Jacky Chan assists two patrons at the Asian Branch on a mobile phone

RSC

Ready, Set, Connect! **PROGRAM REPORT 2016**

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Oakland Public Library

COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY network

As a semi-finalist in the 2016 Knight Foundation News Challenge, Our Ready, Set, Connect! (RSC) program engaged its fourth cohort of diverse Oakland youth aged 16-24. The youth are tasked with lifting their communities out of the Digital Divide while gaining critical professional development and new, relevant skills for future careers in tech and other industries. In 2015-2016, 100% of the RSC cohort were youth of color, and 50% were female.

Every year since the program's inception, the selection process for applicants has become more competitive. Nearly 100 Oakland youth applied to be a part of the 2015-2016 cohort, of which 19 were chosen. In partnership with the Oakland Public Library, RSC youth worked in 8 of OPL's 16 branches, providing critical services at no cost to Oaklanders while gaining concrete professional experience in product management, visual design, user experience and interaction (UX and UI), marketing, community development and more.

Description of Activities

A uniquely dynamic program, RSC professionally develops youth while giving them experiential community service learning opportunities that in turn serve and help develop their communities.

Computer and Internet Tutoring: RSC youth trained Oakland library patrons in 12 different areas including basic computer skills and internet use (on desktops, tablets, smartphones, and e-readers); disability access; email and online communications; financial literacy services and information; family history research; government services information; health services information; internet safety and security; job search skills; Microsoft Office; and social media.

Tech and Digital Skills Training: Youth come to RSC with some familiarity with and/or the desire to build their digital skills. RSC gives them training in programs relevant to their professional development, such as Photoshop, InDesign, Google Sites, and Google Drive.

Online Professional Profile Development & Job Search Skills: Each RSC youth participant receives training on how to develop a professional online profile to market themselves and bring their online presence up to employers' expectations for entry-level applicants. This training includes crafting a compelling LinkedIn profile, developing research skills for online job searching, and coaching and mentoring on resume and cover letter writing.

Group Project Work: To prepare youth for the realities of professional life and to continue to build their interpersonal and teamwork skills, RSC individuals collaborate in groups on a project assignment of their design. Youth get the experience of negotiating with each other over project details while producing a project of benefit to the community. Examples this year included a promotional website for RSC, resource websites for each branch in different languages, currated list of gaming sites and resources for patrons' children to play with while they visit the branch, how-to videos for basic digital skills, visual guides and marketing programs for the branches, resources for job searching and resume help, and research into the digital needs of a high school.

Site Visits: So much of visualizing your career and dreaming big comes from actually seeing where you could work. Therefore a critical piece of RSC is the experience youth receive visiting tech and other companies like Google, Bluewolf, Schoolzilla and others to gain insight on the professional experience, get mentored by corporate professionals, and receive etiquette training to help them feel work ready and confident.

Marketing and Outreach Experience: To market their own digital training services to the community and further build their marketing and communication expertise, RSC youth are trained with software and web-based tools to create promotional campaigns for the program on their own.

Community Engagement and Relationship Building: An area of growth RSC youth often cite, as well as one that is observed often by staff, is the knowledge they gain in community engagement and relationship building. Youth come to the program with the desire to give back to their communities and play a concrete, tangible part in helping to develop them. They leave the program with a deeper understanding of and commitment to their communities, having strengthened relationships between library patrons and staff and created new ties between the library and other community members. The youths' new corporate contacts, and the connections made with other program participants, help create a solid professional network they can draw on for life. These social skills and emotional intelligence components of the program help ground RSC youth in their values with interpersonal tools to build their careers.

Broader Impact:
Cultivating Diverse Talent through Tackling the Digital Divide

The Bay Area is a region with growing income inequality. However, Oakland has an economic opportunity, because it is at the heart of the new growth in the tech industry. In the last 5 years, the number of jobs in tech that are located in Oakland has risen between 4 and 10 percent each year. Large, influential companies are relocating to Oakland, and the city's small-business startup scene has significant hiring needs. Furthermore, other Oakland-based businesses also have tech jobs that also need to be filled.

