CTN and the Oakland Public Library partnered for Ready, Set, Connect!, a professional development program designed to help Oakland youth between 16 and 24 years old discover the professional skills necessary for technology-focused careers. Youth received a monthly stipend for their commitment and an additional bonus for completing the program.

During this 12-week program, Ready, Set, Connect! participants learned how to be computer tutors and use web design, social media, and graphic design tools. They practiced their dynamic skills while assisting the Oakland Public Library with program outreach and digital literacy tutoring in computer labs at five Oakland Library branches. Ready, Set, Connect! youth took on specialist roles within their branch teams based on their skills and future career goals. Specialist roles included Social Media, Digital Media, Communications, and Marketing. Lastly, youth received professional etiquette training and mentoring from employees at Blue Wolf Consulting and Google. Visits to both mentor locations served as the capstone events to the program.
This pilot program was funded by a Dell Powering the Possible grant from Dell Corporation and a grant from the Werner-Kohnstamm Family Giving Fund (WKF). Powering the Possible is Dell’s commitment to put technology and expertise to work where it can do the most good for people and the planet. Through our grant we received funding, equipment, technology solutions, and Dell team-member support to help further our organization’s mission and give young students hope for a brighter tomorrow. WKF supports cost-effective interventions specifically designed to address barriers to productive civic engagement faced by the economically and politically disadvantaged individuals, especially immigrants. WKF is most interested in innovative projects that are able to demonstrate strategies that move toward “positive tipping points” in community life for the individuals, families and communities who most need and can make use of such project outcomes.
Ready, Set, Connect! At A Glance:

- **12** week program
- **17** promising youth ranging from 16 to 24 years old started the program. They included youth who were small business owners, published digital artists, and debate champions. The youth spoke a range of languages including Cantonese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Vietnamese in addition to English.
- **12** youth finished the program.
- **30** hours of training in advanced digital job skills for each participant.
- Over **300** underserved adults received tutoring in basic digital literacy and/or access to a computer and a broadband connection skills at 5 OPL libraries thanks to our youth.
- **260** – number of hours the youth devoted to tutoring service over 10 weeks.
- **$500** – total stipend each youth received during the 12 week program.
- **10** – hours youth spent creating a resume, an online portfolio, and a LinkedIn profile.
- **25** mentors from Blue Wolf Consulting and Google led youth on office tours, gave resume advice, and helped youth with job interview preparation.

*RSC team member Jesus Espinoza helped this young patron at the 81 Avenue Branch learn how to use the scanner to make a copy of a cherished family photograph.*
Ready, Set, Connect Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Location</th>
<th>Volunteer Hours</th>
<th>Clients Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81st Ave Branch Library</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Branch</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chavez Branch Library</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimond Branch Library</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Library</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockridge Branch Library</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>570</strong></td>
<td><strong>349</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RSC team member Xavier Corena (left) helps a Cesar Chavez patron (right) learn how to use her new personal laptop.
Testimonials from OPL Staff

“Ready, Set, Connect! was a very successful program at Oakland Public Libraries. In partnership with the dedicated staff of Community Technology Network (CTN), we were able to further two of our primary missions at the library, supporting and training youth and bridging the digital divide by providing public access computers and training to patrons who might not have significant resources at home. It was very exciting to watch the youth transfer their technology skills to people in their community who need help. The patrons served by the RSC youth interns expressed appreciation and returned frequently for additional assistance.”

Jamie Turbak
Interim Deputy Director, Oakland Public Library

“I am really impressed by all of the youth, especially Jesus. When speaking with Jesus, I came to realize that he is a computer genius! He has taken it upon himself to mentor and help our high school intern, Moises, with a potential gaming program. Moises is lucky to have such a smart, positive, and motivated young man to serve as a role model. We as staff are lucky to have such a rich technological resource at our disposal. Thank you so much for choosing OPL—and especially 81st Avenue Branch—as a partner. All of us at 81st feel lucky to have these youth among us.”

Susan Maldonado
Teen Services Librarian, 81st Avenue Branch, Oakland Public Library

RSC team member Sandra Maldonado (standing, right) used the outreach techniques she learned during a Professional Development training to convince her mother to come to the Main Branch for some computer tutoring.
Comments from RSC Youth

Ready, Set, Connect has made a major impact on my life. I started this program as a way to earn some extra money and left with a new mindset and skill set. Through tutoring at the Dimond library I was able to be of service to people in my own neighborhood. It is a good thing to be able to give back to your own. I do believe I was able to make a difference in some people’s lives. Being digitally literate is very important in these times and I am glad to be of service. Even our specialists roles had an impact on our efficiency in the program. Being able to delegate and communicate effectively is extremely important. Our specialist roles helped to increase these skills. Each role had a different responsibility. All equally as important.

