	99
Carver	120	114	0	105%	Vineyard	99
ACCPA	57	55	0	104%	Swope Park Campus	110
Holliday	94	91	0	103%	Noble/Gregory Ridge	101
Wheatley	83	81	0	102%	Wheatley Elementary	121
King	91	90	0	101%	Oak Park Southeast	115
Banneker	51	82	31	62%	Banneker Elementary	113
Southeast CAN Center	31	99	68	31%	Swope Pkwy/Erwood	118

Last updated on 2012-09-10 at 00:05

September 9, 2012

In One City, Signing Up for Internet Becomes a Civic Cause

By JOHN ELIGON

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — With Google’s promise last year to wire homes, schools, libraries and other public institutions in this city with the nation’s fastest Internet connection, community leaders on the long forlorn, predominantly black east side were excited, seeing a potentially uplifting force. They anticipated new educational opportunities for their children and an incentive for developers to build in their communities.



Steve Hebert for The New York Times

Margaret May, left, led a drive in the Ivanhoe area of Kansas City, Mo., to preregister people for Google’s new Internet service.

But in July, Google announced a process in which only those areas where enough residents preregistered and paid a \$10 deposit would get the service, Google Fiber. While nearly all of the affluent, mostly white neighborhoods here quickly got enough registrants, a broad swath of black communities lagged. The deadline to sign up was midnight Sunday.

The specter that many blacks in this city might not get access to this technology has inflamed the long racial divide here, stoking concern that it could deepen.

“This is just one more example of people that are lower income, sometimes not higher educated people, being left behind,” said Margaret May, the executive director of the neighborhood council in Ivanhoe, where the poverty rate was more than 46 percent in 2009. “It makes me very sad.”

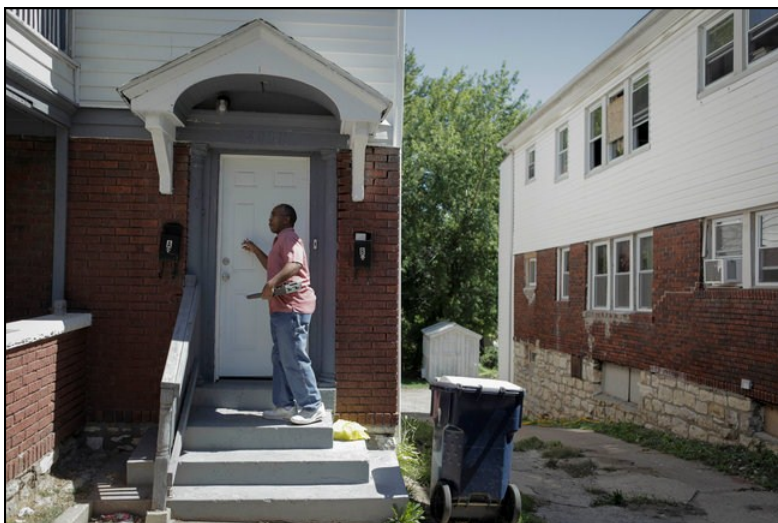
For generations, Kansas City has been riven by racial segregation that can still be seen, with a majority of blacks in the urban core confined to neighborhoods in the east. Troost Avenue has long been considered the dividing line, the result of both overt and secretive efforts to keep blacks out of white schools and housing areas and of historical patterns of population growth and settlement, said Micah Kubic, with the nonprofit Greater Kansas City Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

Nearly three in four people living east of Troost in Kansas City’s urban center are black, according to an analysis of 2010 Census data by Andrew Beveridge, a sociology professor at Queens College in New York City.

As recently as 15 to 20 years ago, black residents said, they did not venture west of Troost for fear of harassment from the police. Today, they complain that their schools are failing, crime is rampant and infrastructure is dilapidated.

“See all this filthiness?” Vic, a 47-year-old lifelong resident of the east side who declined to give his last name, said as he stared at hip-high brush in a vacant lot. He expressed doubt about how much of an inroad Google Fiber would make.

“You can’t get the neighborhood to come together to get this cleaned up,” he said. “How you going to get them to care about that?”



Steve Hebert for The New York Times

Myron T. Moore went door to door on Saturday in Ivanhoe to sign up residents.

Convincing residents of the importance of Internet access — to apply for jobs, do research, take classes and get information on government services — was one of Google’s primary challenges here. The service is currently being offered only here and in Kansas City, Kan. About 25 percent of homes in both cities do not have broadband, and 46 percent of blacks do not use the Internet.

Qualifying neighborhoods will get Internet service with speeds of up to a gigabit per second — 100 times faster than the average broadband connection — for \$70 a month. Google is also offering a television service along with Internet for \$120 a month. Schools, libraries, hospitals and other institutions in areas that qualify would receive gigabit connections for free.

But the feature most attractive to low-income areas is Google’s offer of a free 5-megabit Internet connection for 7 years, but which requires a one-time \$300 construction fee.

As of Sunday evening, only about 32 percent of people in the neighborhoods that qualified for Google Fiber were black, while just over 54 percent were white, according to Mr. Beveridge.

With almost all of Kansas City, Kan., including low-income areas, achieving their sign-up goals, Google’s focus over the weekend was here in Missouri, where it worked with community groups to register people.

The dividing line of Troost “certainly predated us,” said Kevin Lo, the general manager of Google Access, which oversees the Fiber operation. “It’s unrealistic to expect that we can, in six weeks’ time, close the gap.”

Yet Mr. Lo said helping close the digital divide was “absolutely a core part of our mission.”

Google planned to announce on Monday that neighborhoods that did not qualify this time would have another opportunity to do so, though it did not say when. It also said it would offer grants to community groups in Kansas City to promote digital literacy.

On Saturday, Ms. May, the neighborhood council director, and Google workers set up a tent outside the Ivanhoe community center and urged passers-by to sign up, with the center using a private donation to pay the \$10 deposits and giving out Rice Krispies treats. One woman who registered herself offered to register her neighbor's address as well.

Myron T. Moore, a neighborhood activist in Ivanhoe, walked door to door with a clipboard asking people to write down their name, address and telephone number so the council could sign them up and pay their deposit. When Melissa Gilmore, 34, said she did not live at the house where she had answered the door, Mr. Moore asked if she could sign up the people who did live there. They were not home, and Ms. Gilmore said she was not comfortable doing so, though she did give her own address.

Google rolled an ice cream truck through one area, as a woman on a loudspeaker enticed residents to register. Several Google workers walked alongside, answering questions and handing out brochures and ice cream sandwiches.

Advertisements ran all weekend on Hot 103 Jamz, a hip-hop and R&B radio station, urging people to sign up for the good of their communities, even if they were not going to get the service.

In some neighborhoods, residents feared that if the service were unavailable in their communities, property values would drop and their schools and hospitals may fall further behind those in affluent areas. Businesses that rely on technology might shun their communities, they said, denying them jobs and economic development opportunities.

"It's just one more step to the east side not being able to compete with the west," said Monsherry Terrell, 40, who lives in the east and runs an Internet shopping business.

During the sign-up, Google faced other practical problems. Many people did not have credit or debit cards, which were required to register, or e-mail addresses. And it failed to account for numerous vacant homes in some communities, so it lowered the number of registrants needed to qualify in those areas.

Many people in black neighborhoods had not heard about Google Fiber, and many who knew only had a vague understanding of it.