Yet poverty threatens the economic health of diverse youth of Oakland and their own communities, which the youth are passionate about bringing online.

Without having to apply to expensive bootcamps or coding schools, the talented, driven, and diverse RSC youth get the exposure, perspective, and connections necessary to be eligible for internships and opportunities previously inaccessible to them. Building their tech and transferable workplace skills is empowering. However, when the participants become digital literacy trainers in their communities, they experience firsthand the empowerment other Oaklanders gain when they have access to information, services, and communication tools. RSC provides its youth with the opportunity to have social impact and deepens their commitment and connection to their communities.

Finally, RSC's partnership with the public library is a unique model for specific impact outcomes. Libraries have long been centers of community, resource sharing, and civic innovation. RSC enhances the library environment and network as a space not only for those things, but also as a space for youth development, diversifying the tech sector, and making digital justice possible where community members already feel comfortable and safe.

> RSC youth get the exposure, perspective, and connections necessary to be eligible for internships and opportunities previously inaccessible to them.

Firtuna Teklemariam, Ariana Vilchez, Jacky Chan and Jason Xu engaged in a presentation by Kourosh Safavi on marketing and tech careers at Oracle

The 2015-2016 RSC cohort with OPL Supervising Librarian for Teen Services, Lana Adlawan (pictured front and center)

Locations & Impact

Location	People Trained	Hours Volunteered
81st Avenue Branch Library	180	141
Asian Branch Library	577	161
Chavez Branch Library	180	180.5
Dimond Branch Library	109	107
Eastmont Branch Library	100	108
Main Library	168	106.5
Melrose Branch Library	56	106
Rockridge Branch Library	39	43
Grand Total	**1,409**	**953**

Program Impact Data

- **8 library branches served**

- **18 youth completed** the program

- **95 youth applied** to participate, 19 selected, 18 youth graduated

- **30 week program** of skill building and community service

- **64 hours of professional development** in the form of digital skills, presentation, and public speaking training for each youth participant

- **1,409 Oakland library patrons** served and trained

- **953 hours of volunteer service** performed by the cohort with the diverse residents of Oakland who come to the library to get connected to the internet for free, learn new skills, and access critical information

- **12 types of digital training** offered by youth to patrons: basic computer skills and internet use (on desktops, tablets, smartphones, and e-readers); disability access; email and online communications; financial literacy services and information; family history research; government services information; health services information; internet safety and security; job search skills; Microsoft Office; and social media.

- **12+ languages were spoken** by RSC youth in this cohort, including: Amharic, Cantonese, Hindi, Maam, Mandarin, Nepali, Nigerian, Spanish, Tagalog, Taishanese, and Tigrinya

Jacky Chan working with a patron at the Asian Branch

2016 Cohort

ANDRES ARGUDIN

"My name is Jose Andres, I'm from Mexico. I been in America for more than three years and my hobbies are watching movies, and anime. Also I like to play guitar and learn other languages, for example I am learning Russian."

Andres and his teammate at Melrose provided bilingual digital literacy training to patrons. He helped with Spanish revisions of material and outreach to Spanish speakers.

ROBERTO CAMARENA

"My name is Roberto Camarena. I am a junior at Lighthouse Community Charter School, love animals, and enjoy playing sports and using my computer on my free time. I have some experience with computer codes since I took a summer program about C++."

Roberto was part of a team at Chavez branch, which developed resources for all people involved or engaged by the RSC program.
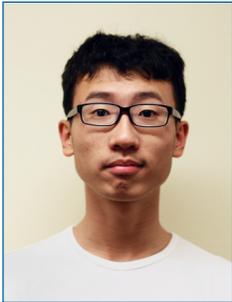
JACKY CHAN

"Hello, my name is Jacky and I am 17 years old. One of my greatest hobbies is to sit in front of a computer and work on coding and to develop cool and fun programs. I like coding because I like things that are logical and very challenging. I am one of those teenagers who is very curious about new things and want to learn about almost everything that comes into my interest. A fun fact about me, is that I know how to solve a three by three rubix cube, and maybe a four by four rubix cube as well."

