

Graduates receive certificates and laptops

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Graduates of a new computer literacy program stepped across the digital divide at Forsyth Technical Community College last week.

Nineteen graduates were lauded for completing the 15-hour Technology Skills for Life and Employment course. They learned the basics of computing, including aspects of Microsoft Word and how to navigate the Internet to search for jobs and other information. In addition to certificates of completion, each graduate was given a refurbished laptop of their very own and a crash course on how to use their new computers.

WinstonNet is one of many partners behind the class, which aims to increase digital literacy among economically-disadvantaged adults. The nonprofit is best known for outfitting local recreation centers with computer labs and wifi. WinstonNet President Dennis Newman said the agency wanted to go beyond just providing digital access.

"So I ask you, is access to a computer lab and public wifi enough to say you've crossed the digital divide?" he said. "I think you'll agree, providing these labs is a great thing, but no, it is not enough. You need to know how to effectively use a computer."

WinstonNet received a \$5,000 grant from AT&T to launch the five-week course, which was offered through Forsyth Tech's Community & Economic Development Department. The class is free, students, however, had to contribute \$50 towards their laptop.



Instructors show graduates how to use their new laptops.



Robert William



Ashley Anderson



Wilson

The classes were held every week at the Central Library and Goodwill Industries on University Parkway. The Kramden Institute, a Durham-based non-profit, refurbished the laptops, equipping them with Windows 7 and the Microsoft Office Suite. There are about 40 more laptops that will be awarded to future graduates of the program.

Bobby Wilson, a 70 year-old graduate of the class, spoke during the graduation ceremony. He'd never used a laptop before, and now, thanks to the program, is the happy

owner of one. He said senior citizens need to be digitally literate.

"Keeping yourself in tune with today's subject matter is important so you do not fall behind," he said.

Fellow graduate Robert William agrees. He's a volunteer instructor at the Winston-Salem Urban League, where he shares his computer knowhow with seniors.

"I think it's important that people learn at our age how to work the computer," said the 56 year-old.

He is currently studying network systems

administration at ITT Tech in High Point, but said he was unfamiliar with some of the more basic computer functions and programs and wanted to pass those skills on to the seniors he instructs. He called the class very instructive.

Eva Jones was one of several graduates who heard about the program through the Urban League. The retiree is studying clerical skills in the Urban League's Senior Community

Service Employment Program. Though she used a computer when she worked in customer service at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, she needed new skills to pursue the kind of part-time employment she hopes to attain.

"Since I've been retired, a lot of things have changed and a lot of things I don't know that this course has offered me, so it makes a big difference," said Jones, who didn't own a computer before taking the class.

Joyce Hunter is looking for a job too, having been laid off from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in May. She's been relying on computer labs like the one at Goodwill to look for jobs. Having never owned a computer before, she said she's grateful for the laptop and thinks it will greatly aid her job search.



Jones



Joyce Hunter holds up the new computer bag that contains her laptop.

"Everything is going to computers and technology, so everyone needs some type of technology within the home," she said.

Ashley Anderson, who taught the course, believes her students will be successful in their job searches and other online endeavors.

"In addition to computer skills that they never had before, I believe ultimately they gained confidence," she said. "A lot of them, when they came into the class, they had been turned down by jobs or were down on their luck and didn't

know what their next step was ... Now, they feel empowered; they're equal and capable of finding employment and transitioning into a working society."

Those interested in future computer literacy classes, may call Forsyth Tech's Ron Berra at 336-734-7715.

BGR!

from page A1

of the 12 weeks, the women are invited to take part in a 5K.

"This program targets beginner runners, basically getting them off the couch and into some activity," said LaTisha Alford, one of the ambassadors for BGR! W-S. "We go from them walking 30 minutes to running their first 5K. It is a lifestyle and personal change that helps you with your nutrition."

When Toni Carey and Ashley Hicks founded Black Girls RUN! in 2009, they wanted to take on the obesity epidemic in the African-American community while providing support and resources to new and experienced runners. The movement has now become a phenomenon, with close to 100 chapters across the



Lucrecia Moore addresses attendees.

nation and beyond. The group's national conference was held in Charlotte in 2013 and in Atlanta this year.

"This shows that

black women in our community care about their health and they're supportive of each other in developing a healthy lifestyle. Running is just



Pam Bradsher



Breanna McDaniel

a conduit for that," Ambassador Lucrecia Moore said of the interest in the group. "We are not a weight-loss group but

weight-loss is a by-product, so it fosters confidence in our women of color, motivation, encouragement and unity among each other."

During the two-hour session, ambassadors not only talked about the program, but about what runners should wear and how they can motivate themselves to get up and get moving. Veteran BGR! runners answered questions about the running shoes, hair care and breathing techniques.

Breanna McDaniel was already familiar with BGR!, having taken part in the group when she lived in Atlanta.

"I just stopped after moving to Boston, and now I'm here. I am now at a place where I want to get my life back on track and get my health under control," she said. "It is something about being around black women with the same mindset and

goals."

Alford expected most of the women who were in attendance to show up this week for trial runs.

"From that, I am expecting at least half or 60 percent of those to successfully complete their 5K in 12 weeks," she said.

Moore says women who are interested in the group should at least give it a try.

"You just have to come out. I don't want to discourage anyone and make them think that it's easy. It is not easy, but with our group, the support, training, motivation and encouragement that we give, it is easier," she said.

For more information about clinics and run times, email bgrwinston-salem@gmail.com or visit Black Girls Run! Winston-Salem on Facebook.

60's LEGENDS OF BEACH & SOUL

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 27th-8PM

TICKETS

\$42.50-\$59.50

THE IMPRESSIONS

"GYPSY WOMAN" "IT'S ALL RIGHT"
"KEEP ON PUSHING" "PEOPLE GET READY"

CHARLIE THOMAS DRIFTERS

"THERE GOES MY BABY" "THIS MAGIC MOMENT"
"ON BROADWAY" "UNDER THE BOARDWALK" "UP ON THE ROOF"

THE TYMES

"SO MUCH IN LOVE" "YOU LITTLE TRUSTMAKER" "MISS GRACE"



SAVE THE FEES at REYNOLDSAUDITORIUM.COM OR BY PHONE (336) 830-5813
IN PERSON at WINSTON SALEM FAIRGROUNDS BOX OFFICE ANNEX