FACTSHEET: FamilyNet Centers

To use the Internet to find a job, write to the local alderman, read the news or perform any other online task, a person must have more than access to a computer. He or she also has to understand how to use digital technology and feel comfortable online. That important distinction is at the heart of the Smart Communities FamilyNet Centers.

Each FamilyNet Center is a convenient neighborhood resource designed to help local residents make computers part of their lives. Fully integrated with existing Centers for Working Families in one of the five Smart Communities, the FamilyNet Centers invite the public to use state-of-the-art computers and broadband access, and they offer training and assistance designed specifically for community members. All services are free to local residents.

Training and support built for our communities
The Centers for Working Families have a track record of providing services such as employment training and financial counseling, and the FamilyNet Centers will continue that tradition. To become a FamilyNet Center, each location has added new computers, higher broadband speeds and a full-time FamilyNet Center manager. Residents can participate in:

- **Drop-in Internet access**, including use of three kid-friendly computers and expanded weekday and weekend hours.
- **Orientations** that give an overview of all FNC programs and an introduction to the services available at the Center for Working Families.
- **Everyday Digital**, a comprehensive set of trainings that start at the most basic computer tasks up to useful skills like online banking. Topics and methods can be tailored for families, senior citizens, business owners, ex-offenders, community leaders and other local groups.

Open for business
The FamilyNet Centers were first proposed in community meetings when the Smart Communities program was being created in 2009. As of January 2011, five of the six FamilyNet Centers are open for business, with some ongoing modifications to the sites still planned, including three fully accessible computers in each location for persons with disabilities. During the first 18 months, the centers expect to be used by 5,400 residents, provide 1,300 orientations and serve 1,600 residents with Everyday Digital courses.

(turn over for more)
For more information
Each FamilyNet Center is operated by a local nonprofit and housed within a Center for Working Families. To learn more, contact your local FamilyNet Center manager.

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Smart Communities
The FamilyNet Centers are a part of the Smart Communities program, which works to ensure increased digital access and use for families, businesses and other institutions in five Chicago neighborhoods: Auburn Gresham, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, Humboldt Park and Pilsen. Funded through the federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program and supported by LISC/Chicago, Smart Communities is part of the City of Chicago’s Digital Excellence Initiative and operated by key agencies in each of the communities.