



AUSTIN FREE-NET (AFN) COMPUTER CLINICS

EVALUATION REPORT

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By

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I INTRODUCTION

Austin Free-Net (AFN) is a non-profit corporation, established in 1995, that provides computer access & training to community members to help them improve their lives, find jobs and become active citizens in the digital age. AFN maintains its operations from funding it receives from contracts, foundation and corporate grants & from the Austin city government for providing certain services.¹

One of AFN's main functions is to offer free computer clinics to members of underserved communities, senior citizens and people with disabilities, at select sites, across Austin.² The purpose of these clinics is to enable the targeted audiences to learn how to use computers, the internet and different computer applications & to provide a platform where the attendees' computer related queries can be posed and addressed. The clinics thus provide attendees, who are alienated or on the margins of the digital canvas, an opportunity to become active participants in the technology landscape. The clinics are open to anyone who wishes to attend and no prior registration is required.

An evaluation³ was carried out during January 2010 to March 2010 to examine the impact of the AFN computer clinics. The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- To examine the value and benefits that the computer clinics bring to attendees
- To examine the volunteering system associated with the clinics
- To determine how the clinics and the volunteering system can be improved & expanded

The methodology of the evaluation consisted of: Surveys administered to past and current attendees & volunteers; telephone interviews with volunteers & computer clinic sites officials; face to face interviews with AFN staff and; a review of the computer clinics related handouts and reports.

This report analyzes and enumerates the results of the evaluation and is structured in the ensuing manner. The following section provides an overview of the computer clinics including what they consist of, the sites they are held at and the role of the volunteers. The subsequent section provides an overview of the methodology employed in the evaluation. The penultimate section provides the results of the surveys and interviews pertaining to the main evaluation objectives. The concluding section of the report lists some specific ideas and recommendations that can be explored by AFN to improve and expand the computer clinics & the volunteering system associated with them.

¹ For an overview of the work that AFN does in Austin, Texas go to <http://www.austinfreenet/>

² AFN also offers fee based classes pertaining to applications of MS Office (Access, Dreamweaver, Excel, Power Point, Word etc) targeted at non-profit organizations and government agencies, but they are in limited demand.

³ The evaluation was conducted and written solely by Dr. Dabla who served as a volunteer with AFN for this purpose.

II OVERVIEW OF COMPUTER CLINICS

The AFN's free computer clinics originated in 2006 and currently are held at five sites across Austin. The main purpose of the clinics is to help attendees learn how to use a computer, the internet and various computer applications & to address any computer related queries that the attendees might have. The attendees of the clinics are predominantly members of underserved communities across Austin and include working, out of work, disabled and senior citizens from a variety of racial and ethnic groups of both genders. Most of the attendees are from low income backgrounds with little or no prior experience in using computers. Since the computer clinics were started more than 500 people have attended them.⁴

Publicity of Computer Clinics

AFN disseminates information about the computer clinics through a variety of channels including:

- AFN website & mailing list
- Flyers posted at the AFN office⁵ and at partner sites across Austin
- Flyers posted at an Austin WorkSource Center where a city employment office is also present (currently the North Austin center)
- Flyers posted at Austin public libraries and links with information on library websites (currently at 21 libraries)
- Public service announcements on KUT (the NPR radio station at University of Texas at Austin)
- Information on #211⁶ (by phone and on 2-1-1 web site)
- Word of mouth

Through these various sources anyone can learn about the free computer clinics and attend them, without any prior registration.

Computer Clinic Topics



The computer clinics are held in designated computer labs at the following five sites:

- Arthur B. DeWitty Center
- North Loop Apartments
- Gaston Place Apartments
- Salina Apartments
- Lakeside Apartments

⁴ Go to <http://www.austinfree.net/about/reports.html> to view prior reports discussing the computer clinics attendees' demographics and the different benefits they have received from the clinics.

⁵ The AFN office is located at the Arthur B. DeWitty Center.

⁶ http://www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/get_help_2-1-1/

At least one staff computer instructor is present at each clinic, and volunteers are usually present for all the clinics at the DeWitty center. Some of the main topics that are covered in the clinics include:

- Orientation to a computer for first time users
- Practicing mouse skills & typing skills
- Managing the desktop
- Using MS Word, Excel, Power Point etc
- Creating a file & saving documents
- Introducing the internet & searching the internet
- Setting up an email account (an index card with the attendee's login and password is kept with the computer instructor as backup)
- Attaching photos
- Creating flyers

Apart from the above listed topics, any computer related queries an attendee might have are answered by the computer instructors and the volunteers. As the attendees are new users of computers their questions are mostly not very complicated, however in a few cases more advanced questions have been asked (for example how to set up an *All in One* printer/scanner/copier, put music to a photo presentation, etc). Attendees can also learn to play games or watch movies on the computers (with earphones) and can print up to 10 pages for free (10 cents are charged for each additional page).

