New Public Access Computing Center at 12th and Cambria

By Ricardo Rose

On May 13, a new public access computing center was opened at the 12th and Cambria Recreation Center. The computing center, named the Brother Kareem Lutfee Ali Media Education Room for a beloved recreation staff member and community leader, has 8 Dell computers donated by Temple University's Office of Sustainability Computer Recycling Center and is open to the public from 3-8 p.m. Monday-Friday. All of the computers have high speed internet access, paid for by the Advisory Council, which strongly supported the creation of the center. There is a printer/scanner available for public use, and there is MORE TO COME!

The effort was spearheaded by Facility Supervisor Ted Mapp and Ricardo Rose, an Air Force veteran, media specialist and consultant who is committed to helping the community grow and thrive, and supported by Michael Abdullah, Senator Shirley Kitchen, the 12th Street Advisory Board and City Council President Darrell Clarke. The opening was

facilitated by a PPR KEYSPOT team including Computer Instructor Emma Earle and Coordinator Kevin Heller. Joining the celebration was Jonathan Latko from Temple, and representatives from the 25th Police District and the Fire Department, who have worked closely with the Advisory Council, the North Philadelphia League of Voters, 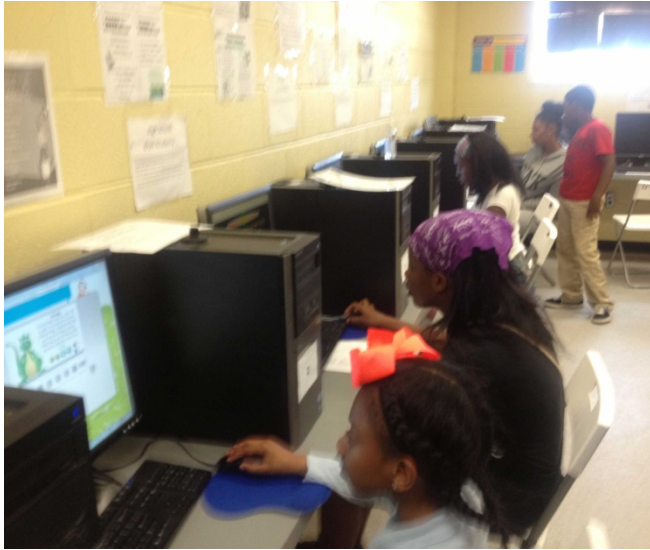and the Dar Es Salaam Community Development Corporation to take back the neighborhood. Rose said, "This is not only going to be a learning center and a free computer lab. We also want it to be a hub for the community to come together."

Nearly 30% of Philadelphians don't have access to the internet in their homes, worse than the national average. Younger, better educated, whiter and wealthier people have easy access to the internet. Poor, less educated and older people use it less. The gap between individuals and communities that have and those that do not have access to the information technologies that are transforming our lives is called the **Digital Divide**.

This center can help to bridge the digital divide between those with tech access and those without. From elementary school kids logging on to educational websites for the first time or doing school assignments, or learning how to combat cyber-bullying or write code, to high-school students researching and writing research papers and college application letters and applying for FAFSA, to adults filing taxes, writing resumes and applying for jobs, to seniors citizens taking their first computer class and downloading health care info, to folks of all ages communicating inexpensively with relatives in other states or even foreign countries, to families trying to obtain benefits like SNAP or LIHEAP, access to technology is vital.

There is a saying that, "No one cares how much you know until they first know how much you care," and putting technology centers like this where Philadelphians already feel cared about is an ideal way to help people learn about and feel comfortable with learning new things. A key advantage lies in the fact that people already love and trust the staff at 12th and Cambria and think about them as an extended family. This combination of high tech and close personal relationships is one reason the PPR KEYSPOTS have been so successful (over 300,000 uses since opening in 2011!) and why the Brother Kareem Lutfee Ali Media Education Room site shows great potential.

To find out the current schedule, or to take, request or give a training session, call Facility Supervisor Ted Mapp at 215-685-9780 or email Ricardo Rose at ricardorosemail@gmail.com. See you there!!