

Spectrum Digital Education Grant Library Open House

Speech by Stacey Wicksall

Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming to this Open House celebration today.

Today we celebrate the receipt of a Spectrum Digital Education Grant. Moreover, we celebrate the impact this grant of 50 laptops will have on both the individuals in our community and this community as a whole.

Have you ever stopped to consider how often technology intersects with our daily lives both at home and at work? Think for a moment. Did your smartphone wake you up this morning? Did you Google the weather to find out which coat to wear? Maybe you checked the library's website to remind yourself what time the doors would be open for the event. Maybe you let friends and family know you would be attending by writing a Facebook post or composing a tweet. Or maybe you sent someone a quick email to let them know about your plans for this morning.

Technology is pervasive. I know many of us may take it for granted and do not often stop to consider that not every household has access to the internet. In Macedon, according to US Census Quick Facts, an estimated 800 households do not have internet access. Looking at Wayne County as a whole, that number increases to 9,000 households. That figure represents nearly as many people as all of the people living in Macedon. What do these figures mean to people in these households? How does it impact the county to have the equivalent of one town's population disconnected?

To be sure, households without internet access would have a much different morning experience than many of us here today. And far beyond the many examples I described above, these families would be at an even more severe disadvantage because technology does not just provide us with the tools of convenience, it provides us with the tools to engage in civics, to access government forms for taxes, to complete the US Census (which is so helpful in developing an accurate depiction of the state of our community), to learn about our world, to develop new skills, to record our finances, to apply for and keep jobs, to complete school (at any level) and to be empowered to be a functioning and contributing member of society.

When organizations like Spectrum are able to recognize the importance of digital equity and then commit to offering libraries the tools needed to build equity, a momentous impact can be leveraged for everyone. It means we can empower all people to have the skills needed to find

jobs, to create opportunities for themselves, whether through education and life-long learning or via entrepreneurial endeavors; and to have the tools necessary to be an engaged citizen.

On the Pal-Mac Intermediate School located just northeast of this library there is an inscription above the doors. It says, "The intelligence of the people is the security of the nation." The quote comes from Daniel Webster and is as true today as it was in the 19th Century.

The Spectrum Digital Education Grant gives the library the tools people need to carry out the very definition of intelligence which is: "to acquire new knowledge and to apply new skills." With these tools we will forge forward by making partnerships with other organizations to ensure that these laptops are placed in the hands of folks who would not otherwise have access to them.

I am excited to announce that 25 of them will be earmarked first for the purpose of ensuring a more accurate 2020 Census Count. Through a partnership with the Pioneer Library System's Census Task Force, we plan on placing these computers in the communities most at risk for not completing the census online due to digital inequity. The computers will be located in communities within Ontario, Wayne, Wyoming and Livingston County libraries and library workers will be on hand to guide people. Participation in this survey is critical because it identifies truly needed services across the country and leads to appropriate government funding and government representation.

We will keep several computers in our Idea Factory for people to use in many capacities. For example, they may want to develop digital graphic design skills using free online software to create customized items that can be printed using the library's laser cutter and engraver. Whether a youngster or adult, the skills involved in engraving a plaque or creating a 3-D box are both transferable workplace skills.

They may opt to use the computers in conjunction with our business book collection and entrepreneur workshops series developed in collaboration with SCORE to develop a business plan to secure the funding needed to launch a new business.

Other computers will be targeted to use with participants in technological literacy classes. In the past, the library has partnered with Finger Lakes Community College to offer training on the use of the Microsoft Office online and Google Drive. In the future, we will look toward offering more technology classes that give adults the computer skills they need to secure a job or improve their current employment situation.

I encourage everyone here today to engage in the various stations we have set-up throughout the library to get a sense for the varied scope of learning that can be gained through the use of this laptop grant.

Thank you, Spectrum, for helping this library to do what libraries all across America are doing: leveling the field for all people and securing the opportunity for everyone to have equal access to education, social mobility and prosperity. This award is truly a gift to us all!