



Latino community given opportunity to learn of technology

By **LA Latino Issues Examiner**, Luis Antonio Pichardo
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At the Van Nuys Civic Center the [California Emerging Technology Fund](#), an organization concerned with promoting technological awareness amongst “unserved and underserved communities,” held a Technology Fair to stimulate interest in, and awareness of, various technology-based services in the predominantly Latino community of Van Nuys.

On hand at the event were many nonprofit organizations, including the [Youth Policy Institute](#), which was sharing information regarding their latest preschool accepting applications for enrollment. Along with having applications available, Flor Delgado, of the Youth Policy Institute, was also spending the afternoon informing visitors at her booth of the [Family Technology Project](#) that the Youth Policy Institute offers to parents of low-income students at area charter schools. The Family Technology Project “brings computer literacy and ownership at no cost” to families who have never owned computers and who successfully complete a computer literacy

program.

The goal of the California Emerging Technology Fund, according to [their website](#), is to “improve access, affordability...[and] to increase broadband [internet] adoption in California by 10% in 2010.” Throughout the event, the CETF gave away three home computer systems with the assistance of radio station KLOVE and technological sponsors Best Buy and La Curacao.

Along with promoting technological know-how, the event also had representatives of various organizations that could potentially serve a community hurting from down economic times. The [Employment Development Department](#) was on hand promoting their free work-readiness services through their Canoga Park branch office, and the Los Angeles-area nonprofit, [Community Union, Inc.](#), was educating attendees on the benefits of their Parent Engagement through Technology program.

According to Antonio Jimenez, a representative of Community Union, Inc., the organization offers free computer repair classes for both adults and youth in various locations throughout Los Angeles, including Pomona, Whittier, and East and Downtown Los Angeles. “And we’re also going to be starting classes soon in the valley too,” Antonio enthusiastically added. “Beginning in about

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two months we will be providing the same classes at our Van Nuys offices.” Community Union, Inc. can be found in Van Nuys at 7555 Van Nuys Boulevard.

For parents who have problems with literacy themselves, another Los Angeles-area nonprofit was present at the event to inform families of their free literacy services in Spanish. According to representatives of the [Centro Latino for Literacy](#), many adults who come to this country from Latin-American countries (estimated between 10%-15%) lacked educational opportunities in their countries of origin, therefore becoming non-literate Spanish speakers. The goal of [Centro Latino for Literacy](#) is to “form a literacy bridge over which each of the 2,000,000 non-literate Spanish speakers can cross.” This goal is achieved through internet-based learning tools that families are taught to use, thereby not only making them literate individuals, but also training them in computer literacy as well.

The [Los Angeles Unified School District](#) was also on hand promoting an innovational program being implemented in schools whereby LAUSD students are instructed through the use of online materials. Joseph Oliver, Director of Instructional Technology, explained that LAUSD’s “Online Classes” are “a new teaching method that incorporates 21st century technology and skills in a practical, school oriented, setting.”

Along with teaching the community of this valuable new resource for students in LAUSD schools, he also promoted a valuable new resource for parents to hold their students accountable in terms of class grades called the [Integrated Student Information System](#). In order for parents to access information pertaining to their student’s grades and progress reports, a parent must only fill out an “access request form” which will allow them to gain access to a database showing a student’s current grades. The system is now available to all secondary schools and will be made available in all elementary schools beginning in 2010.

All in all, attendance at the California Emerging Technology Fund’s Technology Fair was good. Children enjoyed the jumper, free giveaways from Best Buy and other corporate sponsors, and a coloring area, meanwhile parents learned of valuable resources and tools in their community. If CETF’s goal of bridging the “Digital Divide” is to be successful, then the Latino community will be their best indicator.

For more information regarding any of the nonprofits mentioned, feel free to click on their links below:

[Youth Policy Institute](#)
[Community Union, Inc.](#)
[Centro Latino for Literacy](#)

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