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BakerRipley and Verizon Open Verizon Community Forward East End Learning Center, Empowering Houston Community with Digital Skills and Education Opportunities

HOUSTON - BakerRipley and Verizon are proud to unveil the Verizon Community Forward East End Learning Center, a cutting-edge facility designed to provide essential skills, entrepreneurship opportunities, and educational resources to the East End community. A grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony was held earlier today, Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at the center.

BakerRipley officials, Verizon officials, Council Member Mario Castillo (District H), Council Member Joaquin Martinez (District I), Council Member Julian Ramirez (At-Large 1), Council Member Willie Davis (At-Large 2), and Rep. Christina Morales (District 145) all attended the event.

The center is one of two created by Verizon in partnership with BakerRipley that aims to help bridge the digital divide by offering free learning programs and services tailored to youth, adult learners, teachers, entrepreneurs, and community members. The city's first center, Verizon Community Forward Gulfton Sharpstown Learning Center, opened in 2022.

The ceremony marks the official launch of a range of programs and services that will be offered at the learning center. This program is a key initiative under Citizen Verizon, the company's responsible business plan for economic, environmental, and social advancement. Verizon Community Forward is helping to drive the company's goals of providing 10 million youths with digital skills training and preparing 500,000 individuals for jobs of the future.

The center offers program participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in learning experiences including laser cutting, engraving, 3D printing, photography, podcasting, audio/video recording and editing. Additional programming includes coding, robotics, content creation, and exploring the engineering design process. The center will also introduce augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences, further expanding the horizons of learners.

The need for digital inclusion is evident, and initiatives such as Verizon Community Forward aim to address these disparities and empower the East End community through essential digital skills, educational resources, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

As part of Verizon Community Forward, the learning centers leverage the power of community spaces to promote digital inclusion and provide access to resources and digital skills training. By addressing the needs of the local community, the centers aim to empower individuals and foster economic growth. The key programs and services that will be offered at the new East End learning center include:

1. **STEM Education:** The center will provide comprehensive education in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to equip individuals with the skills required in today's rapidly evolving world.
2. **Professional Development:** Teachers specializing in Math, Science and Arts will have the opportunity to enhance their instruction techniques through STEM & STEAM training, enabling them to create engaging and impactful learning experiences for their students.
3. **Small Business Support:** The Verizon Community Forward East End learning center will offer entrepreneurs access to technology for prototyping and marketing products, as well as networking activities, entrepreneurship workshops and classes to foster business growth.
4. **Digital Skills:** Foundational digital instruction will be available to help individuals build essential competencies necessary for success in personal, employment, and educational settings.

For more information, please contact eastendlc@bakerripley.org or communications@bakerripley.org, or go to bakerripley.org/locations/east-end.

About BakerRipley

BakerRipley brings resources, education, and connection to more than half a million people throughout Texas each year. For more than a century, BakerRipley has offered innovative solutions to uplift and empower underserved communities as they pursue opportunities that create new and better lives for themselves and their families. BakerRipley is a United Way Agency partner. www.bakerripley.org #BakerRipley

About Verizon

Verizon Communications Inc. was formed on June 30, 2000 and is one of the world's leading providers of technology and communications services. Headquartered in New York City and with a presence around the world, Verizon generated revenues of \$134.0 billion in 2023. The company offers data, video and voice services and solutions on its award-winning networks and platforms, delivering on customers' demand for mobility, reliable network connectivity, security and control.

About Citizen Verizon

Citizen Verizon is the company's responsible business plan for economic, environmental and social advancement. Citizen Verizon empowers Verizon to deliver on its mission to move the world forward through action by expanding digital access and resources, protecting the climate, and ensuring people have the skills needed for jobs of the future. Through Citizen Verizon, and the key pillars of Digital Inclusion, Climate Protection and Human Prosperity, the company's responsible business goals include providing 10 million youths with digital skills training by 2030, supporting 1 million small businesses with resources to help them thrive in the digital economy by 2030, achieving net zero emissions in its operations by 2035, and preparing 500,000 individuals for jobs of the future by 2030. Learn more at CitizenVerizon.com.

