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## Thin clients extend youth outreach

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Last month Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) presented a check for \$500,000 to Montgomery County executive Douglas M. Duncan to fund a pilot program to bridge the digital divide in the Maryland county.

The funds from the Housing and Urban Development Department will let the county install thin clients in 95 apartments in the Stewartown Homes Community, said Al Browne, vice president of the Community Preservation and Development Corp. of Washington, the nonprofit group that runs the program.

Stewartown Homes, in Gaithersburg, Md., is owned by the county's Housing Opportunities Commission. Under the county's Section 8 program, people are eligible for the affordable apartments if they meet income limitations.

The program will most likely use Winterm thin clients from Wyse Technology Inc. of San Jose, Calif., Browne said. The clients will be linked to a server farm at Edgewood Terrace in Northeast Washington, another low-income housing complex. The server farm has 13 Dell and Compaq Pentium III servers that provide Internet access and run file and print sharing, Microsoft Exchange and Windows 2000. Microsoft Corp. donated more than \$1.8 million in software for several Washington public housing projects, including the Stewartown program, Browne said. The thin clients will run off Citrix Metaframe 1.8 Terminal Server Edition from Citrix Systems Inc. of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

"Technology is a tool, but how that tool is used is what will make a difference," Browne said. He added that the program will focus on three areas: youth, career and community.

### Work with schools

The primary purpose of the program will be youth development, Browne said. "We will work very closely with the public schools to help children increase their knowledge and use of software and the Internet," Browne said.

The program offers career enhancement that “goes beyond just job training,” Browne said. “It’s about building careers.” The program will provide Microsoft Office suite training and also what Browne called “soft skills”—customer service training and English language skills.

### **Community intranet**

The pilot program also aims to provide “community, technology and empowerment,” Browne said. “We want to use this as a community building tool.” The residents will form their own computer advisory boards and run their own community intranet.

One use may be to form what Browne called a “baby corps,” in which users could post their availability for babysitting. So a mother with a sick child could go to the Web site and see who signed up for that day, instead of having to make 10 desperate phone calls, Browne said.

Residents will attend a 45-minute orientation on how to use the thin clients and can sign up for more extensive training.

The Stewartown community should be wired by the end of fall, Browne said.

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