Community Technology Network’s Intergenerational Youth Crew (IYC) recruited and trained 26 youth, between 16 and 24 years old, to become computer and Internet tutors for older adults in San Francisco. The program developed professional and leadership skills, in addition to facilitating a cultural transfer between youth and seniors, who tend to be disconnected.

The IYC gave a total of 1,141 hours, tutoring 1,543 seniors at five Computer Learning Centers (CLC’s) throughout the city. The program was successful in creating strong bonds between youth participants and the seniors they tutored, in addition to creating employment opportunities at the CLC’s and beyond. Youth that participated in the IYC developed career and professional aspirations, attained employment and made a huge impact on the lives of the seniors they tutored by providing them with digital literacy skills.
OVERVIEW:
Community Technology Network (CTN) created the Intergenerational Youth Crew (IYC) to facilitate career development in high school and college students, while providing digital literacy tutoring to low-income seniors in San Francisco. The program was designed to provide an opportunity for youth to use their innate technology skills to benefit a digitally disconnected population, in addition to cultivating a sense of importance around volunteering in one’s community.

OUTPUTS:
The IYC ran for nine months, beginning in January 2012 and concluding in August 2012. The program was comprised of 26 diverse youth from various neighborhoods in San Francisco, ranging from the Mission/Excelsior to the Richmond. The IYC was comprised of eight boys and 18 girls, ranging from 16-24 years old. IYC program participants hailed from a wide range of ethnicities and languages spoken, including Cantonese, Russian and Spanish. IYC participants were at various life stages,

Training Locations
1. Eastern Park Apartments
2. Canon Kipp
3. Capp Street Senior Center
4. 30th Street Senior Center
5. IT Bookman Senior Center

Recruitment Partners
City College of San Francisco
International High School
Lowell High School
MOUSE Squad
San Francisco State University
Urban School
Wallenberg High School
Year Up
from single mothers to AP students, and received a $10 per hour stipend or service learning credit in exchange for their dedication.

The IYC spent three hours in technology and sensitivity trainings to prepare them for the tutoring assignments in five Computer Learning Centers (CLC’s) throughout San Francisco. Youth Crew participants gave a total of 1,141 hours teaching computer and Internet skills to approximately 1,543 seniors. Youth Crew participants received five hours of career development, including a tour to the Google office in San Francisco.

**ACTIVITIES:**
The IYC program activities were designed to facilitate the learning of soft and hard skills for career development. Throughout the program, the Youth Crew practiced tasks that cultivated soft skills that taught teamwork, collaboration, communication, patience, public speaking, personal development, self-reflection and a sense of civic responsibility. Youth were exposed to situations that taught them how to listen, be proactive and take initiative, in addition to building relationships that benefit others and the community.

The IYC program also cultivated hard skills essential to professional development. Youth enrolled in the program learned marketing and outreach skills, creative processes, program development, administrative skills, like time management and balancing priorities, how to provide translation services, in addition to receiving computer and IT training. The IYC created a final presentation [youthcrewreport2012] and presented it at CLC Eastern Park Apartments’ Cyber Cafe where they reflected on the time they had spent together, the time they spent with seniors, what they had learned and their career and academic plans after the IYC concluded.

Members of the IYC reported that the program helped them overcome shyness in public speaking, helped them learn the importance of teamwork, collaboration and clear communication, along with how to be proactive and persistent.

CTN staff and Youth Crew at Eastern Park Apartments in June 2012 for their final presentation. From left to right: Kami Griffiths, Zakiya Harris, Jasmenda Brown, Fiona Li, Konstantin Chuykov, Carla Montanes, Sumin Yu, Angela Liang, Natan Sebhatleab and Nicu Listana.
The seniors, they don’t ask you for help even though they’re struggling, they just don’t want to ask you, so you have to learn to walk up to someone to ask them if they have a problem. ‘You have a question, want me to help you out?’ It helped my communication skills. I learned how to talk to people of different ages. I also learned how to talk to seniors. It’s different than talking to your friends."

