

Benjamin Larkin~Closing the Digital Divide in Upper Merion

Need: In our current time, technology is woven into every aspect of life. People who are afraid or unfamiliar with technology may struggle with communication and information. There are no more phone books. If you want to find out a phone number or address, you need an internet search engine. Want directions? You need a maps program on your phone. Going to a doctor's appointment? You will need to access a patient portal or fill out forms on an iPad when you arrive. Want to order food or pay for your purchase at the farmer's market? You'll need a form of digital payment like Venmo, PayPal, or CashApp. The gap between people who easily use technology and those who avoid technology is known as the "digital divide."

"The consequences of the digital divide include isolation, which can affect mental health, educational barriers as postsecondary education increasingly moves online, and worsening gender discrimination." [K. Taylor *The Digital Divide*] My hope with my community service project is to close the digital divide in Upper Merion Township just a little bit.

Objective: To provide free technology help to people in Upper Merion Township based at the Community Center. I will do this by setting up a table twice a week May through August to provide in person one-on-one help. I will also develop handouts for common technology questions and problems that will be available at the table.

Skills: background with Apple & Windows products, developing/communicating solutions for software and hardware problems, problem solving, researching solutions to niche technical problems

Steps:

1. Coordinate with the Community Center and UM Township to use their facilities to provide this service to the community (3 hours)
 - a. Provide free and accessible in-person technology help to the community
 - b. Secure time and space that is convenient and accessible for community members
2. Advertise the service to the community through many channels (10 hours)
 - a. Advertise on social media (specifically on community and family based pages)
 - b. Put fliers up at the Community Center and other community buildings and message boards
3. Develop and Print handouts for common technology questions (10 hours)
 - a. Research common technology issues
 - b. Select a handful of technology issues with straight forward solutions
 - c. Create and print handouts
4. The help desk on Tuesdays/Thursdays for 6 weeks throughout the summer/dates TBD (30 hours)
 - a. Provide one-on-one support to people who visit the table
 - b. Have printouts for people who want assistance but don't have time for one-on-one support

Hours:

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| Coordination | 3 hours |
| Advertising | 10 hours |
| Handouts | 10 hours |
| Help Desk | 30 hours |
| Total | 53 hours |