PPR KEYSPOTs (Public Access Computing Centers) Alive and Thriving!

After many nail-biting City Council budget sessions, full funding for all 19 PPR KEYSPOTs was included in the City's 2014 budget and in the five-year plan. Strong support from Deputy Mayor DiBerardinis, PPR Chief of Staff Patrick Morgan, and Office of Innovation & Technology Chief Innovation Officer Adel Ebeid played a part, as did Mayor Michael A. Nutter's long-term commitment to addressing the "digital divide" in Philadelphia. Cheers went up from Computer Instructors, after-school teachers, kids and adults throughout Philadelphia as the KEYSPOT project moved from three-year American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, which expired June 30, to a full-fledged, ongoing City supported program. Said Kevin Heller, Program Services Coordinator for the project, "I am ecstatic that we are able to continue providing such an essential service to Philadelphians. The KEYSPOTs program has impacted so many lives and I am proud to be a part of that initiative." The budget also funds four Free Library of Philadelphia KEYSPOTs.

Leo Dignam, Deputy Commissioner of Programming, said, "The only complaint I ever hear about the KEYSPOTs is that they should be open more!" The PPR KEYSPOTs will continue to be open a minimum of 15 hours/week, and efforts to stay open longer will include recruiting and training volunteers and searching for additional funding. The PPR KEYSPOTs will carry on formal classes (on everything from Internet Basics to Website Development), informal one-to-one trainings on whatever visitors request (how to do a job search and write a resume, how to Skype with relatives in Ghana, how to put together a family Remembrance Book), and open access times, when visitors can do whatever they want (write a paper, fill out their taxes online, or just Facebook chat with old friends).

Thus far, the PPR KEYSPOTs have served mostly youth (about 88%), and they will continue to work closely with after-school, summer camp, and other child-based programs, but another organization overseen by Deputy Mayor DiBerardinis, the Mayor's Commission on Literacy, will work closely with us to help bring in more adults. These efforts will focus on adult basic education, digital literacy, English as a Second Language, and workforce development. KEYSPOTs have already helped many adults work on resumes and cover letters, and many women and men have successfully transitioned into jobs. We will also enhance our work with other City agencies designed to aid vulnerable populations, including the Mayor's Office of Re-Integration Services for Ex-Offenders, the Veteran's Advisory Commission, the Mayor's Commission on Services to the Aging, and the Health Department.

The KEYSPOT project was launched in May 2011 with PPR as one of six Managing Partners of a total of 77 free public access computing centers. With less than 25% of the total KEYSPOTs (19 out of 77), and around 20% of the computers (172 out of 819), we provided more than 36% of total uses (PPR KEYSPOTs have had more than 140,000 visits, the entire project a total of 380,000).

To find the KEYSPOT nearest you, for a class you might like to take, or to find out where you could refer friends, go to www.phillykeyspots.org and just put in a Zip code to find the nearest KEYSPOT. Or dial 311 for the same information. You can also contact Ben Burenstein (Benjamin.burenstein@phila.gov) to ask questions, to offer suggestions, or to volunteer. We hope to see you at a KEYSPOT!!!

PHILADELPHIA
PARKS &
RECREATION