During the RSC program, Jacky and his two other teammates worked on a website targeted to serve Chinese immigrants at the Asian Branch Library. Originally from China, Jacky is a student at Oakland Charter High School.

JUAN CORTES

"Most of my interests involve technology. I spend most of my time working on programs and learning code. I actually started a Tech Club at school to expand my interest. I am also interested in majoring in computer science or engineering so learning more professional skills will help me. Thanks again for this opportunity!"

Juan was a lead on a website for patrons and their children at 81st Avenue Branch. After the RSC program, Juan graduated from Oakland Unity High School and was accepted into one of his choice colleges to study Computer Science at Sacramento State University.

ELIZABETH DOMINGUEZ

"I want to be able to work in something that I love to do! I graduated from Media Academy High School in Oakland. I love photography and graphic design, I like to read and spend time learning new things online."

Elizabeth created and gave basic computer classes to patrons at the Melrose Branch. She promoted her digital literacy services and used her graphic design skills to create attractive promotional materials for the Branch, which was a new internship site for RSC at the time.

2016 Cohort

CYNTHIA HERRERA

"I usually go outdoors to do homework and study. I really enjoy going out to concerts and listening to music . On the other hand I enjoy spending time online with my tumblr and I've been thinking about making a YouTube channel... I am interested in having a career in graphic design or computer programming. I want to get exposed to different skills related to technology so I can discover something interesting or develop a new hobby. I have an eye for working with companies in creating their layouts and need to learn the skills to do so."

After graduating RSC, Cynthia was admitted into a Girls Who Code summer program at Twitter Headquarters. She and her teammates at Chavez Branch worked on a RSC dedicated website for interns, patrons, and staff.

ALEXIS LARES

"I am a Hispanic student at Lighthouse Community Charter High School, my hobbies/interests are drawing, painting, playing guitar, playing video games, soccer and watching old Noir films."

Alexis provided bilingual support for patrons at 81st Avenue Branch and was a beta tester for his team's resource website for adults and children.

KELLY LIAO

"My name is Kelly Liao, I am from China, I have been in America for almost two years, and my hobbies are watching anime and drawing... I wanted to join [RSC] to help different people who are the first time using internet. [RSC was also] an opportunity to be a professional and get exposure to professional opportunities."

In addition to serving over 570 patrons with her two other teammates, Kelly helped with the graphic and design component of a website they created for Chinese patrons at Asian Branch.

KATHY PAREDES

"My full name is Mary Katherine Paredes but I go by Kathy. I am 18 years old and am a student at Laney Community College where I work as a Spanish tutor. I have my major set at biology but it is subject to change as I enjoy many subjects. I am the oldest of four girls and have lived in Oakland all my life. I really enjoy reading and writing in both English and Spanish. I also enjoy volunteering and working with people, especially with kids."

Kathy provided bilingual help for patrons at Dimond Branch. She and her teammate worked on visual maps, how-to's, and other important visual digital literacy and Oakland Public Library resource materials for the patrons and staff to use. Like others in the cohort, she was hired by Oakland Public Library. Kathy was also admitted into a competitive science research program with National Institute of Health at UC Berkeley and is pursuing a career in the sciences.

2016 Cohort

ABEL REGALADO

"I am [now a senior] at ARISE High School, and this school has developed me to be someone who makes a change in the world. I like to learn new things all the time by reading books, and I like to implement new things in my life. Additionally, I have a good passion for helping people, and I like volunteering at places and my old middle school. I like to work on technology projects and I often repair my devices when I need to repair a battery, camera or other function on phone. Plus, I recently started building websites with Hack The Hood, and I found a great passion in this because I had the chance to help various local businesses in Oakland get exposure to the virtual market."

Abel has a strong passion for learning and technology and is developing his skills as a web designer. He and his team at Chavez Branch designed a prototype for an RSC website for patrons, community members, RSC interns, volunteers, partners, and others interested in learning more about the program. After graduating from the RSC program, Abel was admitted into competitive coding and entrepreneur summer programs.

