The Beaumont Foundation of America

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The Beaumont Foundation of America

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By Mark Szymanski <marks@pacificu.edu>

In my previous four articles, I wrote a series on the digital divide. Well, it doesn’t seem that four was quite enough. As I was searching for a subject for this month’s column, I found The Beaumont Foundation (1). The foundation came to my attention because of it’s wide range of advertising. The sources ranged from our local free weekly newspaper, the Eugene Weekly to The Atlantic Monthly magazine. I wondered why there was such an aggressive marketing campaign for a foundation. When I logged onto their web site, I immediately linked to The Foundation’s mission statement thinking that this is where they would explain the specific angle they were taking. The mission of the foundation is “To ensure successful use of technology, the Foundation collaborates with successful organizations from the smallest community-based organization to the largest national philanthropies. Our grants provide the technology necessary to make this vision a reality for all. It is our goal to fund underserved schools, organizations and individuals committed to the principle of digital equity” (2).

The carefully crafted mission statement still left me wondering: what’s driving a foundation to advertise. The vision hyperlink (3) offered me less clues and more standard positions. Their vision is to fulfill the promise of the information age by providing every American access to technology and the skills to use it.

Feeling a bit let down because the mission and vision statements were standard went to the History link (4). Here I found the answer to my question. The drive to advertise was driven by time. The foundation has five years to give away $350 million. A settlement from a class action lawsuit generated that money. As a result, the foundation has clearly defined their goals and their methods.

The Foundation’s hope is that the unique circumstances under which the Foundation was created will serve as a model for similar settlements and give rise to a new form of philanthropy. The practical goal of the grant is to provide state-of-the-art Toshiba branded technology equipment to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. There is no explanation as to why Toshiba products were chosen.
The Foundation grants are intended to allow charitable organizations and schools to create programs that support digital equity. The grants will allow government agencies, schools, nonprofit communities and businesses to offer universal access for all.

Project managers are managing pilot projects in Chicago, New York, North and South Dakota, New Mexico and Texas. By assigning skilled project managers to each of its grantees and partner organizations, the Foundation can assure that participants can make full use of the technology.

The Foundation will award grants in 21 states and the District of Columbia during 2003. In 2004, in the remaining 29 states will receive the additional grants. Other grants will be available in subsequent years.

The Foundation has three distinct grant programs:

- Individual Grants of technology equipment directly to individuals
- Schools Grants of technology equipment for schools
- Community Grants of technology equipment to community-based organizations

Applicants to the Foundation may select from pre-built packages and individual equipment items when developing grant proposals. Applicants are encouraged to be creative in building equipment packages that serve your specific project design. It is strongly recommended that applicants also consult with a Technology Specialist when selecting equipment. The equipment the foundation is granting comes in packages that can be modified, but there is a specific list of products to choose from. A standard package includes 30 Laptops, Microsoft Office, and a 3-year extended warranty.

The Beaumont Foundation has certainly taken a unique angle. The hope not only to support the bridging the digital divide, but to encourage other class action lawsuit settlement money to be directed in philanthropic ways. Maybe advertising is the key. It caught my eye.

References:

(1) http://www.bmtfoundation.com
(2) http://www.bmtfoundation.com/aboutus
(3) http://www.bmtfoundation.com/aboutus
(4) http://www.bmtfoundation.com/aboutus/?index=4

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ONE THOUGHT ON “THE BEAUMONT FOUNDATION OF AMERICA”
Sheldon Stutler on January 30, 2014 at 6:17 PM said:

I would like to thank you for the efforts you've put in writing this website. I am hoping the same high-grade website post from you in the upcoming also. Actually, your creative writing abilities has inspired me to get my own website now. Actually, the blogging is spreading its wings rapidly. Your write up is a great example of it.