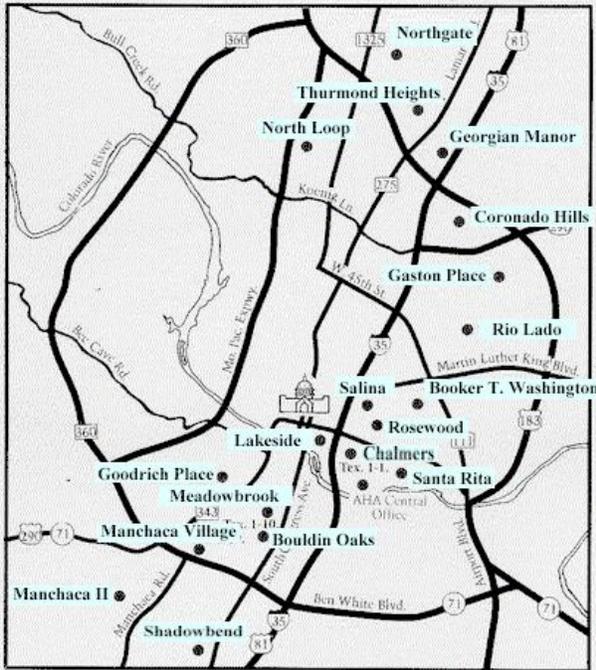
Computer Clinic Sites

AFN currently hosts computer clinics at the following five sites:

- 1 Arthur B. DeWitty Center⁷: Two computer clinics are held every week (excluding the last week of the month) with one on Wednesday evening and one on Thursday morning. Each clinic is held for an hour and a half in a computer lab with 9 desktop computers. On average there are around 25 attendees at the clinics every month. The clinics at DeWitty are overseen by a staff computer instructor and include volunteers. A format of open computer clinics where attendees come in and pose any computer related queries they have is followed for all the clinics at this site. The clinics at DeWitty began in 2006, and a contract with the City of Austin and funding from IBM and the Lola Wright Foundation provide finances for the operation of clinics at this site.

AFN also has a contract (from August 2009 to July 2010) with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) to host computer clinics at the following four sites:

⁷ <http://www.austinfreenet.org/calendar/index.html>



- 2 North Loop Apartments⁸: Two clinics are held every week on Tuesday morning and Thursday afternoon. Each clinic is held for an hour and half in a computer lab on the site, which has 4 desktop computers.
- 3 Gaston Place Apartments⁹: Two clinics are held every week on Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon. Each clinic is held for an hour and half in a computer lab on the site, which has 4 desktop computers.
- 4 Salina Apartments¹⁰: Two clinics are held every week on Tuesday afternoon and Friday morning. Each clinic is held for an hour and half in a computer lab on the site, which has 7 laptop computers.

- 5 Lakeside Apartments¹¹: Two clinics are held every week on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Each clinic is held for an hour and half in a computer lab on the site, which has 4 laptop computers.

The clinics at the North Loop, Gaston Place, Salina and Lakeside sites cater to senior and disabled citizens and are held every week of the month. Each clinic is led by one staff lead instructor and one staff co-instructor, and on average between 10-15 people attend the clinics (total for all four sites) every month. Initially a structured eight week course (covering introduction to computers, mouse skills, Internet, email, folders and files and Google Docs) was offered at these sites, but currently the format of open computer clinics where attendees come in and ask any computer related questions they have is being offered. No volunteers participate in the clinics at any of the HACA sites.

Volunteers

AFN usually has an average of 15 active volunteers a month who participate in the computer clinics at the DeWitty center. A staff computer instructor or a training manager along with 3-5 volunteers are present at each clinic at DeWitty. The majority of volunteers find out about AFN's clinics from: the VolunteerMatch¹² website, publicity done by AFN and through word of mouth. All the volunteers who are chosen for the AFN computer clinics have a background in computers. Some are personal users others have degrees (or are getting degrees) in computer

⁸ http://www.hacanet.org/haca_communities/north_loop.php

⁹ http://www.hacanet.org/haca_communities/gaston_place.php

¹⁰ http://www.hacanet.org/haca_communities/salina_apt.php

¹¹ http://www.hacanet.org/haca_communities/lakeside_apt.php

¹² <http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

science or have work experience with IT companies. The male and female volunteers range from college students, recent graduates, office workers to retirees.

The following procedure takes place when someone wants to volunteer for the computer clinics:

- Potential volunteers are referred to the AFN volunteer page¹³ on the AFN website
- Potential volunteers fill out a volunteer application form and list their contact information, availability, computer related skills, assignment preferences, etc
- The data provided by each potential volunteer is stored in a database operating on the Volgistics software.
- The Volunteer Coordinator has a phone/email conversation with the candidate to assign them a computer clinic.
- After the first volunteering session an email is sent to the volunteer to follow up with him/her regarding how their experience went and if they would like to continue volunteering.
- Based on the volunteers' availabilities (stored in the database) a volunteer schedule is made weeks in advance.