HENRY SALES

"My hobby is to use the computer and search for the latest technology and news. Also I like to play soccer and more importantly I'm really interested in computer science."

Henry and his branch mate at the Eastmont Branch produced print material for patrons to use when looking for work or learning how to use the computer. Henry is from Guatemala, is a student at Laney College, and has some working knowledge of Python as a programming language. His experience in RSC helped him gain part time positions at Oakland Public Library and San Francisco Public Library.

PRIYA SUBBA

"I like to support my community. I am also interested to learn and share knowledge with people. I love reading fiction books and teaching younger kids. I have been performing dances since I was little, including that, I admire volunteering in the library."

Other than helping patrons with Digital Literacy Skills, Priya and her teammate at the Main Branch dedicated themselves to researching the digital literacy needs of immigrant students at their high school (International HS) and promoting services to non-English speakers.

FIRTUNA TEKLEMARIAM

"I am interested in writing and reading. My multiple intelligence are naturalistic, interpersonal. I am interested in helping others - I am caring person and I like to protect and develop my community."

Firtuna is a student at International High School and is interested in becoming a civil engineer. She and her two branch mates worked on a resource website for parents and their children to use at the 81st Avenue Branch. Firtuna also provided bilingual digital literacy language support in Amharic and Tigrinya when needed at the branch.

2016 Cohort

KASIEMOBI UDO-OKOYE

"I was a Human Biology major and Theater and Performance Studies minor. My life pursuits boil down to heavy metal, epidemiology, poetry, barn-dancing, weight-lifting, Judy Garland movies, and Thai food. One of these things will be my future career. I am interested in helping non-profits reach out to and communicate with communities using social media, marketing, and online communication, especially in the field of public health and community health initiatives."

Kasie was integral in the creation of visual materials that would benefit the patrons at Dimond Branch. During the RSC program, Kasie graduated from Stanford University and obtained full-time employment as a content strategist with Tubi TV, a media company in San Francisco.
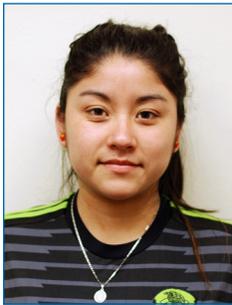
ARIANA VILCHEZ

"I really want to help others... I'm from Mexico, I am responsible and respectful. I can say that one type of intelligence for me is body smart because I love to learn by doing things, I enjoy volleyball, swimming and hiking. I like to listen music and help others, play video-games, read books, also I appreciate when people give some feedback. Finally I love fiction and comic movies."

Ariana provided bi-lingual digital literacy services at Main Branch. She focused on doing outreach to Spanish-speaking immigrants at International High School and investigating what their digital literacy needs were. She and her teammate at Main provided the library with excellent feedback on how young immigrants view the library and its services.

LYNESHA WILLIAMS

"I am originally from Los Angeles, this is my [4th] year living and teaching in Oakland. In undergrad, I earned my BS in Liberal Studies and Sociology. My goal is to soon earn my Masters in Urban Education as well as my teacher's credential in multiple subjects. My hobbies include laughing, walking, watching movies, going to the beach, and amusement parks. My interests include learning new things, poetry, comedy, and teaching youth!"

Lynesha and her teammate at Eastmont Branch worked on important print how-to's for patrons, focusing on job searches and online entertainment. After the RSC program, Lynesha was employed as a camp director and then as a teacher in one of Oakland's Charter Schools.
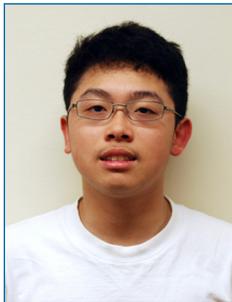
JASON XU

"I like technology and science, and I plan to take engineering in college. In my free time, I like to disassemble items and try to put the item back together. I also like to make art whenever I have time."

Jason and his two other teammates at Asian Branch served over 570 patrons, most of them Cantonese and Mandarin speakers. Jason also helped create a website for patrons at the Asian Branch. After RSC, Jason graduated high school and began his freshman year at college.

