

Made in Durham exceeds goal to secure digital access for 500 at-risk and disconnected youth



Durham, Oct 15, 2020 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Made in Durham exceeds goal to secure digital access for 500 at-risk and disconnected youth

Back-to-school this fall is stacked with remote-learning challenges for many, but for a specific group of youth across Durham, the road ahead is particularly arduous. This is the group of young people no longer enrolled in traditional school but are trying to obtain a high-school equivalency or continuing education certificate that offers a pathway to a living wage job. [Made in Durham](#) (MID) works with organizations that serve these and other youth in Durham's talent development pipeline. In partnership with the [Research Triangle Foundation](#), [Triangle Ecycling](#), and [Kramden Institute](#), MID embarked on a campaign to get companies to donate used computers to be refurbished by Triangle Ecycling and individuals to donate money that could be used to buy computers and other digital resources. In three weeks MID's *Connecting the Disconnected* campaign raised enough to grant devices, digital literacy resources, and internet connection for up to 500 youth whose education is being provided by Durham nonprofits.

"These youth are at the highest risk of dropping their pursuits. We felt moved to get laptops in their hands quickly, so they do not fall further behind. Thankfully, Made in Durham board members Hank Scherick and Anita Brown-Graham stepped up to co-chair this high-impact campaign," said Casey Steinbacher, Executive Director, MID

Computers and other digital resources will be distributed through multiple partner programs including Durham Technical Community College's Gateway to College Program, H.E.A.R.T.S. NC, Durham Police Athletic League, and LIFE Skills Foundation.

In addition, MID intends to make up to 50 computers available to Harnessing Our Partnerships for Education (HOPE) Learning Centers across Durham to ensure that they are a resource for students pursuing paths to education outside of Durham Public Schools (DPS). These centers have been developed through a partnership of DPS, Student U, YMCA, Durham Children's Initiative, Emily K, Boys and Girls Club and Made in Durham. Currently, DPS, Student U, YMCA and Kate's Corner have committed to hosting sites.

"Digital devices, access and literacy are key to supporting remote learning. We are so pleased with the outcome of Made in Durham's campaign. The resources they will provide to Student U will contribute to the success of our HOPE Learning Center." Alexandra Zagbayou, Student U.

In 2019, 12% of Durham youth ages 16-24 were neither in school nor working and, therefore, required alternative paths to complete their education and obtain living wage work. A [new report](#) from Measure of America warns that the COVID-19 pandemic might bring the national youth disconnection rate to 1 in 5, or even 1 in 4, young people. Such an increase would wipe out the progress that has been made in reducing the number of disconnected youth in Durham.

Victor and Ruth Dzau are determined that COVID-19 will not cause Durham to see such increases in the number of young people who are disconnected from both education and employment. The Dzaus responded to Connecting the Disconnected Campaign with a \$25,000 match challenge gift. Dr. Victor Dzau serves as Chair of the MID Board of Directors.

"Through this gift to Made in Durham, we hoped to encourage the community to join us in supporting some of the highest need youth in Durham. We are thrilled that MID met this match in a matter of days and these young people will have access to the technology they need to pursue remote learning opportunities." says Ruth Dzau.

The Dzau's are not the only people in Durham who are thrilled. Hassan Wilson Jr., a 19-year-old Durham resident, received his donated computer last week.

"I'm really appreciative. With everything going on from online school with Covid and applying for jobs in this new market, you can't do anything without a laptop and a smartphone will only get you so far," says Hassan Wilson.

About Made in Durham

[Made in Durham](#) is a 501(c)(3) community partnership of educators, business, government, youth-serving nonprofits, and young people mobilized around a shared vision that all of Durham's youth will complete high school or equivalent, and a post-secondary credential, to begin a rewarding career by the age of 25.

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For more information, please visit madeindurham.org/computers-for-all

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