Each new volunteer is asked to come half an hour early before his/her first volunteering session to participate in an orientation. As all the volunteers have a background in using computers the orientation is pretty basic, and is carried out by the AFN training manager. The topics covered in the orientation include providing an overview of volunteers' responsibilities including how to interact with the attendees and address their queries; what to do with first time computer users, etc. The volunteers are also provided a handout that provides information about their role in the clinics and how to help someone use a computer and its applications.

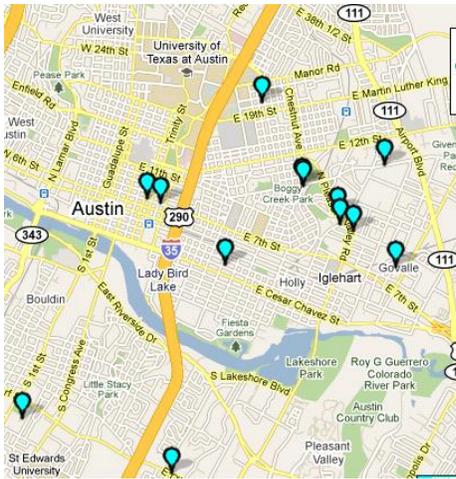
In the DeWitty site computer clinics, new participants fill out a short form with their contact information, current skill level and are assigned to a volunteer. If not working with a participant one-on-one the volunteers walk around asking the attendees if any help is needed and answer any queries. Ideally each volunteer is expected to assist two attendees at a time, but this ratio fluctuates depending on the number of attendees and the types of queries posed. A staff computer instructor is present at each clinic to assist the volunteers and to help answer any attendees' queries, if required.

Overseeing Computer Labs at Community Partner Sites

AFN currently also has a contract with the City of Austin to provide computers and internet access and training to a number of community partner sites. As a result of this funding, AFN oversees the computer labs at select community partner sites in partnership with other nonprofits, a faith-based organization and Austin city departments. These sites include:

¹³ <http://www.austinfreenet.org/volunteers/index.html>

1. Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH)¹⁴ (6 computers provided)
2. Blackland Neighborhood Center¹⁵ (2 computers provided)
3. Casa Marianella¹⁶ (2 computers provided)
4. Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center¹⁷ (11 computers provided)
5. DeWitty Center Public Lab¹⁸ (14 computers provided)
6. DeWitty Center COA Employment Office¹⁹ (6 computers provided)
7. East Austin Neighborhood Center²⁰ (2 computers provided)
8. Lyons Gardens Senior Housing Community²¹ (6 computers provided – 1 from AFN, 5 from a grant to Lyons Gardens)
9. Oak Springs Villas²² (4 computers provided)
10. Rosewood-Zaragosa Neighborhood Center²³ (3 computers provided)
11. South Austin Neighborhood Center²⁴ (5 computers provided)
12. St. John's Neighborhood Center²⁵ (2 computers provided)
13. Trinity Center²⁶ (4 computers provided)
14. Ventana del Soul²⁷ (5 computers provided, addition AFN recently began supporting 7 laptops provided by Ventana del Soul that are not public but are used for training a target audience)



Note: The DeWitty Center training lab, with 9 computers, is opened for overflow when additional public access computers are needed and is loaned out to other nonprofits for their programs or staff training.

AFN’s responsibilities at the computer labs at these 14 sites include: providing technical support, maintaining the computers, installing any appropriate software on the computers, providing handouts related to computer applications training, providing attendees and volunteer sign in forms, etc. AFN sends an email every month to all the site officials to get feedback on the usage of the computers and to solicit any questions they might have.

¹⁴ <http://www.frontsteps.org/>
¹⁵ http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthy_neighborhoods_centers.htm
¹⁶ <http://www.casamarianella.org/>
¹⁷ <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/conleyg.htm>
¹⁸ <http://www.austinfree.net/locations/dewittylabs.html>
¹⁹ <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/hr/default.htm>
²⁰ http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthy_neighborhoods_centers.htm
²¹ <http://www.familyeldercare.org/>
²² <http://www.voatx.org/Services/AustinArea/HousingServices/OakSpringsVillas/tabid/7343/Default.aspx>
²³ http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthy_neighborhoods_centers.htm
²⁴ http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthy_neighborhoods_centers.htm
²⁵ http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthy_neighborhoods_centers.htm
²⁶ <http://www.trinitycenteraustin.org/>
²⁷ <http://www.ventanadelsoul.org/>

In the past AFN has conducted computer clinics and provided volunteers to three of these sites (ARCH, Conley-Guerrero and Lyons Gardens). Currently, however, AFN does not provide volunteers to any of these 14 sites.



III METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the computer clinics was carried out during January 2010 to March 2010 and consisted of the following methodology:

- ***A survey of clinic attendees.*** A survey including multiple choice and open ended questions pertaining to the attendees' demographics, computer skills level, benefits they have received from the clinics & how they feel the clinics can be improved was administered. Hard copies of the survey were placed at the DeWitty computer lab for a period of 6 weeks. DeWitty site officials were asked to request the attendees to fill out the surveys and to place the completed surveys in a box. Through this process 2 surveys were obtained.

The same survey was also emailed to approximately 50 past and current attendees of the computer clinics, whose email addresses were obtained from AFN's mailing list. A total of 10 surveys were emailed back to the evaluator.

- ***A survey for AFN volunteers & site officials.*** A survey including open ended questions pertaining to the volunteers' orientation, impact of the clinics on the attendees & how the clinics can be improved was emailed to approximately 30 past and current volunteers & to 8 computer clinics site officials. Eight volunteers and one site official emailed surveys back to the evaluator.

Hard copies of the same survey were also placed at the computer lab at the DeWitty center (for a period of 6 weeks) for volunteers to fill out. Through this process 3 surveys were obtained.

- ***Interviews with volunteers & site officials.*** A total of 8 phone interviews were carried out (5 with current and past volunteers and 3 with clinics site officials) where the interviewees were asked open ended and holistic questions regarding the clinic attendees, the volunteers, how the clinics can be improved, future strategies for the clinics etc. Each interview lasted for approximately 15-20 minutes.
- ***Interviews with AFN staff.*** Face to face interviews were held with AFN's Executive Director, Program Specialist, Volunteer Coordinator and Training Manager. All four staff members were asked open ended and holistic questions pertaining to the set up and

management of the computer clinics, the attendees, the volunteers, challenges, future directions of the clinics etc.

- **Review of appropriate handouts & literature.** The evaluator conducted a review of all the pertinent handouts and reports related to the AFN computer clinics.

IV EVALUATION RESULTS

This section enumerates the opinions and insights gathered from the surveys and interviews with the attendees, volunteers and site officials.

Attendees

A total of 12 completed attendee surveys (both hard copies²⁸ and emailed copies) were reviewed, based on which the following information was obtained.

(Please note: The 12 attendees who undertook the survey did not answer all the questions in the survey, hence it is not possible to provide comprehensive numbers for the first two groups of indicators listed below.)

Demographics, Education & Employment

<i>Race</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Income Level (in thousands)</i>
-White (6) -Hispanic (3) -Black (1)	-Male (5) -Female (7)	Ranging from 48 to 72	-High School Graduate: (3) -Some College: (3) -College Graduate: (3)	-Salesperson -Legal Secretary -Office Help -Retired -Unemployed -Small Business Owner	-Below 15: (4) -Between 15-25: (2) -Between 25-40: (1) -Above 40: (1)

Computers & Clinics

<i>Using Computers</i>	<i>Number of Clinics Attended</i>	<i>Will Attend Future Clinics</i>	<i>Heard About Clinics From</i>
-Never used before: (1) -Used but not comfortable: (4) -Used to type documents, for email & Internet: (3) -Confident using computer & applications: (2)	-One clinic: (3) -Two clinics: (1) -Three clinics: (3) -More than three clinics: (4)	-Yes: (9) -No: (0)	-From a Friend: (2) -Flyer: (4) -Internet: (1) -#211: (1)

²⁸ For a variety of reasons it was not possible to have a greater number of attendees fill out hard copies of the survey.

Benefits from Clinics

The respondents listed a variety of benefits they felt the computer clinics had provided them including:

- Overcoming a fear of computers
- Learning how to operate the computer and various computer applications (Word, email, Internet etc)
- Learning the value and benefits of the computer in daily life
- Being able to improve and move forward by knowing more about the different possibilities offered by using the computer
- Being better at their job and work by becoming more computer savvy
- Being able to look for jobs on the internet & draft CVs on the computer
- Finding new ways (email) to keep in touch with family and friends
- Being able to share photos with family and friends
- Being able to get information on various topics (social services, health, current events, news, religion, entertainment etc) from the Internet
- Being able to access and use social network sites (Facebook etc) to connect with friends and family
- Being able to play games and watch movies on the computer
- Getting individual attention in the DeWitty center clinics was extremely helpful as this type of service is normally not available in other free computer classes
- Convenience and flexibility of the clinics as you can drop in any clinic without making reservations

Improving Clinics

When asked how the clinics can be improved the respondents were unanimous in stating that there should be more clinics at the current sites. Most of the respondents stated that they would like to continue the classes as they are, but some also mentioned the following:

- Increase the time for each clinic
- Set up an email account which attendees can use to ask computer related questions
- Set up an informal forum or web page where attendees can post questions
- Get help to download and fill out appropriate tax forms
- Have a larger computer lab for the clinics at the DeWitty center as it gets over crowded on many occasions