Three men pulled up to Ms. May's table in a white Ford Expedition, and one of them, Kevin Jackson, asked, "What's that Google Fiber about?"

Mr. Jackson, 51, sighed when he found out that he would not be paid for signing up — he initially mistook the offer to pay the \$10 registration fee for him to mean he would be given \$10. Still, Mr. Jackson relented and gave over his personal information after prodding from Ms. May. "You're helping Ivanhoe," she said. "This has a deeper meaning."



Let's do this for
education
with Google fiber
100 times the possibilities get started at google.com/fiber

Amador Family
Westside Residents

When you help bring Google Fiber to your area, you help bring 100 times faster Internet to eligible local schools—without monthly fees. Help bring 100 times the possibilities to all of Kansas City's students. Pre-register for Google Fiber, and then rally your area to do the same. **Get started at google.com/fiber**



Five reasons why fast Internet benefits students

Being connected to fast Internet means greater access to information, and with broader access students have 100 times the possibilities.

1 **New Ways of Learning**

The web has created new, more mobile ways of learning through online tutorials and classrooms. Learning a new language or skill, such as computer programming or simply doing math exercises online, helps supplement and advances the curriculum learned in the classroom.

Students also benefit from accessing these new ways of learning at home. The Federal Communications Commission reports that students with broadband at home have a 7% higher graduation rate.¹

2 **Endless Research Opportunities**

Access to online libraries, databases, and news articles quickly expands the amount of data students can directly apply to their studies.

Studies have shown that increased Internet usage leads to higher test scores, including one school that achieved a 15% point increase on AP tests.²

3 **Collaboration and Communication**

With busy after-school schedules, finding time and a convenient place where everyone can meet gets hard. With the web, you can hold meetings, share ideas, and communicate at a time and location that works for your schedule.

The current national average access speed per student is just 6.5 Kbps meaning cutting-edge education applications are inaccessible to most kids.³

4 **Discover, Create, Design, Build**

Exposure to new topics, accessibility to online tools and programs, and the freedom to experiment cultivates new passions and outlets to express these interests. Try some of our favorite knowledge-sharing resources next time you're online: Khan Academy, MIT Open Courseware, Wikipedia, The Google Art Project, Code Academy, and Google in Education.

An expected 77% of jobs in the next decade will require technology skills.⁴

5 **The Next Step: College, Internship, Job Search**

Whether it's looking for jobs, internships, or colleges, students can explore these important "next steps" through the information available on the web.

The Federal Communications Commission reports that already more than 80% of Fortune 500 companies require online job applications.⁵

"Education is vital to each and every thing we do in this city. It is the number one economic development project. It is the number one economic development tool."

—Mayor Sly James

Sources

1 FCC report, <http://goo.gl/dg6GG9> (2012). 2 U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, p.24, <http://goo.gl/Q0rqW> (2012). 3 Ibid, p.16. 4 FCC Daily Briefing, p.4, <http://goo.gl/dDvUE> (2012). 5 FCC research study, <http://goo.gl/XGh76> (2011).

Posted on Sat, Sep. 08, 2012

KC's Social Media Club grows into a force for civic, business projects

When they first gathered four years ago in an Overland Park coffee shop, they harbored no doubts, none, that this social media thing had a future.

True believers. All six of them.

Look now at the Social Media Club of Kansas City: On Friday, about 150 members — and that's just 5 percent of the total membership — crammed into the Google Fiber Space facility on Westport Road for the group's monthly breakfast.

They were eager to learn and share updates of their club's efforts to bring neighborhoods in Kansas City and Kansas City, Kan., into the ultra-high-speed fold of Google's fiber experiment.

"Huge kudos to all of you involved," club president Aaron Deacon told the capacity crowd.

Many, of course, were texting and snapping images on their smartphones even as he spoke.

The Social Media Club of Kansas City started out as a geeky gaggle of Web enthusiasts who recognized the need to set aside their keypads on occasion and get together face to face.

Today, they are carving a niche in the area's civic community — as entrepreneurs, boosters, bloggers, word-spreaders and charity organizers who, by some accounts, have quietly made Kansas City a pioneering place in the social-network galaxy.

Take president Deacon.

At 36, he is the architect of an online "crowdfunding" blitz (these people have a funky term for everything) called Paint the Town Green. With the help of scores of volunteers and financial donors, the campaign aims to pre-register thousands of low-income households for Google's first-in-the-nation TV and Internet services, which will race through fiber at an unprecedented, gigabyte clip.

In recent weeks, club members have been phoning, knocking on doors and working their Twitter and Facebook magic to help potential Google customers sign up before the pre-registration deadline strikes at the end of today.



During a breakfast meeting Friday of the Social Media Club of Kansas City, Jessica Best (from right), Dave Greenbaum and Mike Silverman were immersed in social media in the Fiber Lounge at Google Fiber.

If enough sign up, often paying the \$10 pre-registration fee with a debit card provided for free, some of the area's most distressed neighborhoods will qualify for the initial rollout of fiber lines, thus narrowing the so-called digital divide that looms over Google's grand plans.

Club members, Deacon said, are "part of a community that understands how many opportunities are available to you through technology. They genuinely believe it – they do."

"This isn't all about techie gadgets and Facebook games. Through connectivity, people are empowered to create real change in the real world."

Tweet this: A recent census of social-media clubs worldwide ranked the Kansas City group No. 5 in "total potential reach across all social channels."

That's just behind No. 4 Moscow and top-ranked Seattle, according to the global consortium SocialMediaClub.org. The website tracks the activities of clubs in 56 countries, including 189 chapters in the United States.

Go-to group

When Kansas City Mayor Sly James thought it'd be awesome to establish a Social Media Command Center for the week of baseball's All-Star Game, his office tweeted the club.

"It's evolving into one of our office's go-to groups," said the mayor's spokesman, Danny Rotert.

The club recruited volunteers to staff a virtual concierge service in a wired-up mission control room at the H&R Block Building downtown.

Through social media channels they streamed out tips about traffic, parking and places to visit in Kansas City. More than 32,000 tweets about the city were received, sorted and tagged during the July festivities — even one from the blimp floating above the stadium. The volunteers personally answered about 2,200 queries.

At times the operation's Twitter hashtag, #KC, drew more Web traffic than the All-Star Game's #ASG.

The city of Tampa, Fla., tapped the club's 33-year-old chairman, Joe Cox of Kansas City's Barkley ad agency, to help plan a similar social-media operation in conjunction with the Republican National Convention.

The American Royal has approached the group as well, and local businesses looking to build a social-media presence are offering to sponsor the club's gatherings.

Until this year, the Social Media Club "in some ways was a group that hadn't been asked much to be



The Social Media Club of Kansas City had a breakfast meeting Friday in the Fiber Lounge at Google Fiber, 1814 Westport Road. The club's president, Aaron Deacon, welcomed the crowd.

at the table,” Rotert said. “And they really relished the chance to help the city out and show what they can do.”

He added: “Generally, they’re slightly younger professionals in their 30s, for the most part. Not top executives, but maybe in the second or third step of their careers. Their skill sets right now could take them anywhere.

“Many are choosing to stay in Kansas City and grow this thing however they can — exactly the kind of people this or any city needs.”

