

For Immediate Release: 8/24/20

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T-Mobile, Quicklert, and Irvington Housing Authority Team Up to Connect Seniors

Irvington, New Jersey—The Irvington Township Housing Authority (IHA) has partnered with T-Mobile, Quicklert and Comelit to connect and protect seniors through an innovative venture which will serve as a national model for public housing authorities. Executive Director Carmelo Garcia architected this unique, innovative multifaceted solution to leverage technology that would bridge the digital divide while closing public health and safety deficits prevalent in urban public housing. “When COVID-19 hit, fear and disarrayed communication was experienced, so we needed to build a mass communication platform that would be contactless and help us prepare our residents to prevent and respond to this crisis and future emergencies or policy changes to protect their quality of life” said E.D. Garcia

This program will be the first in the nation to integrate the innovative Quicklert system which will deliver mass communications and public safety alerts to its residents through a custom app, installed on tablets donated by T-Mobile. The app is designed to wirelessly distribute real-time emergency push notifications including COVID-19 information, IHA policies and procedures, and emergency alerts. Tablets will also be connected to IHA’s overhauled intercom-system and allow for residents to see who is at their door through the tablet’s audio/video capabilities.

“This program should help the Irvington Housing Authority become a model for the nation in terms of how to use technology to protect the health and security of residents,” said Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr. “It is a great way to get crucial information to seniors who want to stay safe through socially distancing during this global pandemic.”

Phase one of this program will begin on August 31, 2020 and September 1, 2020 with the distribution of 400 internet-ready Alcatel JOY PADS to all senior occupied units at the Nye Avenue and Union Avenue campuses. The overall use of these tablets will be completely free of charge to recipients. T-Mobile donated the tablets which will be connected to T-Mobile's high-speed wireless data network, the cost of which will be covered by a portion of IHA’s CARES Act allocation.

“This program will allow isolated seniors and other residents at the Irvington Housing Authority to access critical services and remain connected to their community during this public health crisis,” said Sen. Cory Booker. “The federal funding, we secured through the CARES Act is being put to good use to protect the health and safety of New Jerseyans and help stop the spread of this deadly disease.”

On each of the distribution days, tablet recipients will become familiar with the tablet functionality during an orientation conducted by T-Mobile representatives and IHA staff. During orientation, seniors will be taught more personal applications for the device, such as: online grocery shopping,

video chatting with friends and family, Telehealth visits and wellness checks, and how to set prescription reminders.

“T-Mobile is proud to be a part of connecting Irvington Housing Authority senior residents. The pandemic has exposed the wide-reaching impact of the digital divide and the importance of being able to receive both critical and personal communications,” said Mike Katz, Executive Vice President of T-Mobile for Business. “By providing tablets that can power applications to send emergency alerts as well as tools for personal use, T-Mobile is helping those at a higher risk stay safe at home.”

These devices will empower the IHA to provide its most vulnerable tenants with the resources needed to stay educated and informed about COVID-19, all while improving the digital-literacy of its seniors and maximizing their connectedness during these isolating times.

The need for a program of this magnitude stems from the disproportionate rate at which COVID-19 affects seniors and minority populations. Irvington Mayor Tony Vauss expressed his excitement for the new program saying, “Our senior citizens face significant challenges while living alone, and those challenges have been inflated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This partnership between T-Mobile and the Irvington Housing Authority will help alleviate some of those challenges in addition to strengthening the line of communication between the Township, IHA and our beloved seniors.”

“Connectivity is key during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this funding, the Irvington Housing Authority will be able to ensure families have the ability to maintain remote learning requirements by providing tablets and Wi-Fi. For seniors, it will give them the freedom to connect to family, friends, doctors and other resources during this difficult time.” said Lynne Patton, HUD Regional Administrator for New York and New Jersey.

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