Impact of Clinics on Families

Responding to a question regarding if the computer clinics have affected their families in any way, some of the opinions that were offered included:

- Not having to ask and/or having to get less help from other family member in using computers, email, etc.
- Being able to communicate with extended family members across the state and country over email

- Being able to share photos with family members and friends
- Being able to look for jobs and apply for them
- Being late for dinner after attending the evening classes

Volunteers

A total of 16 volunteers (including 8 who filled out the emailed survey, 3 who filled out the hard copy of the survey and 5 who were interviewed over the phone) provided their opinions and insights regarding the AFN computer clinics. All the respondents had volunteered for more than two computer clinics at the DeWitty center, and nearly half of the respondents had been volunteers for more than six months.²⁹

Volunteer Orientation

Almost half of the respondents had taken part in an orientation before they participated in their first clinic, while the others had not attended (or did not recollect attending) an orientation. Some of the inputs the respondents provided regarding the volunteer orientation included:

- It provided an understanding of the attendees levels of education and backgrounds
- It provided an understanding of what is expected of them in the clinics

Two of respondents were of the view that the orientation could be improved if:

- A short video of a computer clinic in session is shown
- A summary of the most referenced websites that the attendees visit & the software products that they use is provided

The respondents who had not attended an orientation did not feel it was really necessary as they felt that if a volunteer can troubleshoot computers they can pick up their role quite fast in the clinics & if they get stuck with an attendees query they can always refer to more experienced volunteers and the staff computer instructor to help them.

Satisfying Experience

All the respondents were unanimous in stating that the experience they had in volunteering in the computer clinics was very satisfying to them as they were able to do concrete acts to help the attendees. Some specific opinions that were offered included:

- “It was extremely satisfying. I have volunteered in many places, and being able to see the end-result almost in real-time makes the time worth-while. I also enjoy direct interaction with those in need.”

²⁹ Volunteer respondents were not asked for their demographic information in the survey or the interviews.

- “I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I enjoyed very much helping the mostly senior people that were in need of help.”
- “It was a reminder that the skills I have weren't always there and they are difficult to learn. Computers are not very usable or intuitive at all, despite what we think. It was gratifying to show people the ropes and help them become self sufficient in a crucial job skill.”
- “Being able to assist people with their computer issues & teaching them how to use one is very beneficial for me. It also made me realize how many people still don't have a computer and/or don't have the necessary Internet connection to participate in this medium.”

Three respondents also mentioned how helping the attendees improved their teaching skills as during the clinics they had to explain concepts and work with people from different backgrounds. Thus the volunteering experience was helping them hone their skills for their current and/or future careers. A couple of the respondents, however, did state that the scheduling of volunteers could be improved as sometimes there was a large gap before they were assigned further volunteering duties.

Benefits to Attendees

The respondents were unanimous in stating that the computer clinics brought diverse benefits to the attendees. Some of the benefits they listed included:

- The computer clinics have a small class size and individual attention is given to each attendee
- There is a non threatening environment in the clinics so the attendees feel comfortable asking questions
- Attendees got access to computers, which otherwise many wouldn't
- Attendees overcome their fear of using computers and build up their confidence to use them
- Attendees learn about something they just didn't understand before
- Attendees got immediate results in the clinics such as setting up email accounts, filling out job applications, emailing family members & potential employers, formatting and saving resumes etc
- Older attendees can correspond over email with their children and grandchildren and send and receive photos

Improving Computer Clinics

The respondents provided a variety of opinions to improve the computer clinics including:

- Have more clinics
- Get new computers at the DeWitty Center site
- Flash drives can be made available to the attendees for a small fee so they can save all their files/emails/photos etc
- Explain basic terminologies of computers to new attendees (for example a Desktop is not an actual desk)

- Talk about and spread awareness of security/privacy issues related to the internet
- Provide guidelines about downloading Windows update, updating anti-virus, scanning email attachments, turning Firewall on etc
- Offer more structured classes with fixed curriculums pertaining to different computer applications, if there is a demand.
- Provide a handout that lists certain criteria to look at before buying a computer
- Provide information on how to shop on the internet

When asked if the volunteers would be willing to volunteer at clinics at other sites (apart from the DeWitty Center site) a majority responded that they would as long as the sites were not too far from their house/office and if they had no scheduling conflicts.

Site Officials

A total of four site officials provided their opinions and inputs. One of the respondents was from the DeWitty center site, two were from HACA sites and one was from a Community Partner site whose computer lab AFN oversees (but where no computer clinics are provided).

The respondents from the DeWitty and HACA sites said that the clinics were very beneficial to the attendees: get access to computers and overcame their fears of using them, learn different computer applications, are able to search for and find jobs, are able to use the internet for diverse purposes, are able to have greater communication with family and friends etc. All these respondents were also of the view that there was a demand for additional clinics at their sites.