Alisha Templeton, advocacy chairwoman on the club’s board, said the group’s breakfasts (first Friday of the month) and “Happy Hour” meet-ups (third Thursday) are attracting ever-larger numbers of social-media professionals — those such as herself, who work full time marketing in social media.

“We share our successes and failures and we learn from each other,” said Templeton, who manages social media for Ameristar Casinos. “I’ve met some of my closest friends through the Social Media Club.

“We’re actually pretty social people in real life, believe it or not.”

Face-to-face

If any club might disregard the need to meet physically, at an actual place, the Social Media Club would be it.

Why head out to hear a panel discussion on “Google-Plus vs. Facebook,” even hand over \$5 for a breakfast buffet, in this age of flash communication from anywhere you happen to be lounging?

“There’s still a lot to be said for face-to-face interaction,” said Ed Roberts of Overland Park, a podcasting meteorologist who presided over the club in its early months. “We don’t have to type everything.”

A desire to keep that real-people factor in play was one reason Roberts, in 2008, invited a few others captivated by social media to Homer’s Coffee House for the club’s first powwow.

“By then, Twitter was growing some serious legs and Facebook was going strong,” he recalled. “Each of us represented different aspects of the spectrum,” including one founding member with the technical knowhow to fix breakdowns, “but we all had the same goal: to figure out this whole new communication media.”

Visionary as that tiny group may have been, none could have foreseen the crowd at Friday’s breakfast. Audience members tweeted and checked tweets while featured speakers recapped the All-Star Game activities.

A Google executive then appeared on a giant screen to answer a few questions, live from her laptop in Mountain View, Calif. More tweeting and zapping pictures to others.

“If there’s not a bunch of people juiced and into their phones, the speaker isn’t doing a good job being quotable,” said Eric Melin of Spiral 16, a consulting firm that develops software to monitor social-media traffic for companies.

An update on Deacon’s Paint the Town Green campaign rounded out the meeting.

The folks at Google say nice things about Deacon and the Social Media Club, which last year spearheaded a broad-based initiative, Give Us a Gig!, that engaged many schools and community organi-

zations in the Google conversation. The club launched Give Us a Gig! when Google wasn't divulging many details about its hookup plans.

Still, the Paint the Town Green effort, though compassionate in intent, presents some problems for the company's fiber strategy:

Will households that need a gift of \$10 just to pre-register commit to higher monthly payments once the fiber is installed? Do volunteer canvassers accurately explain Google's products?

The company's Kevin Lo, general manager of Google Access, said, "I could not be more excited about the role that community organizations are playing." But he acknowledged that grass-roots efforts can complicate Google's message and solicitation efforts.

"The digital divide is a massive issue" both for Google and third-party advocates, Lo said. "It's hard for me on one hand to tell them, 'I want you to be creative about this...but I don't want you to do it that way'."

Paint the Town Green provided \$100 worth of debit cards to help Rachel Jefferson complete her task of getting enough of her neighbors in Kansas City, Kan., to pre-register for Google service.

"Some folks may not even have a credit card to start with," said Jefferson of the Oak Grove Neighborhood Association. "There's a plethora of reasons why someone can't sign up online with \$10 using a card, which are Google's rules..."

"We've had a liaison with the Social Media Club working with us for the past year," she said. "I give that group a lot of credit for spreading the education."

As social media become easier to use and a routine practice of corporate America, club loyalists wonder if the term itself — social media — already is too quaint.

Chairman Cox expects his future children and grandchildren to puzzle over why clubs once formed around things as commonplace as texting and file sharing.

"One of the first things we ever discussed, looking down the road," said founding member Roberts, "is whether this is like having, say, a telephone club."

Tweet this: Any telephone clubs out there?

To reach Rick Montgomery, call 816-234-4410 or send email to rmontgomery@kcstar.com.

Wednesday, Sep 12, 2012

Google this: Can KC cash in on high-tech ambitions?

By YAEL T. ABOUHALKAH
The Kansas City Star

Is Kansas City going to be the city Version 2.0 of Seattle, Austin or Boston, attracting gobs of young people eager to live an urban lifestyle in or near a hip downtown while creating lots of cool high-tech companies?

Maybe. And maybe not.

Take that as a challenge to all the ardent believers in Kansas City's future, not as a cranky never-going-to-happen statement.

Yes, several reasons exist to be excited about this crucial issue.

- Start with the over-the-top hype about Google Fiber coming to this area. Today the company is scheduled to make the key announcement of which residential neighborhoods will first get access to super-fast Internet connections.
- Earlier this week Mayor Sly James and economic development officials announced LaunchKC, an ambitious attempt to support information technology industries in Kansas City, especially in downtown and the Crossroads Arts District.
- The University of Missouri-Kansas City's bid to create a downtown campus anchored by its Conservatory of Music and Dance could bring hundreds of new residents there — and renew the positive arts buzz in the area.
- Kansas City recently has received good vibes in a few polls and from some national writers for the "creativity" of its young people.

However, one big thing is missing from this flurry of words and actions.

Jobs.

Seattle, Austin, Boston and other tech-friendly cities in other parts of the country have a big head start on Kansas City in creating a stronger economy with lots of high-tech jobs.

So while it's great to be talking about Google Fiber and its attributes; while it's encouraging that some really savvy social media users are promoting the city, and while it's a great time to be upbeat about our high-tech future, there's another reality.

Kansas City has barely scratched the surface yet of what's possible in this essential endeavor.

UMB Bank Chairman and CEO Peter de Silva explored a few of the challenges while giving an update at a Wednesday luncheon regarding the Big 5 initiatives led by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce.

De Silva is the champion of the Big 5 idea to transform Kansas City into America's most entrepreneurial city. He talked enthusiastically about the strengths of that effort — such as this city being home to the Ewing Kauffman Foundation and UMKC's Bloch School of Business and Administration.

But he was also upfront about a few problems.

It's tough to get young entrepreneurs set up in business when this region doesn't have the people or established companies who will cough up adequate start-up capital to help them. De Silva was also blunt in saying that, right now, Kansas City does not have a positive identity as a great place to start or grow a business.

Take a look at another less-than-positive indicator.

The Downtown Council recently reported that the population in downtown core neighborhoods is just 11,000 people. Add in the "outer" neighborhoods that stretch downtown's boundaries, and the population reaches almost 20,000.

That's up by many thousands of residents since a decade or so ago. Yet it's still far short of the kind of thriving downtown population that will be needed to support even more shops, grocery stores and fun-filled events in the urban core.

On Monday, after James kicked off the LaunchKC initiative at 18th and Main streets, I took a stroll along several blocks east of that site.

Dozens of buildings are empty, undeveloped. Some have been cleared out and made ready for new occupants. But others are simply barren of activity, hardly the kind of "happening place" that Kansas City would hope to show off to attract more young entrepreneurs here.

So, which high-tech, digital-world oriented companies in, say, 10 years, will have filled some of those buildings and created hundreds if not thousands of jobs, thus becoming powerful forces in this city's future?

Even Google can't answer that question.

To reach Yael T. Abouhalkah, call 816-234-4887 or send email to abouhalkah@kcstar.com. He blogs at voices.kansascity.com. Follow him at [Twitter.com/YaelTAbouhalkah](https://twitter.com/YaelTAbouhalkah).

MADE SMART campaign pays off

No area district has come as far as Center in performance on Missouri's state tests.

By JOE ROBERTSON
The Kansas City Star

It's only going get harder to grind out better student performance on Missouri's state tests, because the standards are getting tougher.

