

The OCCN Notebook



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The Ohio Community Computing Network (OCCN) is a nonprofit statewide, membership based alliance of community technology centers (CTCs).

OCCN is committed to creating a society in which everyone has equal opportunity to gain equal access to computer and network technology for life-long learning and personal and community empowerment.

FREE GEEK COLUMBUS

Fall/Winter 2008-09

FreeGeek Columbus launches community WiFi project, page 2

OCCN NEWS

M.I.N.D. Your Own Business Receives Grant

by Barbara Shumate, M.I.N.D. Your Own Business VISTA



On June 18, 2008, the Taylor-McHenry Foundation awarded a \$15,000 grant to M.I.N.D. (Making Impact Negotiating Decisions) Your Own Business Computer Technology Center in Zanesville, Ohio. M.I.N.D. received the grant on July 9, 2008.

Although this was the first time we applied for a grant for M.I.N.D. Your Own Business, C.A.S.S. Productions, Inc. (our mother organization) had received the Taylor-McHenry grant from 2004-2007, to assist with C.A.S.S. Camp, our weeklong onsite performing arts and music learning experience for grades 7-12.

Held annually in June, the Camp is also a computer lab with a dozen laptops for the students to write their own music through a program named Encore. During the Camp, well-known professional musicians teach and perform in various genres. Free concerts are open to the public nightly.

The Taylor-McHenry Foundation Grant is a local grant administered by Huntington National Bank for education and faith-based initiatives. Originally, the Taylor Family Trust and the McHenry Family Trust were separate entities administered by First National Bank, the predecessor of Huntington.

The families decided to join together to form a Foundation that would perpetually bless the people of Muskingum County. Over the last 40 years or so, the Foundation has awarded between \$125,000 and \$130,000 annually.

Before we received Taylor-McHenry monies, every expense came from our CEO, Cassandra McDonald's own pocketbook. The new funds will go right to sustainability, subsidizing our programs to make them more affordable, and enabling M.I.N.D. Your Own Business to develop online with our own logo, website domain, and maintenance.

We are buying a quality printer and strengthening our stores of ink, paper, and other office supplies. We have repaired the leak damage in the lab and are using some of the money to correct our heating problem.

The Lab at M.I.N.D. Your Own Business is cozy and intimate, just the way we like it. We get personal, with attention to every detail of a patron's situation. The better we know someone, the more we can help them. We call it "Home Base". Here, we help people with their educational, job, college, and career goals. Here, we help people dream about changing their lives and bettering their circumstances.

From here we refer people to local programs for assistance with food, clothing, utility bills, furniture, medical/dental, and even prescription drug assistance. We follow up on each one, staying in touch, mentoring and assisting our patrons to stay on track until they achieve their goals, for as long as they are willing to work with us.

One of Cassandra's favorite sayings is "There's more to life than making babies, jail, and bail! You're worth the effort!" Not only is that the heartfelt sentiment of this VISTA, but it speaks about the service of VISTAs everywhere.

I am thankful that OCCN is making it possible for me to serve my community in such a meaningful way. I can truly say that I have found my calling. My work will not end when my service with Americorps and M.I.N.D. Your Own Business ends.

[For more information contact:](#)

Ted Katz, Program Director
Ohio Community Computing Network
614-562-4366
katztm1949@yahoo.com

Getting connected: One neighborhood at a time

by Eric Lowe

An experimental project is underway that could increase Internet access for a community.

The Weiland Park Wifi Project is an initiative to build a community-based wireless network in the Weiland Park neighborhood, located south of the OSU campus.

The project involves bringing together local individuals, community organizations, and businesses to share their wireless Internet connection with the rest of the neighborhood, using an open source technology called OpenMesh. Each participant would strengthen the network and increase redundancy.

FreeGeek Columbus, a non-profit organization dedicated to computer recycling and technology education, is spearheading this effort. Its VISTA, Miles Curtiss, took the responsibility of getting the project off the ground. After being awarded a grant from Comfest, Miles went to work.

"Pretty thrilling, actually," he says.

"I had very little time to get everything together, but the project was just so compelling that I totally dove right in."

After months of planning and organizing, Miles and FreeGeek tested a wireless network at the 2008 ComFest at Goodale Park. Despite problems with interference from other Comfest participants broadcasting strong signals and technical issues with some of the wireless nodes, the test was a success.

With confidence that the project can move forward to a community-wide scale, Miles was involved in establishing nodes from FreeGeek on 16th Ave. to the Third Hand Bicycle Co-op and the Spore InfoShop on 5th Ave., and through a few willing participants in between.

Meanwhile, Miles is responsible for paying for the connection and negotiating a possible partnership with the area's service provider.

He says while the project is going good, there are still issues to work out.

"I have to form a strategy to maintain people's personal download information. Basically how do we protect the privacy of what people download, and yet not aid people's illegal actions?"

Aside from that, Miles says the Weiland community has been receptive to the plan to connect everyone to the Internet.

The Weiland WiFi Project is similar to the wireless project that is taking place in Dublin, with the key difference being that the Weiland project is using cheaper opensource technology and hardware, which makes adaptation easier.

For more information on FreeGeek's activities, visit <http://www.freegeek-columbus.org>.

COMMUNITY NEWS



Weiland Park neighborhood and Spore InfoShop: Participants in FreeGeek wireless project

by Eric Lowe

OCCN welcomes three VISTAs

Three new VISTAs have joined us recently to work on community projects around the state.

Katie Finnigan began her VISTA service at Media Bridges in Cincinnati where she is working to set up a low power FM radio station.

According to Katie, all programming will be produced by volunteers and the station will address issues that are important to the community. Right now, she is involved with researching, fundraising, networking, and recruiting volunteers.

Katie says the project will be inclusive, regardless of race, gender, or income level.

"My program will expand local media in my area and make sure all voices have a chance to participate in public discussion," she says.

Katie is a Cincinnati native and has previously worked as a copywriter at a local advertising agency. She enjoys knitting and coffee shops and proclaims herself a news and politics junkie.

Pamela Brown is the new VISTA at the Oakland Park School of Technology in Columbus where she helps develop computer network programs.

Pamela is originally from Buffalo, NY and was previously a teacher at the Toledo Lucas County Head Start Program where she prepared children to take the kindergarden entrance test.

In addition, Pamela was a Sunday school teacher and a vacation Bible school director. She also did daycare work and provided assistance for the Lucas County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities agency.

Pamela says she hopes to continue to be an asset to the community as a VISTA.

"The project will afford people to receive the GED or continued education and assist parents by providing daycare when they are in classes."

In her spare time, Pamela enjoys bowling, crafts, and games with metaphors. She plans to continue community work after Americorps.

Cleveland native Kristina Crawford is the VISTA at Morning Star Baptist Church in Cleveland where she serves as a community liaison.

Kristina, a former office secretary for a construction company, recruits volunteers and students for the church's computer programs.

"I believe it's important to teach kids computer literacy skills so that they become savvy to what's to come. So much of schoolwork these days is computer driven."

Outside of VISTA, Kristina likes to read, sing, and write.



VISTA CORNER