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CITY OF TALLAHASSEE NEWS RELEASE

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City Receives Statewide Recognition for Digital Harmony *Project Helping to Bridge the Digital Divide*

The City of Tallahassee's Digital Harmony Project won the award for Excellence in Bridging the Digital Divide at yesterday's ITFlorida Awards Gala held in Orlando. ITFlorida is an umbrella, not-for-profit, membership organization that represents Florida's diverse technology community on a statewide basis.

Digital Harmony is a three-year pilot program designed to bring desktop computers complete with Internet access, learning software and ongoing training and support for every incoming sixth grader and, this year, new seventh graders at R. Frank Nims Middle School.

"It has been both an honor and a privilege for the City's IT department to be a part of the Digital Harmony Initiative since its inception. Exposing children early to science and technology increases the probability for a successful career," said Don DeLoach, Chief Information Systems Officer for the City of Tallahassee. "It's wonderful to see the positive impact the project has had on the students and faculty at Nims Middle School."

More than 90 households in underserved areas in the southside of Tallahassee received access to technology through the Digital Harmony program during its first year. Having the computers in the home enabled family members to tap into community-wide resources. Additionally, equipment was provided to the school's computer labs. This increase in students' access to computer technology helped the overall population to realize scholastic gains and benchmark mastery in both reading and mathematics. It also helped raise the school's grade from an "F" to a "C."

"This award is recognition that Tallahassee is a community that cares about all of its citizens," said City Commissioner Andrew Gillum, who spearheaded the initiative. "We believe that all children should have access to the tools they need to become high achieving, successful young people by supporting children and families with technology."

Gillum brought together a variety of partners from the Tallahassee business and technology community including the City of Tallahassee, Leon County School System, Florida State University, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee Community College, Mainline Information Systems, Comcast Cable, Dell Computers (first year), Hewlett Packard (second year), TalTech Alliance, Go Beyond Foundation and other community parties. This collaborative group of partners helped to implement the project, gain funding for equipment and software and develop programs to ensure ongoing training and support for the students and their families.

For more information on the Digital Harmony project, contact the office of City Commissioner Andrew Gillum at 891-8181.

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