So, even among schools that pushed their loads forward in 2012, the reactions are sounding more like community-wide calls to action for 2013.

"The pressure now is to succeed," Center High School Principal Beth Heidi said. "Rather than not to succeed."

In this case, she was talking about teenagers. Sometimes, they can shun their roles in the public campaigns that districts like Center are waging to keep their schools rising.

But here they were, on the school's "MADE SMART" day last week, most of them wearing T-shirts promoting the "MADE SMART" information blitz that the district has launched to put its entire community on a mission to improve student success.

The district needs their enthusiastic backing, just as Boone Elementary School Principal Sheryl Cochran needs her parents on board, all the way before pre-school.

She was all waves and cheers at curbside on a recent morning, she said, as parent after parent delivered children in their T-shirts.

"The parents are excited about being involved," Cochran said. "They're not just leaving it to the school."

No district in the area has come as far as Center since 2006, the last time the state revamped its



During music class, fourth-graders (front row, from left) 10-year-old Brian Cubit, and Aniiisa Masterson, Alexandria Brammer and Sebastien Tanis, all 9, jumped while singing a song last week at Boone Elementary School in Kansas City. The Center School District, once looking at provisional accreditation, has received a perfect state report card. City officials want to encourage further success in a public information campaign called MADE SMART. Students were given T-shirts listing goals of the MADE SMART program.

system for pushing school improvement and measuring progress.

On the state's 14-point standards system, Center made only six at the beginning, but completed its rise to 14 out of 14 this year.

Other districts also had heavy climbs. Grandview recovered from seven to 13. Raytown, which slipped to nine just a year ago, made it back to 12.

Most districts started higher and maintained their standards achievements. Liberty and Park Hill reach 14 standards early and sustained it. Independence regained 14, and North Kansas City scored at 12, after both districts have undergone rapid growth.

It was important to join those districts, Grandview Superintendent Ralph Teran said.

"It feels really good to be able to say we can do that, too," he said. "But in our community, there is a clear understanding that we have to offer our kids high technology, high skills and higher-order thinking or they'll be at a disadvantage."

Next year's tests will be scored into a new, stiffer body of standards. As the change comes, only Kansas City Public Schools lacks accreditation, and only Hickman Mills remains in danger of slipping to provisional accreditation.

Student performance tests will remain the most significant measures in the state's accountability process that also includes measures like attendance, graduation rate, ACT college admission test performance and career placement.

Statewide, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced in communication arts rose from 54.6 to 55.4 percent. The percentage scoring as well in math rose from 53.8 to 55.3 percent.

Some of the biggest performance gains were seen among students who are English learners and among Hispanic students who narrowed the gap with white students in math.

Black students overall did not narrow the gap in math, and they lost ground in communication arts.



Jon Pierson leads a music class at Boone Elementary School in Kansas City. He and the students are wearing T-shirts outlining goals of the MADE SMART program. On the state's 14-point standards system, Center rose to 14 out of 14 this year.



Cortez Saulsberry, 17, worked with Troy Butler during a sophomore English class last week at Center High School in Kansas City.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act is no longer bringing its sanctions to bear on Missouri schools because the state was one of many, including Kansas, given a waiver to apply their own accountability plans. But No Child Left Behind's focus on isolating and measuring the performance of demographic and special-needs subgroups will continue under the state's plan, Education Commissioner Chris Nicastro said.

So while the growth in performance among Hispanic students was encouraging, the gap continues. And the widening of the performance gap with black students is troubling.

"We're going to have to figure out what to do with the persistent gaps, particularly with children of color," she said. "One way is to pay attention to it. The new accountability will capture even more of these students."

The districts that had to make the largest gains on the state tests and report card — like Kansas City, Hickman Mills, Center, Grandview and Raytown — have the highest concentrations of minority students and students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

The districts that saw the most growth followed similar roads to recovery. Raytown drove its attendance higher and recovered dropouts. It doubled up its math instruction and prepared more students for the critical algebra success.

Grandview built stronger, more responsive student data systems and followed Center's lead in developing a benchmarked math system that compels students to move ahead only as they prove they've learned math skills.

And now comes Center's MADE SMART campaign, which inundates parents and students with strategies and incentives to propel children on the trail to college, from birth to the 12th grade.

Booklets and posters distributed to homes in the district describe at different age groups what children need at home and at school to prepare them for the next level. Even the birth-to-pre-kindergarten materials describe how families are taking critical steps on the trail to college 18 years down the road.

College readiness doesn't just happen, the message goes. Children are made smart.

It expands the learning mission beyond the school walls for the hard days ahead, said Center's director of public relations, Kelly Wachel.

"We all want to make sure we have a high-performing district," she said.

To reach Joe Robertson, call [816-234-4789](tel:816-234-4789) or send email to jrobertson@kcstar.com.



Wearing one of the T-shirts listing goals of the MADE SMART program, ninth-grader Lakesja Parrish, 14, gets books out of her locker between classes at Center High School in Kansas City.

Thu, Aug. 16, 2012

Despite tough challenges, many schools still shine

By BARBARA SHELLY
The Kansas City Star

A big story was revealed when the state of Missouri released its performance reports for area school districts this week, and it wasn't the small bump in accreditation points for Kansas City Public Schools.

It was Center School District, with a minority enrollment of 76 percent and seven of 10 students qualifying for free or discounted lunches, meeting all of the state's rigorous performance standards.

It was Grandview School District, where 75 percent of students qualify for free or discounted lunches and 70 percent belong to minority groups, measuring up to 13 of the state's 14 standards.

It was the Raytown and Independence School Districts, each serving their share of low-income students, posting high grades. Raytown met 12 of 14 standards and Independence met all 14.

The big story, often lost in the clatter about the "crisis in public education," is that most school districts in and around Kansas City are doing good work, and some are positively inspiring. They are defying the conventional wisdom that schools with high numbers of poor and minority children are destined to underperform.

"Our professionals are proving day in and day out that if you challenge kids and provide good instruction you get good results," said Bob Bartman, Center superintendent. "We set high standards, both academic and behavioral, and students respond."

The school districts that posted impressive results while serving large populations of poor and minority students share some traits: stable administrations, visionary superintendents and cooperative school boards.

They also have retained a core of families which have experienced educational success and expect their schools to continue making that possible.

So what are we to make of those pockets where schools aren't measuring up to the state's expectations as far as test scores, attendance, graduation rates, ACT scores and career and college readiness?

Kansas City Public Schools scored two points better than last year, when it lost its state accreditation, but still ranked as Missouri's second lowest performing school district. The Hickman Mills School District scored only seven of 14 accreditation points. And while some of the city's charter schools did well, two-thirds scored the same or worse than Kansas City Public Schools.

There are explanations, and there are excuses, and sometimes the line that separates them is blurry.

DeLaSalle Education Center, a charter school, mustered zero accreditation points. But its mission is to serve high school students who have not succeeded in more traditional school settings. Most are behind where they should be academically when they enroll, so it stands to reason they won't be acing Missouri's academic performance tests or the ACT.

"We know we are going to take it on the chin," said Mark Williamson, the school's executive director. "But if we don't serve these kids, where are they going to go?"

Arguably, DeLaSalle's circumstances are valid explanations.

Other charter schools, though, serve more traditional school populations and should be doing better.