Darius Henson

I was able to experience helping and interacting with others to share my knowledge on computers. In addition, I learned new skills that may be useful in the future.

Jessica Gonzalez

Ready, Set, Connect! gave me more knowledge of what it takes to be in a technology-based field.

Amy Wen

I got to meet new people and get an idea of where the community is in the technical world. Talking with new people every week made communication with a different person.

Calvin Nguyen

I wanted to gain more communication skills and be able to share my knowledge with the community as I gain knowledge from them, which will help me with my college career.

Sandra Maldanado

Opposite page, clockwise from top left: RSC team members with Google mentors after their tour of Google’s San Francisco office; Angie DeWitt (left) from Blue Wolf coaches RSC team member Jessica Gonzalez on interview techniques; RSC team members with Blue Wolf mentors; Blue Wolf mentors Richard Anastasi (far left) and Caleb Hoffert (far right) give RSC team member Darius Henson (center) tips on improving his resume; Blue Wolf mentors Ross Warnof (center) and Zoe Koven (far right) help RSC team member Sara Kahan improve her “elevator pitch;” RSC team members with Blue Wolf mentors
Corporate Tours/Mentors

Ready, Set, Connect! youth met with over 25 mentors from Bluewolf Consulting and Google in San Francisco. These visits served as a capstone to our program. The youths’ first stop was at Bluewolf Consulting. There a team of employees from across the organization led workshops on interviewing techniques, building a personal brand, and using elevator pitches to help with networking. The youth also met one-on-one with mentors for help with creating their resumes and polishing their job interview skills. Star program volunteer and mentor, Danielle Bowers, organized a visit to Google’s San Francisco office. The afternoon featured a panel of Googlers who fielded the youth’s questions about how to get a job at Google and what makes a “dream” job. Later, the mentors sat down with the youth to give feedback on their resumes and final projects.
XAVIER CORENA
When I was 8, I moved to Oakland California from El Salvador. Moving to the US was a big culture shock but I managed to adapt and even found a passion in rock music. Now I am working on my presentation skills and learning from many motivational speakers and teaching myself the skills necessary to be successful. That is why I wanted to be part of Ready, Set, Connect, because I believe that in the long run, this will benefit me more than the dishwasher job that I turned down to be part of this program. Apart from this I am also going to college and looking forward to transferring to UC Berkeley or Stanford in a year and a half. I was part of the team that tutored at the Cesar Chavez Branch Library in Oakland. I wrote blog posts RSC team members and tutoring clients.

JENNIFER COELLO
At the age of 10, I migrated from Honduras to the United States with my younger sister. I had a challenging time, fitting in to this country’s culture and people. Throughout my high school experience at Lighthouse Community Charter School, I have been involved in various activities such as Ready Set Connect. I like to be involved in community service and different activities because it will help me determine what I really want to pursue as a career. This Fall I will be attending San Francisco State University. I was the Marketing Specialist for 81st Avenue Branch, where I did my weekly tutoring. I developed and implemented marketing and outreach plan for our branch’s tutoring program. I also created flyers and other marketing material.

PREMA BABA
Working directly with people is my passion. I love giving back to the underprivileged, as I am in the same boat. I am also grateful to be aware of the tools and knowledge that I shall pass on through my growth as I explore the cultures of our world, gain skills in media production, branch out by working with others, together helping to improve the community. In addition to tutoring at the Chavez Branch as much as twice a week, I wrote blogs and Facebook posts promoting computer tutoring at my branch as well as highlighting the impact of the Ready, Set, Connect! (RSC) program for youth as well as for library patrons.
JESUS ESPINOZA
After exploring fields such as hair dressing, cooking, and even architecture, I discovered my passion for video games. I attended school for Animation & Visual Effects. With the skills I obtained at school I started getting into video and audio cinematics for fun. I’ve been doing it for a little over two years now; in December of 2012 I signed a three year contract with the world’s #1 game entertainment website, Machinima. I was the Digital Media Specialist for the 81st Avenue Branch. I took and edited pictures and videos for use in RSC marketing, blogs, and social media posts. I also trained other RSC youth on how to use photo editing software and created the RSC fundraising video. I’m interested in animation and video effects. I love to beta test video games and would love to make a healthy living off of my Machinima partnership.

