Date: March 13, 2013

From: Merle Bush, HICAP Director

To: Ms. Ilda Simao, Grants Coordinator Internet Society

Re: Final Report HICAP 2010

The Harlem Internet Computer Access Program (HICAP) under the auspices of the Internet Society New York City/Global chapters is designed to and has successfully provided state of the art hardware, software and Internet access in a pleasant, stress free environment for folks who did not have access and to individuals who were not familiar with technical terminology. No one is forced, but everyone is welcome to participate. Some people have come to our lab because they are uncomfortable using the free New York Library computers and at HICAP they receive one-on-one assistance. I find that once the student is relaxed, no matter how technically intricate the material is, it becomes easily absorbed.

HICAP specializes in introducing nascent technology to participants in their native language. Class begins with questions about present or prior lessons. Once answered and explained; the final fifteen minutes of class is spent with students searching online for subjects of interests, e-mailing loved ones in this country and abroad. If one thinks that it would be of interest to the entire class, we end class by sharing photos, music, various websites, etc. Classes remain both fun and educational.

The most challenging aspect of the administering the program was creating and presenting exciting, informative, relevant content; then documenting it in an orderly concise manner, building upon what has already been presented. What I did not find challenging were their ages and infirmities. I enjoy working with folks with challenges because they always surprise me with their abilities. An example is Ms. B. Stephen who lives on the fourth floor and has a prosthetic foot. For a period of six weeks, the building’s elevator was being expanded for wheelchair access. All the tenants were offered $500 toward expenses and a six week hotel stay. I thought it wise to suspend class during that period. The class took a vote and was very vocal. They all wanted to stay and forgo the cash to come to class. They, including Ms. Stephen, did not miss one session.

When the Manhattan Borough President’s office audited HICAP, they were so impressed with our program that our artistic student was invited to show his original art work at the gallery of the Manhattan Borough President for the entire month of February. Pictures from the opening celebration are posted on the HICAP blog.

One of the most difficult times for me was when my mother was hospitalized and the Internet Society sent Guy Calaf and his assistant Ruben Collado to video the core class members. Everyday during that time, I would run to the hospital, then go to the lab and back to the hospital with little to no rest. Guy and Ruben were such gentle and generous spirits; I trusted them with my students. The soulful video captured by Guy and Ruben tells the story of how important the Internet is and how it has changed the lives of everyone involved. The ‘Breaking Barriers Harlem’ video can be seen at www.isoc.org and www.youtube.com.

Unclaimed Funds site has brought thousands of dollars to students, who would not otherwise know that these monies exist. HICAP’s Learning Lab is a service where inquiries are answered. I travel to provide hands-on services when necessary, such as loading software, downloading...
applications, setting-up newly purchased equipment, assisting international students with travel visas or whatever a person requires to keep pace with this technological age. All of HICAP’s participants, who came to 80% of their classes and passed computer/Internet competency tests, now have computers and Internet access in their homes. HICAP’s impact to the community of Harlem is palpable.

The most significant portions of our educational journey are documented at www.hicap.blogspot. I found that much of the information of interest that was discussed by the class members was of an astrophysical, atmospheric and global phenomenon nature; we accessed this data at www.nasa.gov. Recently, I created a second blog www.hicapv.blogspot.com; this blog is dedicated solely to computer Internet education.

Utilizing wireless Internet and laptops, I plan to conduct an outdoor class in a local New York City park in May 2013 to review facts that we’ve covered and enjoy a beautiful day in nature’s living room.