Ready, Set, Connect! - a collaboration between Community Technology Network (CTN) and Oakland Public Library (OPL) - is a program that gives tech-savvy 16-24 year-olds the experience and skills needed for a future in technology-focused employment.

Through a program of on-the-job training, participants are supported in the development of professional and personal skills, and are connected to mentors from high-profile Bay Area technology companies.

Unlike ordinary work-readiness programs, RSC has a wider community focus. Through volunteer service at six library locations, participants become Computer Tutors and learn to put their superior technical knowledge to good use by improving basic computer literacy among library patrons.

The pilot program (RSC13) ran for 12 weeks and engaged 17 young people, who helped 349 older adults. In May 2014 the second program (RSC14) was completed, with even more impressive results.

RSC14 was made possible by substantial in-kind support from OPL, and financial support from the WKF Fund, Christensen Fund and individual donors.
Responding to feedback from the pilot cohort of participants, CTN extended the length of the RSC program to 30 weeks to allow deeper engagement among participants and community beneficiaries. A monthly stipend (totalling $1,125) was paid to each participant and those who completed the program received a completion bonus. This not only helped create a more true-to-life work experience, but recognized the fact that financial necessity may force students to drop out and choose minimum wage employment to make ends meet – further diminishing their future opportunities. The program was designed with the assumption that, although tech-savvy, young people may not possess the skills an employer looks for.

RSC takes a practical approach to encourage participants to learn by doing and, based on his/her individual career goals, participants were given a ‘specialist’ role at their respective libraries, either: Social Media, Digital Media, Communications, or Marketing. A number of participants were bilingual and learned the value of their language skills in helping clients who spoke Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish.

THE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- **Computer tutoring**: Allocated to a library branch, participants helped patrons with such tasks as: completing online job application forms, resume creation in Word, downloading eBooks, and using eReaders and tablet devices.

- **Tech training**: Participants received training in how to use programs they may not have had access to in the past, including InDesign, Photoshop, Google Sites and Google Drive.

- **Designing a promotional campaign**: Participants learned how to use software and web-based tools to market their computer tutoring services to the local community.

- **Creating a professional profile**: Participants were given help developing their resume and using web-based tools, including LinkedIn.

- **Group project work**: Working in teams, participants completed an assignment of their own design. One group made a video promoting the RSC program for future funders, and another created a web-based tutorial on basic computer skills.

- **Site visits**: Participants visited Google, Blue Wolf Consulting and Zynga, where they gained insight into a real work environment, professional etiquette, and received mentoring from professionals.
RSC14: Vital Statistics

- **30-week** program
- **21 youth** were recruited for the program from underserved areas of Oakland and Alameda County
- **19 youth** finished the program
- **64 hours** of training in advanced digital job skills was received by each participant
- **1,700+ adults** were tutored in basic digital literacy and/or access to a computer and a broadband connection at six libraries
- **1,064 hours** of tutoring service was provided by the youth
- **$1,125** was the total paid to each participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>People Trained</th>
<th>Hours Volunteered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Library - OPL</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>315.5</td>
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<td>Asian Branch Library - OPL</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chavez Branch Library - OPL</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>407</td>
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<td>Dimond Branch Library - OPL</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>121</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastmont Branch Library - OPL</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>104.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockridge Branch Library - OPL</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,723</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,277</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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OPL Asian Branch Teen Librarian, Jeanie Austin (left), with RSC Team Members Cindy Lu (center) and Eric Zhu (right). Thanks to Cindy and Eric’s outreach efforts, attendance at their tutoring sessions more than doubled between November and May.
RSC Team Member Zadok Doe’ Parker (right), with a Rockridge Branch Library tutoring patron.

Rockridge Branch tutoring regulars Mr. and Mrs. Catanno (seated) with RSC Team Members Jasper Kriguer (standing, left) and Zadok Doe’ Parker (standing, right).

RSC Team Member Rachel Arauz (right) helps a Main Branch patron trouble-shoot Microsoft Word so she can keep writing her science fiction story.
OUTCOMES

Through a thorough evaluation of the RSC14 program, we are confident the program is effective.