Kansas City Public Schools and the Hickman Mills district face formidable challenges. They serve higher percentages of impoverished students than other area districts, and many come from families which have experienced generations of educational failure.

Many families live in rental housing and move frequently. In Hickman Mills, 25 percent of the enrollment typically transfers in from other districts during the course of the school year.

These challenges are in some ways explanations for poor performance. But they don't work as excuses. The Center and Grandview districts also face issues with poverty and mobility and are succeeding.

Our region is fortunate to have more models of educational success than failure. That some districts manage to get the job done in difficult circumstances should serve as a message to those which don't.

To reach Barbara Shelly, call 816-234-4594 or send email to bshelly@kcstar.com. Follow her at [Twitter.com/bshelly](https://twitter.com/bshelly).

September 7, 2012

Reading, Math and Grit

By JOE NOCERA

Early in [his acceptance speech](#) Thursday night, President Obama gave a nod to his administration's backing of education reform. "Some of the worst schools in the country have made real gains in math and reading," he said, calling on the country to add 100,000 math and science teachers in the next decade. Then he moved on to other topics, like foreign policy and [Medicare](#), that he clearly views as more vital to the campaign as it enters the home stretch.

It is hardly a surprise that education isn't a heated subject in the presidential race. Not when the economy is still sluggish, and the fight over the role of government so central. Besides, Republicans and Democrats alike have tried to fix education: George W. Bush with "[No Child Left Behind](#)," and Obama with his administration's "[Race to the Top](#)." Those "real gains" notwithstanding, progress remains fitful and frustrating. Too many disadvantaged children remain poorly educated. Too many high school graduates don't attend — [or drop out](#) — of college, which has become the prerequisite for a middle-class existence.

Which is why the publication of a new book, entitled "[How Children Succeed](#)," written by Paul Tough, a former editor of the Times Magazine, is such a timely reminder that education remains the country's most critical issue. In "How Children Succeed," Tough argues that simply teaching math and reading — the so-called cognitive skills — isn't nearly enough, especially for children who have grown up enduring the stresses of poverty. In fact, it might not even be the most important thing.

Rather, tapping into a great deal of recent research, Tough writes that the most important things to develop in students are "noncognitive skills," which Tough labels as "character." Many of the people who have done the research or are running the programs that Tough admires have different ways of expressing those skills. But they are essentially character traits that are necessary to succeed not just in school, but in life. Jeff Nelson, who runs a program in partnership with 23 Chicago high schools called [OneGoal](#), which works to improve student achievement and helps students get into college, describes these traits as "resilience, integrity, resourcefulness, professionalism and ambition." "They are the linchpin of what we do," Nelson told me. Nelson calls them "leadership skills." Tough uses the word "grit" a lot.

On some level, these are traits we all try to instill in our children. (Indeed, Tough devotes a section of his book to the anxiety of many upper-middle-class parents that they are failing in this regard.) But poor children too often don't have parents who can serve that role. They develop habits that impede their ability to learn. Often they can't even see what the point of

learning is. They act indifferently or hostile in school, though that often masks feelings of hopelessness and anxiety.

What was most surprising to me was Tough's insistence, bolstered by his reporting, that character is not something you have to learn as a small child, or are born with, but can be instilled even in teenagers who have had extraordinarily difficult lives and had no previous grounding in these traits. We get to meet a number of children who, with the help of a program or a mentor who stresses character, have turned their lives around remarkably. We meet Dave Levin, the founder of [KIPP](#), perhaps the best [charter school](#) chain in the country, whose earliest graduates run into problems when they get to college — only 21 percent of them had graduated after six years, according to Tough — and then begins stressing character traits to turn things around.

And we also meet Nelson, the founder of OneGoal, which takes disadvantaged students when they are juniors in high school — most of whom believe that college is an unattainable goal — and transforms them into responsible young adults who can succeed in good universities. OneGoal has a "[persistence rate](#)," as Nelson calls it, of 85 percent, meaning that that's the percentage of students from OneGoal who are making their way through college. (The program hasn't been around long enough to have a graduation rate.) By comparison, nationally, around only 8 percent of the poorest students ever graduate from college. Nelson told me that OneGoal is expanding to Houston next year, and it hopes to be in five cities by 2017.

I hope it happens. Tough's book is utterly convincing that if disadvantaged students can learn the noncognitive skills that will allow them to persist in the face of difficulties — to reach for a goal even though it may off in the distance, to strive for something — they can achieve a better life.

It is easy to get discouraged about the state of education in America. Maybe that's why the presidential candidates aren't stressing it. Which is the other thing about "How Children Succeed." It's a source of optimism.

Posted on Sat, Sep. 08, 2012

Independence schools send 15 students to health camp

By JOE ROBERTSON
The Kansas City Star

Too early. Too dark. Kimberly Kuhlman forced herself to let 11-year-old Cameron sleep a little longer.

She'd sprung out of bed at 4 a.m. to reread the startling letter she'd opened late the night before.

The Independence School District was offering to help send her son and 14 other overweight children to a health camp in South Carolina for the entire fall semester.

Now she was studying the camp's website, seeing its promise of a potentially life-changing experience among organic gardens, horses and sports fields.

Boarding school. Kuhlman gulped. Far, far away.

"You've got to understand," she said, reliving her fears of that June morning. "We had tried everything."

She sensed this was an astonishing offer. And that was true. The school district and the camp — MindStream Academy in Bluffton, S.C. — know of no other school district that has taken such a leap in battling childhood obesity.

At 6 a.m., she roused Cameron and pointed him to her computer. She'd left its screen glowing with the illustrated map of a campus rich in emerald trees and blue water and an abundance of activity sites.

"A fatty camp," he said.

It was his first thought as he took it all in.

Then he looked some more, imagining kayaking and swimming, contemplating trampoline games.

"There'd only be kids like you," his mother said. "Everyone there would have the same goals."

She was a single parent. And it had been so hard. So many things had gone wrong.

And there was Cameron Larkins, her youngest son. A strong boy who loves his dogs. Who loves the Schwinn Sting-Ray bike she bought him online with the first paycheck from her new job last spring.

He was an A student, the president of his elementary school's student government.

But also a child picked on over his weight. Bullied. So many of his emotions had been shut down, she said. Even now, when you ask him about it he shrugs it off, saying, "I'm used to it."

She left him alone with the website for a while. Then she ventured back.

"What do you think?"



Cameron Larkins, 11, of Independence, left Aug. 26 to attend MindStream, a residential school camp in South Carolina where teens work on achieving a healthy body weight, getting fit and improving self-esteem. Cameron said he'll miss his dog, Lady.

Independence Superintendent Jim Hinson knows he's asking a lot.

It's a gamble for the families.

It's a gamble for the school district.

Independence is sending 15 children, ages 11 to 17, all at once to a still-growing camp that previously served a total of 20 children over three semesters since it opened in January 2011.

"It's pretty radical," Hinson said.

It wouldn't be the first time Independence has stepped out on a limb.

The district launched full-day community programming in its elementary schools in the 1990s, at the forefront of what would become a nationwide community school movement.

It took on the annexation of western Independence schools from the Kansas City Public Schools in 2007 — a massive undertaking that doubters had long declared legally and politically impossible.

In recent years, noting its own data that more than a third of its students were overweight, the district established several health and wellness programs for students and staff.

