

Inaugural Don and Rosemary Vial Awards for Digital Inclusion Exemplary Individual Performance Nominee

Emily Simas

**Executive Director of California
Computers for Youth**



Throughout her nearly 20 year career, Emily Simas has focused on the intersection of education and technology in an effort to close the Digital Divide and ensure that all children have access to an excellent education. As Computers for Youth (CFY)'s Executive Director of California, Emily has combined her skills as both an educator and business woman to expand and deepen the organization's program in order to promote Digital Inclusion.

During the second year of working at Computers for Youth, Emily successfully launched the CFY program in the cities of San Francisco, San Jose, and Los Angeles. As a result of her work, approximately 3,500 students and parents have participated in CFY's Family Learning Workshops, which highlight ways families can harness the power of technology and the Internet to both improve student achievement and the quality of their lives. More than 1,400 California families have received their own CFY computer loaded with selected educational software, online educational content, and information about affordable broadband options.

Emily has enhanced CFY's Family Learning Workshops, developing a highly interactive and empowering learning environment where both students and parents learn vital Digital Literacy skills and techniques for using technology to help students succeed in school. She has also developed strong, mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations and key leaders and administrators in three California school districts, enabling CFY to support families with the greatest need who are often the hardest to reach.

The foundation Emily built for CFY in Los Angeles lead directly to obtaining one of two grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) for sustainable broadband adoption. The \$7.6 million grant will benefit more than 16,000 families in Los Angeles. Emily has united educational communities in California's two largest urban regions around the common goal of improving the home learning environment of low-income families. She has the innate ability to inspire, enlist, and assist others in promoting Digital Inclusion, particularly harnessing market forces to serve the public good, engaging diverse stakeholders, and using technology to tackle poverty.