COMMUNITY NEWS

Church group meets to cross digital divide

Special to the Tribune

A small group of young people and adults gathered in the basement of the New Beginning Church in Germantown to begin a leap across the digital divide.

The group was were there for the Nonprofit Technology Resources Inc.'s Learning Through Technology (LTT) program, being taught by hardware coordinator and instructor Reginald Mosley.

Before each participant was a computer, keyboard and mouse. Each person would take his or her computer home after completing the three-hour class. The group would have learned to assemble, disassemble and upgrade the computers.

The hands-on instruction demystifies the computer as participants learn basic computer diagnostics, memory installation, sound and video card placement and hard drive maintenance. The students at New Beginning Church were amazed when they saw how fast and easy it was.

"The more of this you can do yourself, the more money you save," said Mosley, a certified electrical engineer and computer consultant. "This is the most important thing you need to know about your computer to keep from being exploited by computer stores.

"You need to know these options," he continued. "A store would charge you $40 to install these things which take less than five minutes to complete." Mosley said his primary interest is in training low-income and minority children in computer skills.

"He gave a good presentation," said Brenda Sims of New Beginning Church. "You're actually learning the product. The programs included are good, especially the children's programs."

Started in 1999, Learning Through Technology is Nonprofit Technology Resources' most popular program. It provides computers and training to clients of other non-profits, churches, schools, community organizations, block associations and low-income individuals who otherwise could not afford a computer. For $200, participants receive a complete computer system, including software, as well as the three-hour training class.

"Recent statistics show that while over 65 percent of all households with children have a computer, only 20 percent of households classified as low-income have computers," said Stan Pokras, founder and executive director of NTR. "During the past year, NTR has distributed 1,140 computers to 1,192 low-income children and adults. We are committed to bridging the technology gap in communities throughout Philadelphia."

NTR accepts donated computer equipment and refurbishes it for distribution. Equipment ranges from $50 for a basic 436 to $250 for a loaded Pentium with a sound card and speakers. For information, call (215)-564-6686 or visit www.libertynet.org/ntr.