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The Stride Center Receives Elevate America Community Initiative Grant from Microsoft

Grant will fund program to help underserved populations in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Greater Sacramento Area find jobs.

Oakland, CA— Feb. 3, 2011 —The Stride Center today announced that Microsoft Corp. is awarding \$200,000 in cash as well as the software needed to help the organization offer technology skills training and job placement services to the San Francisco Bay Area and Greater Sacramento communities.

In today's technology driven economy, finding a job without strong technology skills and during a tough economic downturn can be extremely difficult. To help ease this burden, The Stride Center is partnering with Microsoft through the company's Elevate America community initiative, to provide technology access and skills training to help people find employment. The Stride Center is placing a special focus on underserved communities, including women, young workers who have greater barriers to employment and re-employment than the broader population.

Women are often at a disproportionate disadvantage in the workforce. For example, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, almost 60 percent of all low wage workers are female compared to 44 percent of higher wage workers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics also notes women's re-employment rate is roughly six percent lower than men's. In addition, young workers also see a disproportionate disadvantage in the workforce as compared to the broader population. According to the Economic Policy Institute, young adults represent 13.5 percent of the workforce but account for 26.4 percent of unemployed workers.

Selected through a competitive funding process, the grants will help The Stride Center fund a comprehensive set of resources to help people be successful in today's workplace such as career counseling, technology skills training, job placement and additional support services. The Stride Center's

mission is to empower men and women facing barriers to employment to achieve economic self-sufficiency through well paying, vibrant careers in the information technology field.

“One of the greatest impediments poverty creates is a lack of the relevant, marketable skills needed to get a good job. The Stride Center has trained over a thousand inner-city adults in computer and network technology skills, and enabled nearly 80% of them to get jobs,” Barrie Hathaway pointed out. The Executive director of the Stride Center is excited about the opportunities the program offers. “Not only do our graduates get a strong technical education and an internationally-recognized certification, they learn the professional skills that empower them to begin, keep and excel in their new information technology careers. We are extremely grateful to Microsoft for recognizing the importance of this work and helping us continue it by expanding and growing our programs. Thanks to the Elevate America grant, the Stride Center will be able to help more people work their way out of poverty, and get their share of the American Dream.”

The Stride Center has demonstrated how our approach to providing people with technology and job training resources can be scaled at the end of the two years, with the goal of creating replicable models to expand to additional communities.

“Too many Americans don’t have the technology skills that many jobs today require,” said Pamela Passman, corporate vice president of Global Corporate Affairs at Microsoft. “The Stride Center has demonstrated how they can reach some of the most underserved people in our society, and we’re honored to partner with them to provide training and job support to the people that need it most.”

“At a time when people don’t have the skills they need for today’s jobs, the importance of technology access and training has never been more important,” said Oliver Parker Director of Hi-Tech Manufacturing Sales at Microsoft and President of The Stride Center’s board of directors. “We are delighted that The Stride Center is receiving an Elevate America community initiative grant, enabling them to provide training and job support to the people that need it most. We believe that the best way

Microsoft can help to address this issue is working with local partners who can bring the benefits of technology skills to people in their community. ”

Since 2003, Microsoft has been committed to providing technology skills training to people across the country through its Unlimited Potential program, which includes Elevate America. In partnership with thousands of nonprofit organizations including The Stride Center, the company has reached more than 27 million people. More information on Elevate America is available at <http://www.microsoft.com/ElevateAmerica>. More information on The Stride Center is available at <http://www.stridecenter.org>.