- **84%** of participants felt they better understood how to use software tools such as InDesign, Photoshop, and PowerPoint.
- **90%** were more confident in using web-based tools and skills such as building Google Sites websites, creating social media campaigns, and collaborating using Google Drive.
- **84%** said they were more skilled in resume building and communicating.
- **95%** believed they had improved their networking skills.
- **74%** understood how to be more effective at problem-solving in a professional environment.

One year in, participants of the pilot program were also surveyed. Over 80% of respondents told us they used the skills learned at RSC at least once a month since completing the program.

One of the RSC14 youth participants was so competent in his duties he was able to fill in for an absent library staff member and deliver the scheduled computer classes!

While we do not have the resources to measure community learning outcomes, it’s clear it has an impact, as the following anecdote shows:

“The lady I've been working with finally admitted that she actually wanted to learn to use the computer. It had been a slow progress. She was really uncomfortable with even touching it. I was gently trying to get her to play with the mouse for the past few weeks. She was coming under the pretense of finding housing for her son and now she told me she actually wanted to learn and keep learning! I almost lost hope for a second there!” – Andrea Guzman, RSC member at Dimond Branch

And one library patron felt moved to contact the RSC Program Manager about her positive experience:

“My name is Juanita Catanno. I had the pleasure of being instructed in audio books by Marc Brown. Marc is a knowledgeable, pleasant, and polite instructor. Rockridge Branch on College Avenue is fortunate to be represented by such a courteous young man.”

And another left this comment: “You guys are really helpful. I feel it is too early to end up the tutoring in May, because people with very few computer skills like me really need your help.” – Qiudi Huang, Asian Branch Patron.
PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The numbers look good, but we love to read the qualitative feedback from participants and beneficiaries about the impact of the program. Here are just a few of comments.

“With the help of the youth we are able to address the questions that patrons have. Library staff just don’t have the time to give one-on-one computer help. It’s also a great community builder here. Most of the people the youth help are older adults. It’s been a great way for youth and older people to work together.”

-- Susy Moorhead, Teen Librarian at Cesar Chavez Library

“I thought the program was great with the fact that groups were so diverse in age and allowed group members to learn from each other. I was able to network within OPL and apply for job opportunities there.”

--Rene Soto, participant

“RSC helped me decide if I wanted to keep proceeding with a career in technology. I definitely do!”

--Jose Iglesias, participant

“I’m really grateful for the opportunity. I got a lot of exposure to a lot of people and their experiences. RSC connected me with mentors and resources, and I feel really grateful.”

--Andrea Guzman, participant

“My favorite professional development training was when we went to BlueWolf. It was really the resume help we got there was really helpful. It was great to talk to professionals and get their insight into what a resume should be.”

--Kevin Chen, participant

“I liked the presenters from Google, and the volunteers who came in to teach us about Photoshop. All the mentors taught us about how to make a career out of what we’re interested in, our passions.”

--Ilili Mejia, participant
Cynthia Mackey (standing, right), owner of Oakland-based digital marketing firm Winning Strategies, helps RSC Team Members Shobhita Roberts (seated, top) and Iliana Mejia (seated, bottom) develop a social media campaign for RSC tutoring services.

Bluewolf mentor Ross Warnlof (right) gives RSC Team Member Kelly Tan feedback on her resume.

RSC Team Member Maggie Mei (seated, right) tries out Ian McKellar’s (left) Google Glass a test drive during Ian’s presentation about his career path as a software developer.
ALEJANDRO MALDONADO
My name is Alejandro Maldonado, but everybody calls me Alex. I am 16 years old, turning 17 in July this year. I am currently enrolled at Lighthouse Community Charter School, and I want to attend a state university once I graduate from high school. I want to major in either engineering, photography, or technology because I have always been interested in building and creativity. I want to know the world better and would like to travel to Japan and Jamaica one day. I have always liked helping others, even if I have difficulty myself sometimes. I know that I can meet my goals and that I will accomplish them by trying my best.

ANDREA GUZMAN
My name is Andrea Guzman. I have solid academic, admin, and nonprofit experience. Since elementary school, I have volunteered consistently in roles such as peer mediation, mentoring, community rights, and advocacy. In addition to my paid work, I am currently translating for Lacanian Ink magazine, using my language and code switching skills. I am also using my technical skills to develop two multimedia websites. The rest of my free time I spend riding my bike, participating in urban farming and sustainability efforts, attending workshops and trainings given by different community organizations, learning to code, reading, drawing, and traveling. I have been selected to coordinate the next Ready, Set, Connect program this fall.