The district has been joining with churches and grocers, staking out a role of a school district as a community hub for whole-child health.

All that work was falling short for some children and families whose health risks had surpassed the district's ability to help them, Hinson said.

"My heart-cry over this was that their longevity can be cut short," he said. Frustration kept sounding, he said, from families who were saying, "We've tried everything we can do."

Now the district is turning to a novel camp founded by Ray Travaglione, a South Carolina entrepreneur who has spawned other unusual schools in the state.

He created the International Junior Golf Academy, which led to his Heritage Academy — a "passion-based" school whose mission is to build academic programming around whatever drives a child's interest, whether it be golf, chess or birdwatching.

MindStream is his response to a national health epidemic among children, said Sarah Stone, the director of programming.

"Some kids need a place like this," she said, "to get healthy inside and out."

The industry is dominated by summer camps, mostly on the East and West coasts, that offer programs generally from two to eight weeks long.

The Independence children will be gone 16 weeks, and that may give them more of a chance to maintain whatever weight-loss and lifestyle changes they achieve.

"When they are at camp, they can be very successful," said Shelly Summar, the weight management program coordinator for Children's Mercy Hospital.

"But if the environment they go back to doesn't change, it's difficult to maintain the weight loss," she said. "That's the biggest challenge."

The district and the families combined will be paying half of MindStream's usual \$28,500-per-resident tuition for the semester. The other half is being covered through donations to the Reshape Your Life Foundation, associated with the camp in Bluffton, and by other donors.



On Friday afternoon, Cameron Larkins of Independence had a Zumba workout with the rest of his classmates at MindStream Academy in Bluffton, S.C.

The district will be paying amounts at least equal to its general per-student funding plus any of the federal dollars specific to those students with special-education costs, up to a total of about \$13,000 for the semester.

The camp is negotiating payment plans with the Independence families, most of them low-income, to pay a portion of the cost. The families will pay some of the costs because the district wants them to have “skin in the game.”

The district’s foundation is to cover any remaining cost.

The camp has little track record yet.

Hinson’s confidence comes from Independence’s collaboration with David Katz, director of the Yale University Prevention Research Center. Katz has helped create some of the health and wellness programs under way in Independence schools over the past 10 years.

Katz became the senior medical adviser for MindStream in spring 2011 after he was recruited by Travaglione and saw for himself what was taking shape.

Teenagers were learning whole-life skills, free from bullying, and were making changes they could “pay forward” with their peers when they returned, Katz said.

“I was overwhelmed by the kids there,” he said.

Hinson and the school district’s health services director visited the camp last spring, he said. They came away with the same impression.

The 20 residents who have gone through the program lost an average of 50 pounds, Katz said. They improved on multiple other fitness and health measures.

The district determined it would try a pilot project for one semester, with the possibility that some students might return in the spring. District nurses recommended students they thought could be helped.

“We’re making it available to our families,” Hinson said.

“They have to decide if it’s right for them.”

Which is scarier?

Kuhlman could send Cameron — who has never been on a plane before or stayed one night in a hotel — a thousand miles away for four months.

Or she could continue her desperate search for a way to save her son from the fate his pediatrician foretold in a still-frightening sketch.

Cameron was 9 at the time and rapidly gaining weight. Some of it was lifestyle. Some of it was genetic. His father, who was never part of his family, was an obese man.

The doctor drew an airplane, nose up. He projected its flight with a line over a graph he’d drawn marking Cameron’s age along the horizontal axis, and the rising weight on the vertical.

The plane soared past 800 pounds at the age of 21. He likely wouldn’t live much past that, if that long, the doctor warned.

Kuhlman had to run outside the doctor’s office. She couldn’t stop shaking.

Dieting wasn’t working enough. Frustration swelled over the higher costs embedded in most healthier food choices.

She and Cameron would partner on the same diet regimen, and she would lose weight but he wouldn’t.

The best Cameron could usually manage was to slow his weight gain.

Over the summer, the idea of going to the camp began to appeal to him, he said. He began telling his classmates in summer school that he was going to South Carolina.

“They said, ‘Are you crazy?’”

MindStream staff began holding a series of meetings with parents in Independence. The negotiations around cost were intimidating at times, but Kuhlman was staking her hopes on the camp.

Kuhlman reached an agreement on what she could pay.

She got help from friends picking up some of the things Cameron would need, like two pairs of running shoes, a scientific calculator and a laptop for the online courses the Independence students would be taking.

Cameron was setting goals: Lose 100 of his 250 pounds.

"I want to lose weight," he said. "I want to look better, swim a lot and do some fun stuff."

Kuhlman's goal: "To save a child's life."

The staff at MindStream know they bear the burden of these families' lives, Stone said, to help bring them the deserved rewards for "the level of bravery they've demonstrated."

Rain shrouded Kansas City International Airport the last Sunday morning in August.

Security allowed one family member inside the gate for each of the 11 Independence children flying out that day.

They let them go under floods of tears.

The AirTran liner taxied out, and they watched it gather power for takeoff.

Kuhlman had imagined she would watch it all the way, until a speck of a plane disappeared from sight.

But the low clouds swallowed it right off the runway.

She tried to catch her breath. And she lifted a prayer.

"He's only 11 years old. God, please be with him."

So far, so good.

Cameron has survived the expected bout of homesickness, Kuhlman said Friday.

He reports that he's into turkey burgers and making homemade walnut butter.

And he's been to the beach.

His mother is counting the days. Thirteen done. One hundred and seven to go.

To reach Joe Robertson, call [816-234-4789](tel:816-234-4789) or send email to jrobertson@kcstar.com.

Independence School District to aid homeless students

Drumm Farm Center for Children to help provide relief, assistance to those in need; first meeting is Thursday

By Kelly Evenson - kelly.evenson@examiner.net

[The Examiner](#)

Posted Sep 12, 2012 @ 12:08 AM

Independence, MO — It is hard to imagine that some students do not have a place to go to after school ends for the day. They don't know if they are going to eat, and they don't know where they will find a place to sleep.

These students do not have a home to go to.

They are homeless.

While there are some organizations and groups to help children and families who are homeless, there are few services in the Eastern Jackson County area. That is why the Independence School District is partnering with the Drumm Farm Center for Children to provide some relief and assistance to homeless Independence students.

"Part of our role is to operate a school district," Independence Superintendent Jim Hinson said Tuesday at the Independence Board of Education meeting. "But we have to understand that there are a lot of kids who are experiencing life that is unlike what we experienced at that age. There is a real need for this kind of program."

The program will pair homeless children with families who will host these children for a period of time. Drumm Farm will help in identifying the families, handling training sessions and performing background checks.

The first information session for interested host families is at 7 p.m. Thursday at the Central Office.

"There are a growing number of students we work with whose family is experiencing being homeless," said John Trammel, director of family services for the district. "There is also a group of students who experience not being with their family of origin and end up in various places every night trying to find somewhere to sleep. Through this program, they will know where they will be each night, have something to eat and have a place to take care of those essential needs."

Board of Education member Matt Mallinson, who has been working on the committee that is developing this program, said he is happy to know that this program will serve a definite need.

"I think the number of students that are in this situation would make everyone surprised," he said. "There will be a number of students served by this. That makes me very, very happy."

Thursday, Sep 13, 2012

New figures show mixed results in fighting poverty

In 2011, poverty rate didn't rise, but didn't really fall.

