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CHARITABLE FOUNDATION C CLOSES DIGITAL DIVIDE AT LOCAL CHARTER SCHOOLS TO STRENGTHEN REMOTE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 SHUTDOWN

Devices donated aim to allow all students access to virtual classrooms and online learning resources, during the pandemic crisis and beyond

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Tomorrow Crossroads Charter Schools will begin distributing tablets to families without access to digital resources, enabling the opportunity for all students, regardless of income or economic-status, to thrive in a remote-learning environment due to the current pandemic.

This initiative is supported by a donation from a Missouri-based charity organization, Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation. “Our teachers have created virtual schools, using Google Classroom and Zoom to teach lessons, conduct tutoring sessions and provide personal check-ins. They are preserving the community and connectivity of a traditional school day,” said Dean Johnson, Co-founder and Executive Director at Crossroads. “But the digital divide renders this virtual community inaccessible to many students. We are grateful for the Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation which is closing the divide, connecting students and building community.” Tysie McDowell, Co-founder and Chief Academic Officer, believes internet access is fundamental to providing quality education. “This is a social justice issue. We must ensure that all households have access to reliable technology so they can be connected to their community and to the world.”

Kirsten Brown, Principal of Crossroads Preparatory Academy, sees the digital divide impact everyday with her middle and high school students. “The divide has always existed. Before the pandemic, some students completed better quality work simply because at home they could type a paper with spell check, get extra
math help from Khan Academy or use a search engine to research a debate topic. I’m very concerned that the pandemic will exacerbate the achievement gap among students who lack virtual access in their homes.”

Brown notes that Crossroads teachers are also creating printed homework packets and reach students by phone, “but these options cannot match the sense of community and dynamic learning opportunities that exist for students who have access to the virtual classroom.”

Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation funded the purchase of 150 iPads, ensuring that all Crossroads students can access the virtual classrooms and rich array of other online learning resources. “We learned that many students at Crossroads were studying remotely without the benefit of technology in their homes. We have a deep understanding of the power of technology and the impact of the digital divide, and knew we had to help” said Eric Fritsche, President of Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation. “Crossroads’ focus on using technology to augment and extend learning opportunities for all students is the perfect match with our foundation’s mission to inspire and enable young people to participate in programs that build science, engineering and technical skills. We pride ourselves on fostering the connection of people for the greater good of the community.”

The donation of iPads is intended to help during the current shutdown due to COVID-19, but also will enable longer-term learning improvements. “The tablets will be leveraged to improve learning across all grade levels for years to come, and the pandemic is teaching us critical lessons about the need to permanently close the digital divide,” said Johnson. “Our entire community benefits when all students have access to the tools they need to learn and succeed. The pandemic is challenging all of us, but no student should have the double disadvantage of being cut-off from their virtual classroom. We’re happy to help bridge the access gap for Crossroads Charter Schools families,” Fritsche said.

Crossroads is also partnering with SchoolSmartKC and LEANLAB Education to develop its online teaching resources and acquire the tablets and hotspots needed to close the digital divide.

For more information about Crossroads Charter Schools visit www.crossroadsschoolskc.org and Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation at www.joshseidel.org

About Crossroads Charter Schools
Crossroads Charter Schools are tuition-free, public charter schools serving 930 students in Pre-K through 11th grade on its three downtown campuses. The schools are still growing and will welcome their first high school seniors in the fall of 2020. Crossroads opened in 2012 and quickly earned a reputation for its exceptional teachers, creative learning environment and its use of the civic, cultural and artistic resources downtown as an extended campus. Long student waitlists compelled Crossroads to open its 2nd and 3rd campuses.

Crossroads’ Mission is to prepare and inspire students to build a better tomorrow by providing an academically rigorous K-12 education in a creative, collaborative, community-focused environment. It is our Vision to be the premier school system in Kansas City and a destination for other educators seeking inspiration and best
practices. Graduates of Crossroads Charter Schools will be scholarly, culturally literate and service-oriented individuals who will pursue their dreams relentlessly and have a positive impact on their family, their community and the world.

**About Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation**
The mission of Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation is to honor the memory of Josh Seidel by assisting and inspiring young people to participate in programs or attend schools that build science, engineering and technical skills, encourage entrepreneurship and foster the connection of people for the greater good of our community. The foundation has supported STEM programs, scholarships and more across Kansas City, Columbia and St. Louis for over 6 years.

The Josh Seidel Memorial Foundation was started by a diverse, yet tight-knit group of friends committed to honoring Josh's memory by celebrating the things that were most important to him: science, technology, entrepreneurship, connecting people and having fun while doing it. The group adopted Josh's life motto as their own as a tribute to him: Work Hard. Play Hard. Help Others.

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