

# Donation helps center help others

Microsoft Corp.'s gift provides \$50,000 in funds, equipment

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When Juana Rivera took stock of her life not too long ago, she realized something important was missing.

"I wanted to learn more," said Rivera, 35, a Detroit resident who emigrated from Mexico in 1997.



*(Airfoil Public Relations)*

Students participate in a computer class at All Saints Neighborhood Center in Detroit. A gift of computer equipment and funds from Microsoft Corp. has helped improve the center's programming for families.

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Speaking her adopted country's language without the heavy accent that sometimes disrupts her conversations is her top goal, she said.

"My English is not so good," said Rivera.

Last fall, she discovered the All Saints Neighborhood Center in Detroit.

"When she would speak, no one could understand her," said her daughter, Mirsha Rivera, 13, a seventh-grader at Detroit Caesar Chavez Academy.

Her mom has made progress over the past few months, said Mirsha.

A \$50,000 gift of computer software, hardware and funds from Microsoft Corp. in 2006 has made it easier to help people like Rivera, said the center's executive director, Dennis Nordmoe, 66, a Huntington Woods resident.

## **Improving quality of life**

The new equipment is used to teach adults how to speak or improve their English, help them earn a high school-equivalency diploma or gain computer skills they can utilize in the workforce.

Youngsters and teens also stop by for tutoring and other activities.

It's all part of the center's mission -- to improve the quality of life for families living in southwest Detroit.

"We want to have a neighborhood where people know each other and look out for each other and improve their own homes," said Nordmoe.

Nordmoe said the area often serves as a first stop for immigrants.

"They move in poor and move out prosperous," he said. "The problem is the people who know how to make it in American society are always leaving. We have to give them the sense the neighborhood is improving along with their lives."

Crime and drugs are two of the challenges residents face.

"If they have nice parks and programs they want for their children, more and more of them will stay," Nordmoe said.

### **A neighborhood vision**

The center shared its grant money and equipment with other area agencies, including the Clark Park Coalition, the Delray Community Center and the American Muslim Society.

"Our goal is neighborhood improvement," Nordmoe said.

That's a big reason why Microsoft decided to give a grant to the center, said Marietta Davis, the corporation's general manager of the Heartland District.

"Microsoft is committed to transforming communities and helping people realize their whole potential," said Davis, 47, a West Bloomfield resident. "We thought the Neighborhood Center community members could utilize our technology and increase their technology proficiency."

Detroit-area organizations have picked up \$5.7 million in cash and software through Microsoft grants since 2003, she said.

The corporation's gift has made a big difference to the center, said Nordmoe.

"It's helped us teach so much more effectively," he said. "Many of our people don't have the confidence they can learn."

The software and hardware gifts have helped speed up that process, he said.

"Learning quickly makes them feel more confident about their own potential in life -- learning is not this long ordeal toward this goal they can never reach," said Nordmoe. "It can be very exciting."