By ERIC ADLER
The Kansas City Star

At this point, it matters little to Tony Crawford which presidential candidate claims to have the best solution to solving America's economic hardships.

What he knows — and what was confirmed Wednesday by fresh data on poverty released by the U.S. Census Bureau — is that better times cannot come soon enough, and maybe some are on the horizon.

Federal figures show that the steady increase in poverty in the post-recession years ground to a near halt in 2011, with no increase in the 15 percent of people in poverty, but no meaningful decrease, either.

Some 46.2 million Americans lived at or below the poverty line in 2011, virtually unchanged from the year before at a time when many economists were predicting a further slide.

Other news was mixed: While the number of Americans with medical insurance rose by 3.6 million, mostly through the government, the income gap between rich and poor continued to expand.

"It's past important. It is extremely serious," said Crawford, a 47-year-old line cook who in the last seven months lost his job and his apartment. Until landing this week at the Salvation Army shelter in Independence, he lived out of his car with his partner and their two children, one of whom, Ciara, 3, suffers a severe genetic disorder.

"It is not just for me," Crawford said in hoping for better days, "but for my kids and their future."



After a period of living in their car, Tony Crawford, his partner, Tammy Sidhu, and their children, 3-year-old Ciara Crawford and 6-year-old Isaiah Davis, now live in a Salvation Army shelter in Independence

Whether the Census report offers a glimmer of hope or confirmation of entrenched hard times is a matter of perspective. Among its findings:

Income

- Median household income was \$50,054 in 2011, down 1.5 percent from 2010. It is the lowest since 1996 and 8.1 percent lower than in 2007, before the recession. Median is defined as the midpoint; half of households make more and half make less.
- The number of men working full time in 2011 increased by 1.7 million; the number of full-time women workers increased by 500,000. Median earnings for men and women dropped by 2.5 percent from the year before.
- Income disparity grew. While incomes for the top 1 percent of wage earners increased by 6 percent over the last year, income for the bottom 40 percent remained stagnant.
- Among races, Asian households had the highest median income at \$65,129. For non-Hispanic white households, the median was \$55,412, compared to \$38,624 for Hispanic households and \$32,299 for black households. While real median income declined for white and black households, it remained unchanged for Asian and Hispanic households.

Poverty

- Poverty by race also remained virtually unchanged, at 9.8 percent for whites, 27.6 percent for blacks, 25.3 percent for Hispanics and 12.3 percent for Asians. Nor was there a statistically significant change in poverty by age group: 21.9 percent of children were in poverty, compared to 13.7 percent of people ages 18 to 64 and 8.7 percent for people age 65 and over.
- Poverty among men decreased from 14 percent in 2010 to 13.6 percent in 2011, while for women it remained unchanged at 16.3 percent.

Insurance

- Some 2.3 million people were added to Medicaid and 2 million to Medicare in 2011. Some 50.8 million people were on Medicaid and 46.9 million on Medicare.
- The percentage and number of Americans with insurance increased for the first time in three years, from 83.7 percent insured to 84.3 percent. For the first time in 10 years, the percentage of people on private insurance, 63.9 percent, did not decrease and remained unchanged.
- In 2010, the number of uninsured Americans — with no coverage, private or public whatsoever — fell just short of 50 million. Last year, the number of uninsured dropped to 48.6 million.

The bottom line, according to Elise Gould, director of health policy research at the nonpartisan Economic Policy Institute: “The data (are) not telling a very positive story.”

The numbers continue to be reminders of the effects of the recessions and other long-term economic forces, she said.

“It’s not just a recessionary thing,” Gould said. “The Great Recession is terrible, but there wasn’t been much going on for workers in the 2000s overall. We don’t project it is going to get any better soon. You’re not going to see incomes returning to pre-recession levels for a long time.”

In the latest edition of “State of Working America,” a policy institute book released this month, Gould and others argue that significant parts of America’s economic woes stem not just from the recession and the housing bubble’s burst, but also from more than 30 years of changes that have added to “income inequalities,” larger gaps opening between the rich, the middle and the poor.

Factors such as globalization, the loss of higher-paying union jobs, a loss in value of the minimum wage compared to inflation and the higher cost of living have all hurt middle- and lower-income wage earners.

Helping the poor

At the same time, the poverty numbers and what they mean in terms of human suffering need to be put into perspective, said Gary Burtless of the Brookings Institution.

A poverty rate of 15 percent is never good. Any increase in the federal poverty level is often interpreted as an increase in human suffering, and Burtless does not minimize its effect on families.

“There is no doubt that, relative to the long-term history of poverty when we began to measure it, these are bad numbers,” Burtless said of the poverty rate over recent years. “People could still say they go hungry for a few days a month, or for a few days a week. I don’t dispute that.”

But when the Census began collecting poverty data some 50 years ago, many of the myriad programs that now aid the poor — programs that include Medicaid, food stamps, tax credits and federal housing subsidies — were much smaller or did not exist.

Current federal poverty calculations rely on pre-tax incomes, essentially the cash that comes into a family each year.

Nearly 174,000 people were added to food-stamp rolls in June alone, according the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From before the recession to now, the number of food-stamp recipients has skyrocketed from 26 million in 2007 to 47 million today, or about 1 in 7 Americans.

The annual cost of the federal program has more than doubled in that time, from \$30 billion to \$72 billion, prompting some in Congress to propose significant but gradual cuts.

Others counter that cutting the program at a time of such great need would only further hurt Americans, many of them children.

In a shelter and grateful

Tony Crawford and his family have needed lots of help in recent months.

He and his partner, Tammy Sidhu, 37, had lived hand-to-mouth for some time. Crawford had a job smoking meats for a supermarket chain. They and their kids lived in Sidhu’s federally subsidized apartment until they lost the place, she said, for nonpayment of her utilities.

That led them to Crawford’s mother’s place and, soon after, to another apartment in Grandview. When creditors began garnisheeing Crawford’s pay for back debts, they couldn’t keep up with the rent.

“It really put us in a bad bind,” said Sidhu, whose son, Isaiah, is 6. At home she cared for Ciara, whose genetic disorder does not allow her to properly metabolize proteins. Without a proper diet, toxins build up in her blood.

“Me, being home, I had no income coming in,” Sidhu said.

Losing their apartment again, they found themselves homeless, living out of Crawford’s 2001 Dodge Durango, sleeping with the kids in the parking lot of an Independence motel. At night, the family got food from the local church.

In the morning, they’d eat and wash at the motel.

“Once we would wake, they would set out free coffee and free cereal and we pretended we were staying there,” Crawford said, “but they knew we weren’t.”

When it came time for Crawford’s truck to be repossessed, not even the repo company had the heart to leave them stranded, the couple said.

The repo company connected them to a church, which housed them and lent them a car temporarily.

Now they are living at the Salvation Army shelter and are grateful to be there. On Tuesday, Crawford interviewed for a cook’s position at an Independence restaurant, perhaps offering them a slow path out of poverty.

“If it weren’t for this place,” Crawford said of the shelter, “I don’t know where we would be.”

To reach Eric Adler, call 816-234-4431 or send email to eadler@kcstar.com.

September 12, 2012

U.S. Income Gap Rose, Sign of Uneven Recovery

By [SABRINA TAVERNISE](#)

WASHINGTON — The income gap between the wealthiest 20 percent of American households and the rest of the country grew sharply in 2011, the [Census Bureau](#) reported, as an overwhelming majority of Americans saw no gains from a weak economic recovery in its second full year.

