



PRESS RELEASE

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BIT-NASHVILLE LAUNCHES HIGH SCHOOL TECH EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Nashville chapter of the Blacks in Technology Foundation (BIT-Nashville) announces the launch of a High School technology education initiative aimed at providing technology education to Nashville high school students. The 3-year pilot program - named LocalTek – Thrive - is supported by Dell Technologies as the Presenting Partner, as well as learning partners LocalTek, and Tennessee State University.

The LocalTek-Thrive program partners with local schools to help build sustainable technology education programs for high school Junior and Senior students. LocalTek – Thrive is starting in the 2022 school year with over 150 junior students at RePublic High School, a charter school within the MNPS district. Students will be exposed to a variety of technology subjects, including Data Science, Healthcare Analytics, and App Development. Eligible students will also receive college credit through the TSU Dual Enrollment Program, as well as opportunities to earn industry certifications.

“RePublic High School is proud to partner with the Blacks in Technology Foundation through LocalTek – Thrive, as we seek to remain trailblazers in computer science education for all scholars in Nashville,” said Allison Arth, Director of Computer Science at RePublic Schools. “We believe that by teaching our scholars computer science skills, including coding, app development, and robotics, we are teaching them the skills of tomorrow that will give them a competitive edge in the future job market. We are honored by BIT-Nashville’s commitment to pour into our schools and community, helping us to achieve equity in access for our scholars.”

According to Lena Winfree, BIT-Nashville co-organizer and Vice President: “We believe very strongly that “Innovation means going first”. We appreciate partners such as RePublic High School, Tennessee State University, and our Presenting Partner – Dell Technologies – for being willing to take this first step with us toward changing the way we think about technology education and pipeline building. Innovative organizations like these are crucial when it comes to truly moving the needle.”

“At Dell Technologies, we are passionate about investing locally and working closely with community-based organizations to achieve digital equity, which is why we are so excited to partner with such a purpose-driven organization like BIT-Nashville on the LocalTek-Thrive program.” said Shoshana Samuels, Nashville co-site director for Dell Technologies. “This program shows great promise in introducing a new generation to careers in the tech industry and in achieving greater diversity in

Nashville's tech community overall. Exposing students to such robust technology education in high school can have a lasting, life-changing impact on their futures and further connect them to opportunities in the digital society. We look forward to seeing the next wave of local tech leaders who will emerge from LocalTek-Thrive."

LocalTek-Thrive is launching as a required course for high school juniors, with plans to include senior students in years 2 and 3. The program assists schools with teacher training, curriculum development, and resources for tech hardware. Course content will include both in-person instruction as well as facilitated virtual instruction. Local training partners such as LocalTek and Tennessee State University have collaborated with RePublic High School to provide the training curriculum.

"Tennessee State University Dual Enrollment Online is excited to partner with Republic Charter School and Blacks in Technology - Nashville!" Said Dr. Johnnie Smith, Assistant Vice President of DEO and Academic Support at Tennessee State University. "This partnership will allow high school students to build technology skills that can lead them to STEM pathway degree options while preparing them for the college experience. We look forward to a successful Fall 2022 semester as we welcome Republic Charter School and BIT-Nashville to the TSU Dual Enrollment Online family!"

Lena and Holly already have their eyes set on expansion. They are actively speaking to other high schools that may want to incorporate the program - with an emphasis on schools in North Nashville neighborhoods, such as White's Creek High School, Maplewood, and Pearl Cohn.

Holly Rachel, President and co-organizer of BIT-Nashville adds: "Building a tech pipeline begins before a student graduates from college. We can't expect a 21 year-old to choose technology as a career path if we haven't invested time into engaging that person with technology from a younger age. We are intentionally targeting schools with a high percentage of non-white students such as RePublic High School because we want to see more students of color showing interest in technology careers. We know what we want the future of tech to look like, and we are moving toward that future with actionable steps to get technology education to the students that need it."

BIT-Nashville was co-organized by Holly Rachel and Lena Winfree of Rachel + Winfree Consulting in March of 2021. Since then, BIT-Nashville has partnered with multiple local non-profits, companies, and educational institutions with the purpose of increasing the diversity of the Nashville technology community. BIT-Nashville is a chapter of the Blacks In Technology Foundation, a global non-profit focused on increasing diversity in tech. BIT-Nashville represents one of over 50 chapters of the BIT Foundation. Prospective members can join their local chapter at Foundation.BlacksInTechnology.net. The Blacks In Technology Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit entity of Blacks in Technology, LLC.

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Notes To Editors:

- For more information about the LocalTek-Thrive program, and for partnership inquiries, contact: Holly Rachel, Pres@bitnash.org, 615-314-3495