



## **Alfred Box of Books Library receives \$244,517 in grant funding for new public computing center**

September 14, 2010 Alfred, NY

Thanks to the efforts of former Box of Books library director Lana Meissner, with the approval of the library's board of trustees, the Alfred Box of Books Library was recently selected as one of 30 libraries in New York State to receive \$244,517 in funding to create a Public Computing Center in the library. This award is provided as part of a grant awarded to the New York State Library through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). One of the main goals of this federally sponsored program is to provide funding for training and resources that will help vulnerable populations, such as the unemployed or underemployed, learn critical workforce development skills.

Although the Box of Books library is the smallest library in New York State to be selected to participate in this two year program, their goal is to provide all community members with comfortable, convenient and timely access to the equipment and training they need to become digitally literate citizens, and to assist with workforce development skills. The workforce development training will include sessions on how to search for employment opportunities utilizing on-line tools, and learning new computer skills that could assist with career advancement. Other training programs offered at the Box of Books PCC will include instruction on a wide variety of computer based resources including: email, social networking, instant messaging, basic word processing and database software programs and videoconferencing for collaboration, business and recreation.

Due to current economic conditions across New York State, and lack of broadband access to many rural areas, the ability to provide free access to computers and internet access in the library is essential. According to Mary Linda Todd, a Library Development Specialist, for the New York State Library, NY State Education Department, “78% of people in communities across the state depend on libraries for internet access”. The Alfred Box of Books Library Public Computing Center (PCC) will be a source for local residents to help meet this need for public computing resources. The Public Computing Center will help to provide the training needed in our community to identify and use internet-based resources for job searches, career advancement, digital literacy, and communication. These training sessions, which will be a new addition to the current programming schedule, will be offered on an individual basis and as small group workshops in the library.

As part of this grant program the Box of Books PCC will be purchasing additional laptops, a graphics capable computer, and portable video conferencing equipment to expand the current technology resources at the library. Due to the fact that the Box of Books is the smallest library in this program, a professional space planner has been assisting to help determine the best use of space in the library. This space utilization study is essential because the PCC will offer the new programs without interfering with any of the current programs and features enjoyed in the library.

According to State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner for Libraries Bernie Margolis, “The Public Computing Centers, funded and supported under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), are designed to bring the fruits of high-speed connectivity to everyone. Many parts of New York State will for the first time be able to experience the bounty of communications and content available online. The Public Computing Centers are a primary outpost for free public access to a wide array of broadband services. As part of a highly effective network, the PCCs and the libraries of which they are a part will continue their critical role as a hub for community life and service.”

According to Lana Meissner, the local grant administrator for the Alfred Box of Books BTOP program, “The Box of Books is extremely fortunate to receive this significant grant that will enable the library to provide a host of new computer-based training programs and services to

benefit the entire community. We look forward to partnering with community leaders, businesses, and organizations to ensure that all our citizens have access to the resources they need to secure employment, gather information, or safely and securely communicate with others.”

The Alfred Box of Books Public Computing Center Director and Lead Trainer, Amanda Burns, anticipates that all new equipment should arrive, and be installed in time to begin offering classes later this fall.

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Any questions concerning this press release can be directed to:

**Amanda Burns:** Director and Lead Trainer for the Public Computing Center - or -

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