



# Raleigh Connected

The City of Raleigh Information Technology Department provides technical solutions for citizens, the community, and city employees. Through Raleigh Connected, Information Technology's community team takes technology out of the data center and into the community. Raleigh Connected is a group of initiatives that uses technology to promote digital inclusion, community engagement, civic innovation, workforce readiness, and economic development. The goal is to build a 21st century city using technology as a catalyst.

Raleigh Connected offers free outdoor Wi-Fi that provides Internet access for thousands of visitors and shop patrons, creates a fiber network to serve government, provides youth training programs, and extends wireless access to families in underserved areas. Through Raleigh Connected and strategic partnerships, the Information Technology community team is striving to make technology relevant and accessible to all Raleigh's citizens.



Raleigh's 2011 broadband symposium gathered leading authorities and regional leaders to discuss the impact of the digital divide and established key partnerships for addressing issues in the Raleigh community.

# What Digital Connectors Do

**118** Digital  
Connectors

**537** Computers  
Refurbished  
& Distributed

**2,707**  
Residents Trained

**5,710**  
Community Service Hours

## Digital Connectors

In 2009, Raleigh secured \$1.4 million in federal stimulus funding to bring broadband access to 1,482 underserved homes and start the Raleigh Digital Connectors program.

Digital Connectors is a youth program that promotes 21st century digital literacy, leadership skills, and a lifestyle of community volunteerism. Youth in the Digital Connectors program serve as ambassadors, teaching their families, friends, and neighbors to participate in the digital economy. Digital Connectors practice skills that prepare young people for opportunities in tomorrow's technology-driven economy. Students give over 60 community service hours throughout the school year.

Raleigh Digital Connectors give back to the community and help address the digital divide by:

- Promoting digital literacy at community events with partner agencies
- Training community members on basic computer skills and the Internet
- Refurbishing computers for economically disadvantaged families
- Performing humanitarian community service projects





## Digital Connectors Staff & Leadership

The Raleigh Digital Connectors and new youth entrepreneurship programs are fully staffed with a program manager, instructor, and intern. The manager, a Community Technology Advocate, provides day-to-day oversight of the programs. Digital Connectors are assigned mentors, typically students enrolled in STEM programs at local universities and colleges. A Digital Connectors graduate currently serves as a mentor and creates a special connection with program participants.

The Digital Connectors' instructor conducts class twice a week in an innovative learning lab at the city's Saint Monica Teen Center. The program's intern, a Community Psychology doctoral student at North Carolina State University, assists with program evaluation

and enhancements. The most recent enhancements include the addition of modules on open data and coding with open source tools. Planned updates for the 2015 curriculum include life maps, social media campaigns, and sustainability.

A community advisory board provides leadership for Digital Connectors and other youth focused efforts in the Raleigh Connected program. The advisory board includes individuals from the technology sector as well as citizens, educators, and entrepreneurs who understand the core STEM curriculum and the need for specialized skills that promote workforce readiness.

Guest speakers present Digital Connectors with the opportunity to discuss relevant topics with regional business and civic leaders.



## Digital Connectors Teaching & Community Service

Raleigh Digital Connectors are encouraged to adopt lifelong community service by teaching others and leading events such as the Oak City Tech-a-thon. Students led this year's inaugural event on Global Youth Service Day. Raleigh Digital Connectors provided basic computer training for residents, collaborated with Habitat for Humanity's A Brush with Kindness, and canvassed the neighborhood to recruit residents for future computer training. A community mural, created as a visual metaphor illustrating the importance of bridging the digital divide, was unveiled at the conclusion of the event.





Through access, education,  
and inclusion, we are  
building a culture that values  
technology and embraces it  
to enhance lives.

## Partners in the Community

The City of Raleigh partners with like-minded organizations that focus on increasing digital literacy and empowering individuals with skills to make an impact in the community and participate in the 21st century economy. Raleigh Digital Connectors' community service partners are:

- Wade Edwards Learning Lab
- United Way's Teaming for Technology
- Kramden Institute
- Habitat for Humanity

Raleigh will provide a youth entrepreneurship program in partnership with Startup High beginning in the summer of 2014. Digital Connectors alumni with strong entrepreneurial interests will be selected as program participants. Startup High allows teens to engage with local entrepreneurs, develop entrepreneurial projects, and perform volunteer service. The goal is to provide participants with entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

The City of Raleigh Information Technology and Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources departments are partnering to provide fast-track Digital Connectors sessions at the new Northeast Outreach Center. The training is part of Raleigh's Community Oriented Government initiative. The initiative strives to create strong partnerships between government, business associations, local schools, neighborhood organizations, and public service agencies to address issues that affect the quality of life in Raleigh.





In 2010, Forbes magazine named Raleigh as "America's Most Wired City."

Raleigh Connected focuses on making Raleigh the most wired in **all** communities.

## Fiber Network

In 2011, the Information Technology and Public Works departments collaborated to install a 125-mile dark fiber network. Twenty-four strands of fiber runs alongside the new traffic signal network. This fiber runs primarily along major thoroughfares and will connect municipal-owned buildings. The network will reach many areas in Raleigh by the end of 2014. In addition to city facilities, the network will be in close proximity to a number of County and State government, and non-profit entities. The City of Raleigh anticipates this network being used as a foundation to foster government and non-profit collaboration, public-private partnerships, economic development, and improving resident's quality of life. Realizing the potential of the fiber network, Raleigh enlisted consultants, CTC Technology and Energy, to conduct a fiber needs assessment and develop a strategic plan for the city's fiber network.

In 2012, Raleigh was invited to participate in the North Carolina Next Generation Network (NCNGN) along with surrounding municipalities, Cary, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham, and Winston-Salem. NCNGN is a regional initiative focused on stimulating the deployment of next generation broadband networks in North Carolina. The coordinated effort is led by six municipalities along with Duke University, North Carolina State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest University. NCNGN is supported by local Chambers of Commerce and businesses in the Research Triangle and Piedmont regions. NCNGN's goal is to encourage private sector providers to deliver ultra-fast bandwidth at affordable prices to ensure members remain competitive and at the forefront of developing the next-generation applications essential to all economic sectors.