JESSICA ZEPEDA

"In my excess time, I engage in the acts of creating art, playing basketball, running, and self-studying programming languages - in order to educate myself further about the topic. Originating from my earliest years, an interest in math and science had risen. This evolved into a potential career in the stem field, where I'm aspiring to major in bio-medical engineering. Regardless of the hardships and adversity I have had to endure, I always aim to be more persistent and insert an increased amount of effort into my work as a means to achieve my goals. Through my life experiences as well as the support of my family during my educational development, I am determined to continue to pursue my ambition of entering the field."

After the RSC program, Jessica graduated high school and was admitted into one of her choice colleges. During the RSC program she helped her teammates at the Chavez Branch create a web page for RSC.

Abel Regalado helps a patron figure out email on a public computer at the Chavez branch

Kourosh Safavi from Oracle giving a presentation to the RSC cohort on the marketing side of tech

Participant Feedback

"I helped someone apply for a studio since they were homeless and needed a place to stay."

Alexis Lares, 81st Ave. Branch

"[I helped] a family find a home."

Cynthia Herrera, Chavez Branch

"It was great helping a patron with her resume and cover letter for the first time."

Lynesha Williams, Eastmont Branch

"I helped a patron with getting a permit for him to be able to work in a restaurant. He was really excited because it was all he needed to get a job."

Abel Regalado, Chavez Branch

"The outreach speech helped me gain confidence in front of others."

Priya Subba, Main Library

"I was able to make a connection with the HR marketing person at Google and she had some great advice about how to take some concrete steps and networking measures to help realize my dreams for a creative career."

Kasie Udo-Okoye, Dimond Branch

Tech Trips

Many RSC youth are exposed for the first time to the tech workplace through the visits to the program partners' offices. In addition to meeting tech professionals in their workspaces, youth get exposed to the variety of physical environments and offices across the sector. This experience gives youth the opportunity to visualize themselves in such workspaces in future. Youth begin to feel what the tech industry and various careers can be like in a very real way. These trips have included a tour of massive and complex spaces like Google's original campus in Mountain View as well as an innovative accelerator startup at Matter, The History Project. In addition to getting one-on-one mentoring, youth have also received resume reviews and personalized advice, witnessed how a successful startup grows, heard personal stories in different roles within a company, and have been exposed to the nonprofit side of tech. All of these elements help prepare youth for making decisions about their next steps professionally (whether it be applying to a bootcamp, school, a job or an internship), while leaving the program with an actual network of tech professionals from the personal contacts made on each trip.

12/10/15: Schoolzilla
03/03/16: Bluewolf
03/10/16: Bluewolf
03/31/16: Google (Mountain View)
03/17/16: History Project
05/12/16: OTX-West
05/19/16: Google (San Francisco)

Special thanks to all the volunteer speakers and trainers who shared their time and expertise with our youth this year:

Clay Murphy	Google
Danielle Bowers	Google
Bel Gy	Bluewolf
Kevin Schmidt	Bluewolf
Kevin Louie	Bluewolf
Laura Brigham	Bluewolf
Cynthia Mackey	Winning Strategies, LLC
Hallie Montoya	Schoolzilla
Niles Lichtenstein	The History Project
Nikita Shamdasani	Matter.
Rebecca Bowring	Matter.
Amanda Lenaghan	Charles Schwab
Joseph Benvenuto	Charles Schwab
Michael J. Castro	Charles Schwab
Kourosh Safavi	Oracle
Seth Hubbart	OTX West
Domingo Vasquez	OTX West
Matt Kinnamont	OTX West
Mai-Ling Garcia	City of Oakland Communications & Digital Strategy
Daniel Ross	Independent Videographer

This program and the impact it makes would not be possible without the time, passion, and dedication of Oakland Public Library's staff who work with our participants in branch computer labs across the city all year long. Due to their commitment, diverse Oakland youth are empowered and grow through the chance to connect with industry professionals who help them realize their potential and make a meaningful difference in their communities.

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