CINDY LU
My name is Cindy. I am currently a senior in high school. I love photography, designing, and anything involving art. My main hobbies are drawing and painting, and I want to major in art and design in college. When I knew that RSC had something to do with designing, the program appealed to me. In addition, I wanted to learn more about technology and get the benefit of real work experience. The program made me expand my knowledge of computers and share my knowledge in helping patrons.

ERIC ZHU
My name is Eric Zhu, and I am 18 years old. I immigrated to the U.S. from China two years ago, and I am currently a senior at Oakland International High School. I am really looking forward to going to college because I think it will be totally different from school life and will be lots of fun. Being in the Ready, Set, Connect team has been one of my most exciting experiences because I got the chance to meet and talk with peers, which is really fun. I am interested in learning math and playing with computers, and my goal is to be a computer or chemical engineer.

GERARDO ACEVEDO
My name is Gerardo Acevedo. I’m 16 years old and a junior at Lighthouse Community Charter School. At the moment, my mind is set on studying business in college. Through Ready Set, Connect I learned I’m mostly interested incorporating technology and social media into the marketing side of business. Through the program, I also learned about myself. I am responsible and always try to complete the tasks assigned to me. I try to stay persistent when things get difficult because I know I’ll get the satisfaction of not giving up. I tend to work well with other people because I believe it’s easier to complete a task with the help of other people who cooperate.
ILIANA MEJIA
I was born and raised in Oakland. I am a junior currently attending Lighthouse Community Charter High School. I’m interested in studying criminology for my future career. I started watching Criminal Minds and CSI at around the age of 15 and have been interested in pursuing a career in the field ever since. I decided to join the Ready, Set, Connect team to be exposed to different fields like graphic design and marketing. I also like the feeling of being able to help other people with their computer problems.

JASPER KRIGUER
I am a student at Laney College. I am planning on working in IT when I graduate. For fun, I play Minecraft with my friends.

JAVIER INFANTE
My name is Javier Infante. I was born and raised in Oakland. I’m currently a junior in high school. Since I was 13 years old I’ve been interested in criminal justice and hope that one day I will have a job that involves that. I believe I can make a change in my community, and I like helping others. Being in Ready, Set, Connect has been one of the best experiences I’ve ever had. I learned to communicate well with people I don’t know. It helped me overcome my shyness, and it taught me many things I wouldn’t have learned about computers. It was a great experience for me, and I am so grateful to have been in the program.

JOSE IGLESIAS
My name is Jose Iglesias. I am a persistent young man, born and raised in East Oakland. Through all the challenges I have faced being a low-income student, I am determined and committed to being the best intellectual leader I can be. As a current Summer Searcher, SRA Scholar, and participant in Ready, Set, Connect, I do my best to be a proactive human being. Currently at Arise High School, I am awaiting college acceptances, and look forward to being a first-generation college student. I want to be an entrepreneur, and I hope one day to return to my community to help bring it out of poverty.

KELLY TAN
I am an 18-year-old high school senior. I’m going to college at Northwestern University to study communications or public relations. I don’t know exactly what I want to do with my life yet, but I know I want to work with people, and I want my job to involve lots of interaction. I’m an avid reader, and sometimes I like to bake — but only recipes that involve multiple sticks of butter!
KEVIN CHEN
My hobbies and interests are video games, reading, business, and psychology. I’ve taken psychology classes in the 8th and 9th grade at the College of Alameda. I was able to put my business and video game interest to good use by entering a Young Entrepreneur’s competition run by UC Berkeley. I wrote a winning business plan for a video game retailer and presented it with use of computer technology such as Google Docs, PowerPoint, and Excel.

KEVIN COOPER JR
My name is Kevin Cooper, and I am 19 years old. I am very fascinated with computers and the technology of today. I also love the outdoors and getting active by playing basketball or going on a hike. The little things in life matter to me, and family is the most important thing of all: it’s for them I am determined to become successful in my life. I know life has many things in store for me, and I plan on spending time finding out what those things are. After high school, I plan on going to community college to get my general education degree.

