

newsworthy trends

Making Technology Compute For Everyone

(NAPSA)—Experts say an important key to closing economic gaps between some ethnic communities is to bridge what's known as "the digital divide." The term refers to the difference in computer and technology skills that tends to exist between people of different racial backgrounds.

The issue is significant, because studies suggest that 60 to 90 percent of jobs in 21st century America will require skills in computer and network use. In addition, those with computer skills are expected to earn 43 percent more than those without.

Who Is Affected By The Divide?

According to a report issued by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the U.S. Department of Commerce, computer usage by blacks lags behind that of non-Hispanic whites by more than 14 percent while Internet usage by blacks trails that of non-Hispanic whites by nearly 20 percent.

Finding Solutions

In an effort to close the "divide," students of all ethnic backgrounds are being encouraged to take math, science and computer classes in school. It's thought the coursework will help them in a variety of professional fields. In addition, different education programs have been established to reach out to traditionally underserved communities.

For instance, Black Family Technology Awareness Week (BFTAW) is a global public awareness campaign. It was established by Tyrone Taborn in an effort to communicate the value of technology to black families, as well as its importance in the career and educational preparation of children.



BFTAW in action.

"We've generated awareness and I'm tremendously proud of that," says Taborn. "However, our task is nowhere near complete. We've got to inspire a movement."

The program is sponsored by IBM and Career Communications Group (CCG), a company for which Taborn serves as chairman. The initiative involves seminars, conferences, hands-on workshops and symposia that take place on three continents and provide thousands of people with opportunities to access technology and enhance their technological skills.

Bridging Divides

According to IBM, career development in almost every field will depend on familiarity with a wide array of equipment and software. The more people know about word processing, spreadsheet use, graphic design, Web site design, and programming, for example, the more valuable they may be to their companies. It's hoped that Black Family Technology Awareness Week will help more Blacks to not only bridge the digital divide, but to make important economic inroads as well.

Visit www.blackfamily.net or call (410) 244-7101 for information.