

## **Third Fairfax County Computer Clubhouse Opens at Willston Multicultural Center at Seven Corners in Falls Church**

**Falls Church, Virginia March 18, 2003** - Fairfax County's newest computer clubhouse opened today at the Willston Community Center near Seven Corners.

Fairfax County Community and Recreation Services and the Northern Virginia Technology Council Foundation helped build the new clubhouse, which is a place where students age eight to 18 can go after school to learn about technology.

Willston is the third computer clubhouse to open in Fairfax County in the past four years. The first clubhouse was opened in 1999 in the Gum Springs area of Alexandria, and the second was started in 2001 in Bailey's Crossroads.

"The computer clubhouse program bridges the digital divide between students who have access to expensive computer equipment and those who don't," said Tim Nurvala, president of the NVTC Foundation.

Working in a public-private collaboration with the county, the NVTC Foundation helps bring together the local technology industry, which provides financial as well as equipment donations. The clubhouses have also received support from local, state and federal governments.

In addition to being a fun place to learn, the clubhouses are "multi-media playgrounds" where students can create their own projects and find new experiences.

County officials also have found the clubhouses are helping students improve their grades and preparing them for the workforce, which in the future will require more workers with technology skills.

"The clubhouses offer students the opportunity to reinvent themselves by having the resources, experiences and models to help them succeed in school," said Pat Franckewitz, Director of the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services. "In addition to an overall improvement in academic performance, an increase in digital literacy provides the students with the self-confidence and marketable skills they will need for an increasingly technology-oriented job market."

Kate Hanley, chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross, were on hand to open the doors and turn on the lights at the new clubhouse. Both board members commended the work of the community and recreation services department and the NVTC Foundation.

The Willston Computer Clubhouse will be open weekdays 12:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. It is staffed by a clubhouse manager, Eric Primmer, and volunteers from AmeriCorps\*VISTA, which is part of the Corporation for National Service.

The computer clubhouses are discovery spaces designed to encourage creative learning through constructive play. They allow students to relate and discover their hidden talents, such as experimenting in the music lab or learning to write software for creating their own computer games.

"The goal of the computer clubhouses is to allow students to use technology creatively so they can acquire the tools, problem solving skills and confidence to build successful lives and careers," the NVTC Foundation's Nurvala said. "The clubhouses open a world of technological adventure for Fairfax students, and we're pleased to see that it's working."

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***About the NVTC Foundation***

*The NVTC Foundation was founded to encourage and facilitate corporate efforts to give something back to the community and specifically looks for community initiatives based in Northern Virginia that include technology as an important component in their mission. It is a charitable 501(c)(3) organization and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. The NVTC Foundation is affiliated with the Northern Virginia Technology Council, a membership organization of more than 1,300 companies representing nearly 170,000 people involved in the technology industry in the Northern Virginia region. More information about the programs that it supports can be found on its Web site at [www.nvtc.org/foundation](http://www.nvtc.org/foundation).*