MARC BROWN
I am 16 years old and currently attend St. Mary’s College High School. I am a friendly and easygoing person, sometimes a little shy, but passionate about things I’m interested in. I had the chance to travel to China in 8th grade, and now want to visit South America, Europe, and Australia. I took a class in Mandarin from 5th to 8th grade and would like to continue it. I am interested in being a graphic artist or possibly an architect. I have taken graphic art classes for the past few years with the Inneract Project, and I recently helped design the company’s brochure. In addition, I want to become an accomplished musician. I play the tenor sax and have been doing so since the 4th grade, as well as the drums, guitar, and didgeridoo!

MELISA HERNANDEZ
My name is Melisa Hernandez. I’m 16 years old, born and raised in California. I’m a junior in high school. I enjoy playing soccer. This is my first time volunteering for RSC. I volunteered because it involved technology, and I had in mind to pursue a career in web developing. This program helped me decide if I wanted a career in web developing, or if I wanted to do something else.

MINGYIN (MAGGIE) MEI
I am a senior at Arroyo High School and will graduate in June 2014. I plan to major in computer science at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Born in China, I immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 6. Even though I had to “start” my life again at a new place, I persevered and overcame all the obstacles. Two years ago I joined a girls’ after-school program, Techbridge, and was given an opportunity to attend a Summer Science and Engineering Program at Smith College. There I learned my first coding language, HTML. Wanting to expand my experiences, I got a job at the Boys & Girls Club and an internship at the Engineering and Transportation Department of the City of San Leandro. Through my experiences, I have learned to prioritize and balance tasks. The experience of being a part of Ready, Set, Connect has shaped me into a more patient and enthusiastic person.
ORLANDO RAMOS
When I was 6 years old, I discovered YouTube. I was amazed that a couple of friends could produce videos on their own and go from a few hundred views to a few million. Because of YouTube, I gained an interest in video editing and graphic design. I want to be able to produce all types of high-quality videos and build my own website. I chose Ready, Set, Connect because I felt I could give back to the community while practicing some design skills. I love the enthusiasm from both the RSC staff and the patrons we helped. I also enjoyed working in a diverse group of people with different goals and aspirations. Currently I am working with friends to start a small-scale tech company here in Oakland that will build websites and produce videos. Wish me luck!

RACHEL ARAUZ
I guess you can say I’m a techie person. I love to make videos and films. I can edit them with music and sometimes with a trick or two. I’m going to attend the Academy of Art University so I can learn more about editing films and adding special effects. I hope to have a career in the performing arts. Technology allows me to be creative, and I want to be a part of it in the near future.

RENE SOTO
My name is Rene Alejandro Soto. I graduated from Life Academy high school in June 2011. I am a very self-motivated person, so I took advantage of the extracurricular activities offered at school. I was involved in the boxing club and poetry club, and I took on a hospital internship for three years. I’ve finished two years at UC Berkeley and am currently working to earn enough money to go back. I have a passion for learning new skills, such as practicing the guitar, writing poetry, and learning new languages.

ZADOK DOE’PARKER
My name is Zadok Doe’Parker, and I’m 18 years old. I just started at Laney College, where I’m studying CIS (computer information systems). I’m an inspired computer programmer. I’m really into creating things and being productive. I’m a very hands-on person, and I enjoy carpentry, soldering, and framing. After Laney, I plan to go to either UC, or CSU, to get my BS in computer programming. My dream job is to be a computer programmer at a big company like Google or to be a part of a lucrative startup.
Special Thanks to all of the volunteer speakers and trainers who shared their time and expertise with our youth this year:

- Amy Sonnie  OPL Teen Outreach Librarian
- Clay Murphy  Technical Writer, Google
- Cynthia Mackey  Owner, Winning Strategies LLC
- Daniel Ross  Media Producer, Pearson Higher Education
- Danielle Bowers  Data and Trends Manager, Google Plus
- Ian McKellar  Senior Software Engineer, Google [X]
- Kerry Fuggett  Consultant, Bluewolf Consulting
- Lana Adlawan  OPL Supervising Librarian for Teen Services
- Maureen Elia  OPL Senior Library Assistant
- Monique Anderson  Strategic Partnerships, Oracle
- Ross Warnoff  Marketing Coordinator, Bluewolf Consulting
- Suzanna Bobadilla  Google+ Community Partnerships
- Tiffany Price  Strategic Partnerships and Grants Manager, Kapor Center for Social Impact