



Nonprofit brings internet connectivity to the region

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Community Learning Network's program supports students learning remotely

Santa Fe-based nonprofit the Community Learning Network (CLN) is partnering with a national organization to provide free internet connectivity to rural and Native communities impacted by COVID-19.

This issue is particularly important as schools across Northern New Mexico start the new school year with online and distance-learning approaches.

"Latest report indicates that there are 134,000 students in New Mexico without adequate internet connection, and New Mexico has been identified as one of five states nationwide with the largest digital divide," says Jennifer Case Nevarez, director of CLN.

"Although we knew the digital divide was a problem, now that students are learning from home, teachers are teaching from home, and many family members may be working and/or managing health services from home, the need for internet access has become critical and is revealing that what seemed a digital divide is actually a digital canyon!"

CLN is collaborating with a crew from the [Information Technology Disaster Resource Center](#) (ITDRC) on Project Connect to conduct site assessments and deploy wireless access points to support wireless internet access for community members in need.

The Laboratory has been assisting by introducing schools and other organizations across Northern New Mexico to the program.

So far free wireless access has been established in over 45 locations including schools in Abiquiu, Alcalde, Chama, Chimayo, Dixon, Española, Hernandez, Jemez, Pecos, Pojoaque, Sombrillo, and at Santa Fe Indian School.

"The ITDRC hotspots provide wireless access to the community in a limited area surrounding a building or location so that community members can access the Internet for free from a parking lot, park, or playground," says Nevarez.

The program has also provided connectivity at tribal buildings at Nambé, Picuris, Laguna, Santa Clara, Ohkay Owingeh, Jemez, San Felipe and Zia Pueblos, and outside the Northern New Mexico region.

CLN and ITDRC are also working on setting up other hotspots at other schools and community buildings in rural and tribal areas across the region and state. The full list of current locations is [available here](#).

“The hotspots are the first step in bridging the current digital divide for communities, families and students,” says Nevarez. “However, we know that comprehensive residential Internet access based on a family ecosystem model is the only way to ensure equity and access for all regardless of zip code, race, culture, or socio-economic status and is now imperative so that ALL community members have the tools to work or learn from home.”

Community Learning Network recognizes the following individuals and groups that have helped on this project:

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- Northern New Mexico STEAM Coalition
- Rio Arriba County Office of Economic Development
- City of Santa Fe Office of Economic Development
- Santa Fe County

Los Alamos National Laboratory

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(505) 667-7000

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