Gary Evans enrolled in Byte Back in 1998, just one year after our organization was founded. At the time, he was working as a custodian for the DC Public Libraries and he wanted to qualify for a higher-paying job. With no college degree and limited computer experience, he knew he’d need additional training to compete in the job market. He heard about Byte Back on the radio and enrolled in beginner classes.

At the time, the classes were called Basic Mouse and Keyboarding and they were only taught at three locations in the city. Like many of our students, Gary created his very first email address in his Byte Back class. Fifteen years later, he still uses this email address and he’s even kept the very first email he ever sent. When he thinks about his time in these classes, he’s struck by how much he learned there. “[The classes] made me comfortable with computers,” he said. “I still use what I learned every day.”

After he passed the basic classes, he took courses that introduced him to the different programs in the Microsoft Office Suite (classes that we now call Office Track). He appreciated the classes so much that he decided to give back by helping to teach one of the introductory classes. After leaving Byte Back, Gary enrolled in courses on engineering and continued to build his qualifications.

Today, Gary works as a steam engineering supervisor with the D.C. government. His skill set is highly in demand and he also works part time with the Howard University Hospital. He’s never forgotten about Byte Back, however. A few weeks ago, he decided to donate $3,000 to our organization. It was the very first time he has ever donated to a nonprofit, but he felt confident that the money would be well spent.

“You’ve got to put your money where your mouth is, and I’ve been speaking the language of Byte Back to everyone I know,” he said. “I don’t know of a better program than Byte Back.” Of all the changes that Byte Back has made in the past fifteen years, he is most impressed by how much the organization has grown. “You’ve come a long way from those three places back in 1998,” he said.

Gary is happy to be back in touch with the Byte Back community, and he’s optimistic about the organization’s future. “You don’t know how much I love you guys,” he said. “There’s a lot of people out there who think very highly of you. Keep doing what you’re doing and hold true to the mission and you will be rewarded for it.”

Are you one of those people? Click here to donate to Byte Back’s mission.
We’re thankful for new opportunities!

First Time Technology Connects to the Community

By: Andrea Mack, First Time Technology Office Manager

An empty room is a blank canvas, a space with endless possibilities. For Byte Back’s CompTIA A+ students, it is also an educational tool. Each student in the A+ course has a blended learning experience: they spend 195 hours in class, 16 hours developing skills, and 80 hours at First Time Technology for an internship. In September, three of these student interns put their knowledge to use and helped First Time Technology staff install a technology lab in an empty room at Rockson Community Development Corporation.

Three interns worked under the supervision of Byte Back’s Ronald Wade and Jonathan Ladson and supported them in the installation of a five-computer technology lab. Rahel Yacob was one of the interns who worked on the lab installation and on refurbishing the five computers, including installing operating systems and upgrading hardware. “My confidence level has shot up,” Rahel said. “I could tell [a prospective employer] that I installed a computer lab.” She was excited to tackle the project with her fellow interns Ramael Slater and Eric Gaston. For Rahel, it is one thing to take a class and another to go out and implement those skills.

Installing each computer was a detail-oriented process. Staff and interns set up multiple computers and ensured network connectivity so that each computer can access the Internet and print to a central printer. Installing the technology lab was technical but there was also an art to it. When a technology lab is properly set up, users shouldn’t even notice the wiring. The First Time Technology team made sure that the computers were functioning and there were no unsightly wires or tripping hazards. For the final stage of the installation, the interns checked the Microsoft Security and antivirus settings to protect the computers’ data when connected to the Internet.

Giving students a chance to see firsthand what obstacles could come into play on the job is an important part of Byte Back’s A+ internship. “It was a good experience. Jonathan was very helpful when we were unsure of where to place cables and other things,” Rachel said. “Jonathan guided us and made our experience more valuable.” Jonathan Ladson, First Time Technology Refurbisher/Instructor, equips the interns with the skills needed to meet the demands of the IT world. Jonathan was gratified to see the students using what they learned in the classroom in a real-world setting. After the internship is completed, students can apply what they’ve learned to high-paying, meaningful careers.

“I really like that Rockson Community Development Corporation is a community-based organization and that the [technology lab] is being used to help people who have limited computer access,” Jonathan said. By
It may be surprising to hear that 28% of Americans don’t have a wired or wireless Internet connection at home. In some wards in D.C. that number is as high as 41%. As a result, the benefits that many take for granted like access to educational materials, government services, news, information, and job applications are inaccessible to nearly a hundred million Americans.