— Regina

**IMPACT:**

All IYC participants reported developing a heightened level of patience and leadership skills. They reported that tutoring required them to alter their everyday method of talking and reasoning to accommodate the needs of the seniors.

Members of the IYC reported that the program helped them overcome shyness in public speaking, helped them learn the importance of teamwork, collaboration and clear communication, along with how to be proactive and persistent. Youth Crew participants revealed that they had learned more effective communication through small things, like maintaining eye contact, looking for nonverbal cues and the difference in speech when talking in a profession setting versus talking with a friend.

Many youth reported a sense of empowerment and inspiration after developing close relationships with the seniors they taught. Many seniors preferred that the youth call them “grandma” or “grandpa” demonstrating the closeness they developed. The program also provided situations for youth to see the long-term and short-term personal and community benefits of volunteering.

For many of the IYC this was their first job and unlocked professional interest in being a teacher or working with underserved communities. The program also provided entrance to employment as one member of the Youth Crew was hired by a CLC to continue providing tutoring to seniors.
The IYC demonstrated their new hard and soft skills when they identified program challenges in low senior attendance at the various CLC’s where they were administering classes. The IYC members took the initiative to investigate why attendance was low and to create various solutions to that problem. Upon discovering that the CLC’s they were teaching at lacked effective outreach techniques and materials, IYC members created and distributed fliers to promote the learning opportunities in certain neighborhoods. The youth designed, translated and printed these materials, then went out into the community to pass them out at senior centers and places where seniors hung out.

After completing the additional outreach, IYC members learned that many seniors felt intimidated or overwhelmed by the technology in the lab. Participants found that this sense of intimidation stemmed from the teaching materials and the types of learning lessons present. The IYC created games, like “The first person to Google the top song in 1960 wins!” to help the senior students engage with the mouse, keyboards and the websites. Furthermore, IYC members re-translated or further translated the pre-existing tutoring materials and lessons. These small changes resulted in a much larger senior attendance at the five CLC’s where the IYC were teaching. CTN found the IYC’s improvised games and re-translated teaching materials so innovative and successful in engaging senior computer learners, that they will be integrated into the digital literacy curriculum used at CLCs moving forward. Such activities show how much the youth had learned and marked a measurable change in their existing and newly acquired skill sets.

“Before I started the program I was a shy person. I never thought I could be in any kind of leadership position. I didn’t think I could take action. […] When I was offered the team leader position and after the first couple weeks of classes, so much was going wrong and no one was coming to classes, I was like, well you know what, I’m not going to keep coming to empty classes […] so I did my own outreach, made my own fliers […] and I went around to different classes at the community center […], and I started having full classes. I gained a lot of leadership skills.”

–Jasmenda
For many of the IYC this was their first job and it unlocked professional interest in being a teacher or working with underserved communities.

CHALLENGES:
The IYC participants reported some challenges in completing their tutoring objectives and maximizing the opportunities provided in the program. IYC youth stated that communication with seniors for whom English was not their first language was a challenge. Seniors asking questions that the IYC did not have the answers to was also a challenge. Finding meeting and tutoring times with CLC’s that fit the IYC’s schedule was also a challenge, as most members were full-time students. IYC participants also reported that poor class attendance due to promotion by the CLC’s was a problem. Other challenges included CLC’s that did not have the Internet or appropriate computers setup.

NEXT STEPS:
With contributions from Dell and foundations, CTN will increase the number of youth participants, in addition to expanding the region and the professional development of the Intergenerational Youth Crew in 2013. The program will focus on the most economically disadvantaged youth in San Francisco and Oakland, California, and offer professional development in online marketing, training and web design. IYC participants will apply their skills in a collaborative setting by teaching classes, developing curriculum and doing outreach at Computer Learning Centers (CLC’s) for a stipend or service learning credit.

CONTACT:
For more information about this program, contact Kami Griffiths – kami@ctnbayarea.org or 650-784-1156.