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OC PUBLIC LIBRARIES LAUNCHES *WIFI ON WHEELS* PILOT PROGRAM
TO BRING INTERNET ACCESS TO LOW BROADBAND COMMUNITIES

ORANGE COUNTY, Calif. (October 9, 2020) – In direct response to the digital divide augmented by the COVID-19 pandemic, OC Public Libraries is launching *WiFi on Wheels*, a new mobile internet pilot program that will increase internet access across Orange County communities.

WiFi on Wheels is part of the County's *Internet Access Initiative: Bridging the Digital Divide*, a larger project which includes WiFi extensions at County libraries and WiFi hotspots for check out. With assistance from OC Information Technology, OC Public Libraries will expand access to job searching, online school learning, and leisure activities in an extraordinary way.

"Internet access, adoption, and training are essential to creating digital equity for Orange County's diverse populations," said Vice Chairman Andrew Do, First District Supervisor. "Libraries are the backbone of society and this new service will benefit many residents who currently do not have access to WiFi from their homes, from children needing to do schoolwork to those searching for jobs."

The COVID-19 pandemic has driven many essential and social activities online. According to a recent Pew Research Center Study, 53% of Americans say the Internet has been essential to them during the pandemic. Concerns over limited internet access are especially prevalent among parents with lower incomes. According to the same study, 43% of lower-income parents with children whose schools closed, reported their children having to do schoolwork on their cellphones.

The County's commitment to technology access has been a long-lasting effort and response in bridging the digital divide Internet access is more important than ever for residents to stay updated on employment opportunities, learn the latest health and public safety information, and maintain community connections.

Through *WiFi on Wheels*, OC Public Libraries will identify and bring internet connectivity to low broadband neighborhoods throughout the County. Library staff will park a County vehicle with a branded *WiFi on Wheels* trailer at pre-designated locations each week to provide broadband for up to 150 users within a 300-yard radius. OC Public Libraries outreach staff will be present to answer questions, provide information about library services, and register patrons for library cards. Children and job search books will also be available from the vehicle in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

The *WiFi on Wheels* pilot program will launch with neighborhoods in Midway City and Westminster, and expand to Stanton, La Habra, La Palma, and San Juan Capistrano in the coming months.

A kick-off event will take place at the Westminster Library located at 8180 13th Street, Westminster, CA 92683 on Tuesday, October 20, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The Westminster Library is the first branch of OC Public Libraries to extend WiFi beyond library walls and check out wireless hotspots for library cardholders. Families are encouraged to stop by and check out digital library services, take a photo with

Rita the Zebra, and other giveaways, while supplies last. Social distance and safety guidelines will be followed.

OC Public Libraries' *WiFi on Wheels* will officially hit the road starting on Tuesday, October 27, and be available near the following locations[1]:

- **DeMille Elementary**
    - **Address:** 15400 Van Buren Street, Midway City, CA 92655
    - **Date:** Tuesday, October 27
    - **Times:** 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

- **Fryberger Elementary**
    - **Address:** 6952 Hood Drive, Westminster, CA 92683
    - **Date:** Wednesday, October 28
    - **Times:** 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

- **Schmitt Elementary**
    - **Address:** 7200 Trask Avenue, Westminster, CA 92683
    - **Date:** Thursday, October 29
    - **Times:** 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

- **Willmore Elementary**
    - **Address:** 7122 Maple Street, Westminster, CA 92683
    - **Date:** Friday, October 30
    - **Times:** 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

- **Sid Goldstein Freedom Park**
    - **Address:** 14180 All American Way, Westminster, CA 92683
    - **Date:** Saturday, October 31
    - **Times:** 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

For more information about the *WiFi on Wheels* program and updates on OC Public Libraries' services, visit ocpl.org.

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[1] Times and locations subject to change. For most current program information please visit us at OCPL.org.