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New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$24,000 to Freehold School District to Close the Digital Divide

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide \$24,000 to the Freehold school district for Wi-Fi connectivity to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Freehold is one of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Bridgeton, Millville, Red Bank, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

"In today's world, having access to a computer and internet access is not a luxury, but a necessity," said New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, the founding chair of NJPRF. "We are hopeful that our commitment - alongside that of others - will address this pressing need so students can continue learning through the pandemic."

Freehold's funding will cover the cost of 100 hotspots currently in use for the last 6 months of the '20-21 school year and 50 new hotspots for an entire year of service.

"Freehold Borough is very grateful to the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund for helping the district offset the costs of Internet connectivity for our students. This has allowed us to fully connect all of our students to the Internet so that they can have fully robust virtual learning experiences during this time of unexpected disruptions due to COVID-19. On behalf of our students, we thank the leaders of the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund for this timely and targeted financial assistance."

The decision by many districts across the state to move to remote or hybrid learning has exposed a "digital divide" between students in wealthier districts who have devices and broadband internet access and those in poorer districts who do not. Without access, students in districts that have gone remote are at a major disadvantage.

The state has provided \$45 million to public school districts to buy digital devices and internet connectivity, but nearly 40,000 students across the state are still without a device or internet connectivity or both, according to the state Department of Education.

NJPRF CEO Josh Weinreich said the fund reached out to many districts to ascertain their needs and directed its donations to some of the state's most underprivileged districts, where the need far outstripped available funding.



“This is another great example of NJPRF channeling the energy and resources of New Jersey to fill in the gaps and ensure every child has the equipment and access they need so that their education is not interrupted,” Weinreich said.



New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund Targets \$637,000 to Bridgeton and Millville School Districts to Close the Digital Divide

The New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund announced today that it will provide more than \$637,000 to Bridgeton and Millville public schools to help students stay connected during the remote learning.

Bridgeton and Millville are two of nine districts across the state sharing more than \$2.6 million from the NJPRF to help bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced many New Jersey school districts to switch to remote learning.

School districts in Newark, Paterson, Freehold, Red Bank, Passaic, Old Bridge and Trenton are also receiving funding to purchase laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots and internet access needed for remote learning.

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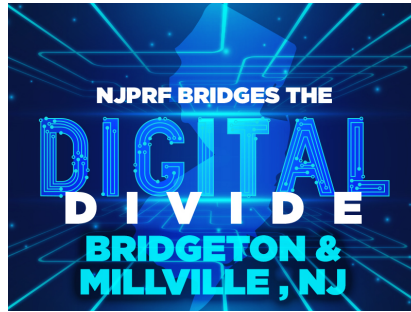
Millville will receive \$392,268 for 291 laptops equipped with Windows operating systems, high-end processors and more memory for students enrolled in career and technical education courses.

“Millville Public Schools (MPS) will now be closer to closing one facet of the digital divide because of the NJPRF grant,” said Millville Schools Superintendent Tony Trongone. “MPS is a school district with 75% of students economically disadvantaged. Our educators can now focus our efforts away from device acquisition and towards digital content and virtual pedagogy. We are forever thankful to the NJPRF in meeting the needs of all our children.”

Bridgeton will receive \$245,000 to purchase 400 Dell laptops fully loaded for student use and funding for five months of T-Mobile hotspot service.

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