

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — June 14, 2016 CONTACT: Beth Phillips, bethp@hacanet.org (512) 767-7725

Austin Housing Authority Awarded Grant to Keep Kids Learning Through the Summer

Austin Independent School District students recently said good-bye school and hello summer. And while most children rejoice at the chance to put away their pencils and books, summer vacation often poses educational challenges for low-income youth.

According to the National Summer Learning Association, summer learning loss, the phenomenon where young people lose academic skills over the summer, is one of the most significant causes of the achievement gap between lower and higher income youth, and is one of the strongest contributors to the high school dropout rate.

Austin Pathways, a nonprofit organization that supports the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA), is working in partnership with the Central Texas Summer STEM Funding Collaborative and local nonprofit Skillpoint Alliance to combat summer learning loss with some of the lowest income youth in Austin.

For the second consecutive year and as part of the Central Texas Summer STEM Funding Collaborative, the KDK-Harman Foundation has awarded Austin Pathways a \$40,000 grant to provide 120 public housing youth with an innovative summer science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) program. The camps began yesterday (June 13) and will run through the summer.

"We are thankful for the funding to provide top-quality summer STEM programming for HACA's youth," said Austin Pathways/HACA Executive Vice President Sylvia Blanco. "We look forward to continuing our partnership in helping bridge the learning gap in the Austin area."

Elementary students ages 6 to 14 years residing at all HACA communities are eligible. Camps will be held at Booker T. Washington Terraces, Georgian Manor, Northgate Apartments, Rosewood Courts, Santa Rita Courts and Shadowbend Ridge. STEM educators will deliver six camps – three wearable tech camps with an emphasis on using Arduino based microcontrollers to translate computer programming into real world interaction via sensors and outputs – as well as three camps which will have participants respond to a zombie apocalypse using hands-on experimentation and engineering.

The program will offer professional development in STEM education by providing three HACA high-school student an opportunity to participate in STEM education and leadership trainingby co-facilitaing the youth STEM camps. Additionally, families who participate in the program will earn free refurbished computer devices donated to Austin Pathways by Austin Community College.

"Skillpoint Alliance really enjoys working with HACA to ensure kids stay engaged during the long summer months," said Amanda Longtain, Director of Programs at Skillpoint Alliance. "We hope they walk away with new experiences, knowledge and career plans. We also hope they learn to look beyond the obvious and start considering new and innovative ways to solve 21st century problems."

Last year, close to 100 children participated in the Summer STEM Camps and attended 80 percent or more of the camp days. As a result, more than 80 families earned refurbished computer devices.

The KDK-Harman Foundation began its Summer STEM funding in 2011 and in 2014 formed the Central Texas Summer STEM Funding Collaborative with a goal of combating summer learning loss in local economically disadvantaged children. The Summer STEM Grant Program also aims to provide opportunities for students to engage in STEM practices and activities to lay the groundwork for building a STEM worker pipeline.

The 2016 Central Texas Summer STEM Funding Collaborative is made up of the following participating funders: the KDK-Harman Foundation, the KLE Foundation, the RGK Foundation, the Webber Family Foundation, the Austin Community Foundation, the Andy Roddick Foundation, the Topfer Family Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, A Glimmer of Hope Foundation, the Austin Technology Council Foundation, Samsung Austin Semiconductor,, Intel, IBM, and Westlake Dermatology.

About Austin Pathways: Austin Pathways is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes the education and general welfare of low-income Austinites who live in the 18 public housing communities owned and operated by HACA and those who participate in its Housing Choice Voucher program. Austin Pathways supports scholarships, youth academic enrichment, workforce development, and health and wellness initiatives. For more information, visit austinpathways.org.

About HACA: The Housing Authority of the City of Austin is a public agency whose mission is to cultivate sustainable affordable housing communities and partnerships that inspire self reliance, growth and optimism. For more information, visit www.hacanet.org, or find us on Twitter @hacanet.

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