The HACA site officials mentioned that some of the disabled and senior citizens, who attended the clinics, could now learn new computer applications to spend their time in beneficial ways & also be in greater touch with their families by writing emails, sharing photos etc. Further they agreed that having volunteers at the clinics who had prior experience interacting with disabled and senior citizens (and who knew about computers) would be helpful. One respondent, however, did mention that more publicity could be done about the clinics to the residents and the residents should also be asked if the current schedule of the clinics is suitable for them.³⁰

The one respondent from the Community Partner site stated that some residents at her site regularly use the computer lab. In the past she had independently managed to get some volunteers to help the residents in the computer lab, but this help has been erratic. Hence if AFN could provide some experienced volunteers (especially those that have worked with senior citizens and who know Spanish) on a regular basis it would be beneficial to the site residents. The respondent remarked that if such an arrangement could be worked out, the computer clinics

³⁰ It should be noted that a resident survey was taken before clinics began at each HACA site and the clinics are therefore scheduled at various times to try to accommodate everyone who turned in a survey or put their name on a class sign-up sheet. In addition AFN trainers call potential participants who participated in the surveys, leave flyers under their doors and post flyers around each HACA site. AFN officials also attend Resident Council meetings at each site and have attended the HACA City-Wide Resident and Partners meeting.

would be added and marked in the residents' monthly activity calendar thereby ensuring no scheduling conflicts and a regular attendance.

V CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the AFN computer clinics has definitively demonstrated that the clinics are bringing a variety of benefits to the target audiences. Further there is no doubt that there is a demand for additional clinics at the current sites. The following discussion enumerates some key ideas and recommendations that AFN can explore to improve and expand the computer clinics and its volunteering system.

Improving Clinics

AFN can explore incorporating the following issues in future clinics:

- The setting up of an email account to be used exclusively by current and past attendees to pose any computer related queries & to provide comments on how the clinics are functioning should be explored. AFN computer instructors and volunteers should be given access to this email so anyone can respond to the queries (a Gmail account would be most suitable for such a purpose). If certain queries cannot be responded over email, then the attendee can be asked to come in person to one of the clinics.
- A sequence of structured courses (as was initially offered at the HACA sites) should be offered periodically at any site where such a demand is found to exist. To ensure that AFN is able to determine this demand site officials, computer instructors and the volunteers will have to make attendees aware that such a course can be offered & to simultaneously solicit the need of such a course from the attendees.
- Many attendees ask for help to look for jobs & to draft resumes, therefore AFN should look into offering a structured clinic (on a periodic basis) for this purpose. AFN should also update its current resource page on its website (and also print a handout) to incorporate links to sample resumes and to other pertinent job tips and resources. AFN can assign volunteers to carry out this task.
- A lot of attendees do not know how to type therefore typing classes should be promoted and recommended. The possibility of having just an extra typing class (on a periodic basis) manned by volunteers at the DeWitty center can be explored.
- The possibility of having a once in a year class on downloading and filling out tax forms before the tax filing deadline should be explored.
- The possibility of having one Mac computer should be explored (starting at the DeWitty site). This will provide an opportunity for the attendees to be exposed to and learn certain Mac based features/applications that aren't available with MS based computers. AFN can explore the possibility of asking for a Mac computer as a donation for this purpose.
- The possibility of offering flash drives to attendees for a small fee at the clinics should be explored.
- A handout should be drafted that contains a checklist of issues to consider if the attendees are going to buy a personal computer, which should be made available at all the clinics sites along with all the community partner sites.

- Teaching attendees about different applications (including Twitter, spreadsheets, podcasts & webinars in pertinent topics, web design etc) should be explored.
- AFN can explore exposing attendees to online banking (for paying telephone, cell phone, utility bills etc) while making sure that issues of privacy and security are also addressed.
- AFN can explore making attendees aware of internet shopping so they can buy certain products and services for a cheaper price and more conveniently, while again making them aware of privacy and security issues.
- AFN can explore providing resources (list of addresses, websites, etc.) of local businesses that attendees can shop at. AFN can use its volunteers to help compile these lists.
- AFN can explore providing pertinent resources (links to community based organizations, events, etc.) to help increase the attendees' community participation and involvement across Austin. Again volunteers can be used to compile a list of such resources.
- It would be helpful to remind and talk to the attendees frequently about how to address issues related to cyber safety, online privacy, identity theft, spam, viruses etc. Some handouts on these topics are available, but many attendees are not aware of them.
- It would be helpful to remind attendees frequently of the resources (pertaining to the curricula, other community computer classes, etc.) that are currently available on the AFN website & to have volunteers do a periodic update of these resources.
- AFN and the officials at the HACA sites should periodically conduct a qualitative review of how the clinics at the sites are progressing and what issues (if any) need to be addressed.
- Get new computers for the computer lab at the DeWitty Center.³¹

Increasing Number of Clinics at Current Sites

The attendees, volunteers and site officials who participated in the evaluation were unanimous in their views that more clinics should be offered at the current sites.³² However for AFN to offer more clinics at the current sites additional funding is required.