Income for the top fifth of American households rose by 1.6 percent last year, driven by even larger increases for the top 5 percent of households, said David Johnson, the Census Bureau official who presented the findings. All households in the middle of the scale saw declines, while those at the very bottom stagnated.

“You’re really struck by the unevenness of the recovery,” said Lawrence Katz, an economics professor at Harvard. “The top end took a whack in the recession, but they’ve gotten back on their feet. Everyone else is still down for the count.”

The numbers helped drive an overall decline in income for the typical American family. Median household income after inflation fell to \$50,054, a level that was 8 percent lower than in 2007, the year before the recession took hold.

That drop poses a political challenge for [President Obama](#) as he presents himself as a champion of the middle class and defends his economic stewardship in a tightly fought presidential race. The Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney, is likely to seize on the decline as evidence of the president’s failure to fix an ailing economy. Mr. Obama, for his part, has emphasized the potentially damaging effects of Republican policies on the middle class.

Obama administration officials said Wednesday that more recent data on job growth, unemployment and wages indicated that median income, adjusted for inflation, was growing this year. They pointed to the rise in [income inequality](#) as proof that their policy priorities are even more urgent. Rebecca M. Blank, the acting United States commerce secretary, [said in a statement](#) that the rise “underscores the fact we must enact policies that help rebuild our economy not from the top down, but from the middle out.”

It is an argument that conservatives, who contend that income inequality is not inherently harmful, largely reject.

“Over the long run, the disappearing middle class has moved up, not down,” said Douglas J. Besharov, a professor of public policy at the University of Maryland. “Too much redistribution will kill the goose that laid the golden egg.”

The Census Bureau reported that a standard measure of income inequality, the Gini index, registered the first year-on-year increase since 1993, a surprise for economists who say the measure, which has been rising for some time, usually changes so slowly that a statistically significant rise over the course of one calendar year is rare.

Two other of the report's findings were promoted by the administration as achievements. The share of Americans without [health insurance](#) declined, driven by a 2.2 percent drop in the portion of uninsured 19- to 25-year-olds, strong evidence of an impact from a provision in Mr. Obama's Affordable Care Act that allowed children to stay on their parents' insurance policies until age 26. The uninsured rate for the nation fell to 15.7 percent from 16.3 percent. And the percentage of Americans in poverty remained unchanged for the first time in four years, though economists had expected the rate to rise for a fifth straight year.

"If you have to guess what's going on, 2011 was the year that we started making real gains in employment," said Justin Wolfers, an economist at the University of Michigan.

Mr. Johnson, the census official, said the movement of people from part-time work to full-time work was most likely a major reason the poverty rate did not worsen. The number of people in poverty declined in the South and the suburbs, and among people who were not United States citizens.

"Looks like there's a big shift from part time to full time, and the largest percent increase in full-time work was in the lowest quintile," he said, referring to the bottom fifth of the income spectrum.

There were 46.2 million people in poverty in the United States last year, little changed from 2010. That figure represents 15 percent of the population, compared with 15.1 percent in 2010, census officials said, a change that was not statistically significant.

But the data still reflects the bleak state of the American labor market. Inflation-adjusted median household income fell by 1.5 percent in 2011. During the recovery, about 3 in 5 of the new jobs created have been low-skill and low-wage — taking people off the unemployment rolls and pulling some families out of poverty, but not providing a clear route to the middle class.

That trend helps explain how the poverty rate could stay flat while the median income went down. Middle-income earners, for instance manufacturing workers and middle managers, have fared worse in this economy than both lower-income workers and higher-income workers, a phenomenon economists refer to as the polarization of the labor market, Professor Katz said. As a result, income at the middle point of the spectrum went down, while remaining flat at the bottom, something that happened from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, he said.

Annie M. Lowrey contributed reporting.

September 12, 2012

Fewer Uninsured People

The number of Americans who lack health insurance [declined last year](#), the first drop since 2007. This is, in large part, the result of the health care reform law and better coverage under public programs like Medicaid. This also shows why repealing the health care law or revamping and shrinking Medicaid, as many Republicans want to do, would be disastrous moves.

[The Census Bureau reported](#) on Wednesday that the number of people without health coverage fell to 48.6 million in 2011, or 15.7 percent of the population, down from 49.9 million, or 16.3 percent of the population, in 2010. Health experts attributed a big chunk of the drop to a provision in the health care reform law that allows children to remain on their parents' policies until age 26. Some three million young adults took advantage of that provision, other surveys show.

The bureau also reported that the percentage of people covered by private insurance stayed flat at 63.9 percent, the first time in a decade it has not fallen. The percentage of Americans covered by government programs, like Medicare, Medicaid, a related children's health program, and military plans, increased for the fifth consecutive year to reach 32.2 percent in 2011. That is a testament to the importance of government programs in troubled economic times.

In other good news, [a survey](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust showed that average premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance for family coverage rose 4 percent from last year and individual coverage rose 3 percent — well below the double-digit increases in the past decade. The recession accounts for some of this moderation in costs. The spread of high deductible health plans may also have reduced spending, and some experts think the health care reforms, which don't fully kick in until 2014, are already pushing health care providers and insurers to lower their costs.

The Census Bureau also reported that median household income, adjusted for inflation, declined last year to \$50,054, a level not seen since the mid-1990s, and that income inequality grew significantly worse, as incomes rose for the top earners. Still, the percentage of Americans living in poverty declined slightly after rising in the previous three years, largely because more people shifted from part-time to full-time work. The census data underscore the importance of retaining the health care reforms, which will increasingly make insurance more affordable for middle-class families.

play well politically in his state, but it's nothing more than a stomach punch to the millions of uninsured in Texas who will have to stay that way.

Many mainstream Republican governors are taking a different approach. In a [letter to the president](#) last week, Gov. Bob McDonnell of Virginia, the chairman of the Republican Governors Association, said states should think carefully before they reject Washington's money. Though he remained quite critical of health reform and Medicaid, he also noted that refusing the expansion would create "a significant gap in coverage" for low-income people.

For now, at least, Virginia recognizes an obligation to its weakest citizens. It's time for Texas, Florida, South Carolina, Wisconsin, Iowa and Louisiana to do the same.

Save the Date

Friday, September 21st, 2012

Partnering with Patients

The Kansas City Quality Improvement Consortium, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is pleased to announce an evening in Kansas City with e-Patient Dave, a stage 4 renal cancer survivor who engages patients and health care providers alike to become partners in health.

Join us in learning how we can all benefit and better manage our care.



Venue: Kauffman Foundation Conference Center
4801 Rockhill Rd.
Kansas City, MO

Time: 5:30pm -8:30pm

Contact: 816-453-4424

RSVP: info@kcqic.org



A participant in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's
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Lights On!

Afterschool



Join LINC as we celebrate our students & community, and focus on the importance of afterschool programs.

Join us on Thurs., Oct. 18

Lights On Afterschool is a nationwide celebration which expresses the importance of afterschool programming. These programs build stronger communities by involving our students, parents, business leaders and volunteers in the lives of our young people.

LINC Caring Communities programs provide safe, challenging, engaging and fun learning experiences to help children and youth develop their social, cultural, physical, and academic skills.

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kclinc.org/lightson