JESSICA GONZALEZ
I am currently a sophomore attending Oakland Charter High School. I am interested in studying law when I go to college. My main focus is criminal justice. However, I also enjoy learning about a variety of fields besides law. I am very passionate about giving to my community and improving Oakland. For this reason, I decided to take part in Ready Set Connect to help educate other members of my community on basic needs in society today. I am hoping to contribute to society in the future and be a positive role model for generations to come. I was the Marketing Specialist for the Main Branch group. I developed and implemented marketing and outreach plan for our branch’s tutoring program. I also created flyers and other marketing material.

DARIUS A. HENSON
I am a graduate of Far West High School. I am currently studying Multimedia Design and Management at DeVry University. I am the CEO of Inspired (Jewelry, Clothing & Accessories). We sell designer clothes, hats, jewelry and accessories. I love making people look good. I am also a freelance graphic designer. I was a Communications and Social Media Specialist for the Dimond Branch of the Oakland Public Library. In addition to tutoring at Dimond once a week, I wrote blogs and Facebook posts promoting computer tutoring at my branch as well as promoting the impact of the RSC program for youth as well as for library patrons.
SARA KAHAN
I was very excited to be an intern at RSC because I wanted to contribute my skills and knowledge to the team. I have lived in the Bay Area for most of my life, and just finished my first year at Mills College. I have experience with various jobs that center around customer service. I have also interned at a summer camp for teenagers and sold peanut brittle to the hungry residents of San Mateo. I was the only RSC team member at the Rockridge Branch Library, so I got to try a little bit of everything from marketing and graphic design, to blogging and social media.

AARON KIRKENDOLL
I am a high school student currently attending Golden State College Prep Academy in Oakland. On my free time I enjoy doing community service, working on computers and playing sports. I play basketball, football, track and field, and baseball. I was the Social Media Specialist for the 81st Avenue Branch. I wrote Facebook posts promoting computer tutoring at my branch.

SANDRA MALDONADO
I joined RSC during my senior year at Lighthouse Community Charter School. I love to play soccer. In addition to my work with RSC, I also tutored seventh and eighth graders in math homework. Not only that but I help individuals outside of school with their homework and make sure that they understand what they are working on. I was a member of the Main Branch team, where I was the Social Media Specialist.
MARIA MARTINEZ
I want to become a concept artist or an animator for video games or animated movies. My real goal is to be part of the making of a good game. I take anime seriously and sometimes rely on it to help me remember that dreams are achievable. I’ve read about what artists do in the game industry and what classes are recommended during high school. I am trying to read more about game art. I interned at the Museum of Children’s Art (MOCHA). I joined the Ready, Set, Connect! Program because it is about helping people, of all ages, to learn how to use a computer. I wanted to be exposed to other skills such as graphic design, photographing, and marketing. I was the Digital Media Specialist for the Cesar Chavez Branch, which means that I took and edited the pictures and videos for my branch. Then my teammates used the pictures for marketing, blogs, and social media posts.

CALVIN NGUYEN
I am currently a student of Laney Community College at Oakland, California. Having a passion in having an impact on the community, I travel around the Bay Area helping other communities thrive. I feel my biggest successes come from community services across the Bay. I feel especially great knowing that I volunteered at the San Francisco 2013 Cherry Blossom Festival, the Bonsai Gardens at Lake Merritt, and especially as the Tournaments Vice Head of Good Game Con. I love learning about new cultures and love attending many different conventions. I am still looking for a field of study that I can feel passionate about. I joined RSC because I wanted to continue to be involved with the community, and because I wanted to improve my professional skills. I was the Digital Media Specialist for the Main Branch of the Oakland Public Library.

AMY WEN
I was born and raised in Oakland, California. I currently attend a high school in Oakland, and am trying out new things in the interest of deciding what I want to do in my future. I am particularly interested in biology, technology, health, and the environment. I have done a few clerical volunteer services in the past with marketing and social media. I am also involved in clubs in and outside of school. I was a Communications Specialist with the RSC program. I wrote weekly blog posts and occasionally did marketing for the program as well as the Main Branch of the Oakland Public Library. I tutored patrons in basic computer skills once a week at the Main Branch of the Oakland Public Library.