DeWitty Center Site

The current financial breakdown for hosting 2 computer clinics a week for a **one** month period at the DeWitty site (where clinics are not held the last week of the month) is approximately as follows, excluding indirect costs such as payroll administration, office overhead, etc.:

³¹ AFN is in the process of trying to get funding from Lola Wright Foundation and the Broadband Technology Opportunities program (<http://www.broadbandusa.gov>) for this purpose. Computers can also be donated to AFN but they have to meet a list of minimum standards, see <http://www.austinfreenet.net/support/index.html>

³² AFN has currently also partnered with other non-profits in Texas to apply for funding to host computer clinics in rural areas in Texas.

Category	Sub Category	Cost (for a one month period) for 2 classes per week
Personnel	Computer Instructor (including admin time)	\$270.00 (\$250.00 plus \$20.00 employers tax)
	Volunteer Coordinator (including admin time)	\$605.00 (\$560.00 plus \$45.00 employers tax)
Computer Lab		Overhead paid by City of Austin
Software	Antivirus for each computer (for 9 computers)	\$ 7.00
Technical Support	Computer parts (for 9 computers)	\$38.00
Printers & Paper	Toner cartridge	\$15.00
	Paper	\$3.00
TOTAL		\$938.00

The financial breakdown of hosting 2 additional computer clinics per week (excluding the last week of the month) for a *one* month period at the DeWitty center site would be approximately as follows:

Category	Sub Category	Cost (for a one month period) for 4 classes per week
Personnel	Computer Instructor	\$415.00 (\$384.00 plus \$31.00 employers tax)
	Volunteer Coordinator	\$904.00 (\$837.00 plus \$67.00 employers tax)
Computer Lab		Overhead paid by City of Austin
Software	Antivirus for each computer (for 9 computers)	\$7.00
Technical Support	Computer parts (for 9 computers)	\$38.00
Printers & Paper	Toner cartridge	\$60.00
	Paper	\$12.00
TOTAL		\$1436.00

Thus an increase of funding of \$498.00 per month would be required to offer 4 classes a week (excluding the last week of the month) at the DeWitty site in the future.

HACA Sites

The current financial breakdown of hosting two computer clinics a week for a *one* month period at *one* HACA site, excluding indirect costs such as payroll administration, office overhead, etc. , is approximately as follows:

Category	Sub Category	Cost (for a one month period)
Personnel	Lead Instructor	\$324 (\$300 plus \$24 employers tax)
	Co-Instructor	\$162 (\$150 plus \$12 employers tax)
Computer Lab		Paid by HACA
Software		Paid by HACA
Technical Support		Paid by HACA
Printers & Paper	Toner cartridge	Paid by HACA
	Paper	Paid by HACA
TOTAL		\$486.00

The financial breakdown of hosting 2 additional computer clinics per week for a *one* month period at *one* HACA site, excluding office personnel administrative time, would be approximately as follows:

Category	Sub Category	Cost (for a one month period for 4 classes a week)
Personnel	Lead Instructor	\$756.00 (\$700.00 plus \$56.00 employers tax)
	Co-Instructor	\$378.00 (\$350.00 plus \$28.00 employers tax)
Computer Lab		Paid by HACA
Software		Paid by HACA
Technical Support		Paid by HACA
Printers & Paper	Toner cartridge	Paid by HACA
	Paper	Paid by HACA
TOTAL		\$1134.00

Thus an increase of funding of **\$648.00** per month would be required to offer 4 classes a week at one HACA site. AFN can, however, explore the possibility of replacing one of the paid instructors with volunteers to further reduce the cost of additional clinics at the HACA sites. Further it should be noted that currently it would not be feasible to increase the number of clinics at all the four HACA sites due to variations in demand. AFN can start of by increasing the number of clinics per week at the HACA site where there is the most demand.

Hosting Clinics at Community Partner Sites

AFN is currently overseeing the computer labs at 14 community partner sites, but also wants to offer computer clinics at these sites. However this can only happen if additional funding is obtained. While attempts to get funding for this purpose continue, AFN should immediately

consider the possibility of forming a volunteering partnership with any of the community partner sites, where there is a demand for computer help by the site residents.

Once AFN has solicited the demand for computer help from each community partner site it can start off by sending volunteers to the sites where there is greatest demand. AFN should engage in an exercise to match its volunteers with the community partner sites for important criteria such as volunteers who speak Spanish and whose home/office is near the sites. A schedule can then be drafted by the Volunteer Coordinator whereby one or more volunteers can visit the chosen sites for a clinic on a monthly or quarterly basis. The community partner sites' officials can then include the computer clinic schedule in their monthly calendar so there is no scheduling clash for the site residents.