The Washington Post held a forum on November 5th to discuss the importance of bridging this digital divide. They convened policy makers, educators, and industry leaders for this discussion. Byte Back’s executive director, Kelley Ellsworth, participated in a panel to discuss solutions to barriers that keep many from accessing the Internet. “Having access to technology is not really about the hardware, it’s really about the people,” she began. “You can bring the Internet the last mile right up to somebody’s doorstep, but if they don’t know how to use it and they don’t know what it’s worth then you haven’t really solved the problem.”

Kelley highlighted Byte Back’s efforts to remove the barriers that keep students from learning computer skills, such as transportation. “What we do is we try to reach people where they are, where they are coming from,” she said. Byte Back teaches at 22 sites all over D.C., including D.C. public libraries and community organizations, most of which are wheelchair accessible. Schedule constraints, language, and literacy are other possible reasons that students might not be able to enroll in a computer course. Byte Back tries to overcome this challenge by offering courses throughout the day and evening, and offering courses for Spanish speakers and literacy learners. Some barriers that keep students from succeeding in computer courses are less about availability and more about how confident students feel around technology. Discomfort with technology can be a barrier. Byte Back works to build student confidence and a love of learning so that students can meet the changing face of technology with an eagerness to learn new skills. This model has successfully reduced barriers for many students at Byte Back and could

Continued
possibly do the same for students across the nation.

The forum also included industry leaders from many different fields of expertise. Speakers included Director of the National Economic Council Gene Sperling, Mayor of Baltimore Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn. Throughout the forum, speakers touched upon the far-reaching effects of the digital divide. It not only affects adults; it also has an incredible impact on children whose learning is impeded by not having access to high-speed connectivity in their schools and homes. At the close of the forum, it was clear that collective efforts are needed to address the digital gap. There is much work to be done but together we can work to use the benefits of technology to equalize opportunities for all Americans. We at Byte Back would like to thank the Washington Post for welcoming Executive Director Kelley Ellsworth and the unique perspective that Byte Back has to offer to this conversation.

**A video of the event is available on the Washington Post’s website.**

**We’re thankful for our partners!**

**Sasha Bruce YouthBuild Awards Night and Graduation**

By: Eleanor Grewal, Director of Programs

The evening of Wednesday, November 13, friends and family gathered at the UDC-CC campus to celebrate Sasha Bruce YouthBuild's Awards Night and Graduation. We were proud to see these young adults graduate from the intensive program, which included GED training from Academy of Hope, construction certification and job placement through Sasha Bruce YouthBuild, and IC3 certification training through Byte Back. Special congratulations to the students who earned their IC3 certification and to those who are now employed! We look forward to hearing about the future achievements of all the Sasha Bruce graduates.

**We’re thankful for our volunteers!**

**Volunteer of the Month: Brett Isaacoff**

By: Ashley Luttmer, Director of Volunteer Services

Teaching the PC for Beginners courses at the Perry School was not the first time Brett Isaacoff has helped others master new technologies. A former trainer for a computer store, Brett started volunteering at Byte Back as a tutor last winter. He helped out occasionally in the spring class at Jubilee Housing and taught the PCB2 class there. Brett’s students raved about his patience and kindness.

This term, Brett taught PCB1 at the Perry School and he’s currently teaching PCB2 - his third class in a row! He’s an exemplary teacher, notable for his articulate explanations and thoughtful responses to students’ questions. Brett says, “My time spent as a Byte Back instructor has allowed me to rediscover my love for teaching....Working with wonderful people to expand their knowledge of digital tools and to connect with the world in a new way has been an immensely gratifying experience.” One of his favorite class memories is when a student learned how to use email and “beamed...after learning how easy it was to stay in touch with her family across the globe.”

We are so thankful to have Brett as a member of the Byte Back community!
First Time Technology is now open for repairs and sales!
By appointment only Monday-Thursday, 10:00 am-3:30 pm
Phone: (202) 803-2704   Email: amack@byteback.org
http://byteback.org/first-time-technology/

Interested in buying a computer?
Computers are available starting at $100 plus tax and come with a 15-inch monitor, keyboard, mouse, Microsoft Office, and Windows 7.
Payments accepted: Credit (no American Express), debit, and gift cards. No cash or checks.

Interested in donating?
We are accepting donations such as PC computers and computer accessories. We do not accept CRT monitors or printers.

