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Tech Goes Home celebrates 10,000 graduates; community impact

CHATTANOOGA, TN, July 29, 2023 — Across Chattanooga and Tennessee, 10,000+ residents are better able to connect with educational resources, loved ones and new career opportunities through [The Enterprise Center's Tech Goes Home](#) program.

The digital literacy program celebrated its 10,000th graduate Saturday, July 29 with a special event for past participants and partners, with remarks by Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly.

“It’s amazing to have reached (and served) 10,000 residents across our area,” said Tech Goes Home Director Sammy Lowdermilk. “The growth of this program just continues to show how much of a need exists for this type of resource, whether it’s for parents, teachers, older adults, entrepreneurs, artists or anyone who needs accessibility accommodations.”

Through partnerships with schools, public libraries, churches, nonprofits and other organizations, TGH offers free courses designed to help residents develop skills and habits required for technology and internet use.

Participants receive 15 hours of tailored classroom training and have the option to purchase a new Chromebook or tablet for only \$50 (upon completion of the course). Those who qualify also receive assistance in obtaining access to low or no-cost home internet through related programs like [HCS EdConnect, powered by EPB](#) for students of Hamilton County Schools, or the Federal Communications Commission’s [Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

The history of TGH

Tech Goes Home began in Chattanooga to provide tools, information, and access necessary for 21st century skills development under Mayor Andy Berke and Mayor Jim Coppinger.

Modeled after Boston’s award-winning program, which began in 1999, TGH expanded statewide in 2022 to further address the digital divide, through partnerships with organizations focused on older adults and early childhood educators. However, Lowdermilk said, the core of the work and the main focus has always been and will continue to be Chattanooga and Hamilton County.

“Celebrating 10,000 participants is about so much more than just a number,” explained The Enterprise Center CEO Deb Socia, who also helped found the Boston-based Tech Goes Home prior to her move to Chattanooga four years ago. “For every graduate, there is a story and an

impact that goes far beyond our classes. We are thankful for the hundreds of partners who collaborated to build a stronger and more resilient community.”

Class sizes are limited and registration is required for any Tech Goes Home class. For more information or to apply for the free classes, you can call 423-521-2071 or visit www.techgoeshomecha.org.

Fast Facts

- TGH CHA began in 2015 as a program of The Enterprise Center.
 - In addition to general community classes, Tech Goes Home has specialized offerings for high school students, older adults, the parents of young children, early childhood educators, K-12 educators, individuals who are deaf or have hearing loss, individuals who are blind or have vision loss, the parents of children who use a communication device, small business owners, entrepreneurs, artists, job-seekers and justice-involved individuals.
- Digital literacy isn't just important for older adults, it's a critical component to workforce development, which is why Tech Goes Home is the preliminary point for TEC's EMPACT program (a partnership with Chattanooga State and City of Chattanooga). The 2023 National Skills Coalition assessment found that workers that qualify for jobs that require even *one* digital skill can earn an average of 23% more than in a job requiring no digital skills. Moving from a job requiring no digital skills to one requiring at least three can increase pay by an average of 45%.
- An estimated 92% of jobs require digital literacy, according to the Skills Coalition assessment. (This estimate included entry level and frontline work.)
- The report also found that the digital skill divide disproportionately impacts workers of color, low-income individuals and rural residents, due to historic underinvestment and structural inequities that The Enterprise Center and Tech Goes Home work to address.

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