Volunteers

The involvement of volunteers in the computer clinics can also be expanded and improved, some recommendations to consider for this to happen include:

- AFN should actively try to recruit Spanish speaking volunteers (with the appropriate computer skills). The Department of Spanish language at ACC, UT and St. Edwards can be good places to start to explore this recruitment.
- AFN should actively try to recruit volunteers (with the appropriate computer skills) who have educational or work experience with disabled people and senior citizens. The Departments of Social Work, Nursing etc at ACC, UT and St. Edwards can be good places to start to explore this recruitment.
- AFN should explore the possibility of sending volunteers who have experience working with disabled and senior citizens to the HACA sites on a regular basis.
- AFN should explore the possibility of periodically sending volunteers to some Community Partner sites (depending on the site residents' computer related demands) for clinics on a periodic basis.
- If not being done already AFN should conduct a complete review of its volunteer database to match its volunteers' skills with the sites & attendees' demands.³³
- The possibility of having volunteers run a typing class at the DeWitty center should be explored.
- AFN should explore having some volunteers conduct research in topics in which attendees are or could be interested (for example jobs, drafting resumes, community participation, online shopping, local businesses, etc.) and ask them to compile resources and links which can then be included in AFN's website resources page.
- Ensure there are no large time gaps between any individual's volunteering sessions.

³³ AFN is planning to employ a different database to manage its volunteers information in the future, therefore it is important that a review is conducted to ensure that volunteers skills are being more closely matched with the clinics and attendees' current and future demands before the new database becomes operational.

- The possibility of looking into having experienced volunteers being present with one computer instructor (instead of two instructors) in any additional classes offered at HACA sites in the future (to reduce costs of the classes) should be explored.
- If AFN channels volunteers into HACA and Community Partner sites in the future it needs to ensure an adequate volunteer orientation takes place.

In conclusion it is important to reiterate that AFN is providing a very valuable service to community members across Austin through its free computer clinics. Barriers to access and lack of adoption of technology lead to citizens becoming marginalized in their societies. Therefore AFN is providing a critical service to help produce citizens who can function and thrive in the information and technology landscape. At the same time it also a clear reality that the expansion of the computer clinics at the current sites and the potential of hosting additional clinics at the community partner sites across Austin is dependent on AFN getting more funding. Nevertheless this evaluation has provided some concrete recommendations that AFN can contemplate and explore to make immediate improvements in its clinics and volunteering system.



Providing welcoming places for people to learn and benefit from the use of computers and the Internet

Thank You!

APPENDIX A

COMPUTER CLINICS ATTENDEES SURVEY

- 1 What race/ethnicity do you identify yourself as? _____
- 2 Are you: Male or Female [Please circle one]?
- 3 How old are you? _____
- 4 What is your level of education?
 - a) Some schooling
 - b) High school graduate
 - c) Some college
 - d) College graduate
- 5 Are you currently employed? Yes No Retired Student [Please circle one]
- 6 If employed, what is your occupation? _____

- 7 What is your income level?
 - a) Less than \$15,000
 - b) \$15-25,000
 - c) \$25-40,000
 - d) More than \$40,000
- 8 Your zip code _____
- 9 What was your computer skill level before you took any computer clinics at this site?
 - a) I had never used a computer before
 - b) I had used a computer before but was not comfortable using it
 - c) I had used the computer to type documents, e-mail and to get information from the Internet (circle all that apply)
 - d) I was confident using the computer for word processing, Internet and e-mail
- 10 How many AFN clinics have you attended?
 - a) 1
 - b) 2
 - c) 3
 - d) More than 3

- 11 Do you plan to attend more clinics at this site? Yes or No {Please circle one}
- 12 How did you find out about the AFN clinics [Circle ALL that apply]
- a) From a friend
 - b) I saw an announcement in the newspaper
 - c) Internet
 - d) Other_____
- 13 How have the clinics helped you?
- 14 How can the clinics be improved?
- 15 What other topics would you like to see addressed in the clinics?
- 16 Has your participation in the clinics affected your family in any way? If yes then please explain how?

APPENDIX B

COMPUTER CLINICS VOLUNTEERS/SITE OFFICIALS SURVEY

- 1 Your name and affiliation with the computer clinics [trainer, volunteer, site staff, other (please explain)?
- 2 How was your orientation before you carried out your tasks at the clinics? How can the orientation be improved?
- 3 Was the experience of being involved in the clinics personally satisfying for you? Please explain
- 4 What benefits and value do the clinics bring to the attendees?
- 5 How can the clinics be improved?
- 6 What other topics would you like to see addressed in the clinics?
- 7 Any additional comments you have regarding the clinics?