Services Provided
• High-quality computer repair services
• Refurbished computers
• Computer lab installation
• Computer lab troubleshooting
• Internship opportunities for Byte Back CompTIA A+ Certification Training students

Donate Your Computer to First Time Technology

Each year the United States throws out 47.5 million computers

Make a difference.
Give your computer a new life.

33% of computers collected for disposal could have been reused
Student Spotlight: Angela Alston

By: Kenya Lee, Volunteer Coordinator

Angela Alston has never been a stranger to overcoming challenges. Even though she has battled with cancer, bipolar disorder, and a tough economy, she is still determined to find a better job. She is a former government employee with over 15 years of experience, but her computer skills had become outdated and she’s currently employed as an usher at the John F. Kennedy Center. Angela first learned of Byte Back through a program called N Street Village. She heard about other Byte Back students successfully finding employment. Byte Back was exactly what she was looking for: affordable, metro accessible employment training.

Angela signed up to attend classes in the fall of 2012. However, she became ill soon after and she was diagnosed with cancer. After almost a yearlong battle, Angela came back to Byte Back stronger and more determined than ever. She attended our classes this fall, even though it meant cutting back her work hours. “Most Mondays I had to find a replacement to work my desk shifts,” she said. “However, I was looking at the long term benefit in contrast to the short term gain [and] I was more than willing to make the sacrifice.”

Angela has successfully completed Office Track, where she learned the essential Microsoft Office tools necessary for many administrative jobs. Angela is considering taking more classes in the future. She said, “Getting [a] certification will further enhance my marketability in a competitive job market. I will continue to make whatever sacrifice is necessary in pursuit of gaining full-time sustainable employment.”

In addition to her struggle with cancer, Angela also dealt with the negative stigma that is placed on people who are bipolar. She explains, “I definitely feel that I have been denied admission into colleges and lost employment opportunities once my diagnosis became known.”

Despite these challenges, Angela continues to take the necessary steps to improve and return to work. Angela proclaims, “My challenges may seem many, but my resolve to acquire a good job is greater.”

We're thankful for our instructors!

Five Questions with an Instructor: Kenya Lee

Interview by: LaTierra Piphus, Computer Instructor

Q: What has been your favorite moment as a Byte Back instructor?
A: My favorite moment was watching all of the PowerPoint presentations. I was able to learn about everyone’s interests, hobbies, and passions.

Q: What is your favorite lesson or concept to teach, and why?
A: PowerPoint was my favorite lesson to teach as well, because it allowed the students to have a lot of creativity and individuality. It was fun to watch their reactions to everything they were learning and it was fascinating to see how they applied these concepts.

Q: What do you like best about living in the D.C. area?
A: I enjoy simply being around people. Where I come from (Indiana) there isn’t much to do or see. In D.C.,
there is so much history and culture to explore. There’s also an unlimited amount of food options to choose from!

Q: What do you most hope to convey to the students you work with?
A: More than anything, I want my students to stay determined. One thing I’ve observed with all the classes at Byte Back is that determination is key. No matter how frustrated you might become with a new concept, stay focused, and continue to be persistent. This lesson can be applied to many aspects of life as well, but it’s definitely useful when learning.

Q: Considering that we’re all evolving daily and learning about ourselves, what’s the most fascinating thing you’ve discovered about yourself lately?
A: I’ve discovered that I’m a great listener. People often confide in me because I’m good at being the person they can speak to without interjecting or making them feel like they’re wasting time.

**Upcoming Events**

- Tours of Byte Back — Would you like a guided tour of Byte Back? For more information and to arrange a tour, please contact Development Associate Lydia Vanderbilt at lvanderbilt@byteback.org or by calling (202) 529-3395.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

"Volunteering is the most effective means to give back to your community and to continue to develop the human spirit."

- Ted Frazier, volunteer instructor

If you’re interested in volunteering with Byte Back, please contact Ashley Luttmer, Byte Back’s director of volunteer services, at aluttmer@byteback.org or (202) 529-3395.

**About Byte Back**

Founded in 1997, Byte Back seeks to improve economic opportunity in the Washington, D.C. area by providing computer literacy and job training for disadvantaged communities. Byte Back offers courses ranging from basic computer literacy to Microsoft Office to internationally recognized computer certification preparation. Byte Back is licensed by the DC Educational Licensure Commission as a postsecondary educational institution.