

Newquist helps people learn, navigate information superhighway

Written by Ivan B. Phifer - MMMC Technology Reporter
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Broadband Access Project leadership profile

A graduate from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, with a degree in English and a minor in Art History, Amber Newquist is the Team Lead for the computer centers at Lifetrack Resources and the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority: Glendale Townhomes.

Lifetrack Resources, 709 University Avenue West, St. Paul, and the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Glendale, 92 St. Mary's Avenue SE, Minneapolis, are among the 11 partner sites in the University of Minnesota's innovative Broadband Access Project (BAP).

The Broadband Access Project is a \$3.6 million initiative of the University's Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center (UROC) to improve high-speed internet access, awareness and use in four federally-designated poverty zones in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The Broadband Access Project supports development and enhancement of the 11 community-based public computer centers for underserved populations, including African and African Americans, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander immigrants, and American Indians.

Newquist's role is to supervise the apprentices at these centers. Additionally, she trains the apprentice staff and those individuals who step into the computer labs.

Prior to this position, Newquist was the Operations Manager for the Art and Architecture Library at the University of Kansas. On April 16 this year, she won the KU Libraries Employee of the month award. But of her present role she says, "It stood out to me because it was helping the community."

Earlier Newquist worked as a supervisor in the Learning and Technology Service Center at her school. She supervised student employees. She provided maintenance for computers. She trained faculty one-on-one—often in emergency situations. This experience has helped her awareness of the Broadband Access Project (BAP), while, in her own words, "My degree helps me write and communicate efficiently."

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Newquist sees BAP and her role in it as beneficial to the communities: “Because we are bringing technology to groups of people that may not have had access to it before.” Quoting the testimony of an individual who had benefited from BAP, she says, “At Lifetrack Resources the other day, I had a guy tell me how great it was to have the lab there because the library limits them to one hour. And he said, ‘It can take me more than an hour to fill out a job application. It is very helpful because not only can I stay for longer than an hour, but the apprentices can help me as I continue to apply for jobs.’”

Newquist brings her unique social experience to the Broadband Access Project, having always been in a position where she interacted, on a one-on-one basis, with either the public, or members of a University committee. Currently she is also looking at her higher education options. “I’m trying to decide if I do go back what it would be for. It may be another bachelors, or masters. It may be related to something more technical,” she said.