

Trainer Profile

Ed Garcia

Cranston Mayor Articulates Technology Needs of Community



Cranston Mayor Allan Fung is working with Ed Garcia to turn libraries into centers for digital literacy.

In a city with a substantial elderly population and many new immigrants just learning English, maximizing use of broadband technology proves critical to improving economic prospects and quality of life. The city of Cranston is maximizing use of its library system as a hub for digital literacy training that targets populations in need and is supported by Broadband RI initiatives.

Count Cranston's chief executive as a leading voice for redefining the role of libraries in ensuring that members of the community remain connected in critical ways. "The libraries are not just bricks and mortar anymore," says Mayor Allan Fung, who credits city library director Ed Garcia for being proactive in making the library system a driver of economically focused activity for residents.

With a population of just over 80,000 in the 2010 census, Cranston is Rhode Island's third largest city. Its digital literacy training initiatives (see related article) have been headquartered at its busy Central Library location, but Garcia says library system technology coordinator Corrie MacDonald intends to launch classes at the city's branch libraries as well (Garcia formerly served as technology coordinator before being named city library director).

Cranston's branch locations are the Arlington Reading Room and the Auburn, Knightsville, Oaklawn and William Hall branches.

Despite a challenging budget environment in the city, recent discussions between the city administration and library leaders paved the way for expanded access to digital literacy services that are in such demand that the library maintains a waiting list for upcoming classes. Garcia says additional funding will allow the libraries not to close on an extra day this summer, as was the case in the past. Also, the library system received a small funding increase for acquiring online resources.

(Ed Garcia and Mayor Allan Fung profile continued)



Ed Garcia in the stacks at Cranston Public Library.

“We had to cut back on hours in the past, but the needs are so overwhelming,” says Fung. “Residents are trying to utilize the libraries in different ways, from Internet training to filling out job applications. They’re going to the next level of communication.”

The mayor praises Garcia and his staff for “doing a wonderful job of making sure that the library stays up to date.” Garcia in turn says the administration understands the importance of maintaining momentum for the library’s technology initiatives. He cites as an example of the mayor’s support his attendance at a kickoff event that marked the city’s receiving an Ocean State Libraries grant for mobile computer lab equipment now used in digital literacy training classes.

Garcia adds that the training initiatives fueled by Broadband RI have a synergistic effect because they lead to efforts in the city to expand upon Internet classes for residents, by holding workshops on job searches and interviewing skills.

For more information contact the digital literacy program:
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