

FOR RELEASE: July 24, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - An imaginary, electronic city-within-a-city became reality today at Youngstown State University.

St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center's Health Education Center and the University this morning (7/24/87) unveiled Youngstown FREE-NET, an open access computer network available for communication and information exchange to anyone--students, faculty, staff, schools, businesses, medical and health field personnel, and the public.

And this community service is free!

Anyone in the Mahoning Valley area with a home or office computer and a device called a "modem" which connects their computer with a telephone can use Youngstown FREE-NET simply by dialing 742-3072.

State, county, city and University and St. Elizabeth's officials took part in opening the magical "electronic city" in ceremonies this morning at YSU's Harry Meshel Hall.

The co-sponsors, in extending computing into the community through this high technology center, chalked up some significant "firsts":

* The first community computer system, outside the parent "Cleveland FREE-NET," on what will eventually be a nationwide network of such systems.

* The first system collaboratively sponsored by a hospital and a university.

* The first community system tied into a university/campus network.

MORE

ADD ONE

* The first direct community outreach by a major university computer center using this medium of communication.

* Butler Institute of American Art is the first U.S. art museum to be online with a community computer system.

The innovative community program is viewed as a star for Youngstown, Ohio. Maybe not "Computer City" (yet), it announces to the world that the once-great steelmaker is alive and well and moving quickly into the 21st century with an educational/medical "first" in community service.

Youngstown FREE-NET is patterned after Cleveland FREE-NET, which is the brainchild of Dr. Tom Grundner, assistant professor of Family Medicine at Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine. He started what became known as "Doc-in-the-Box" in 1984 with ideas, a cast-off computer and a pirated phone line to launch a communication system for CWRU's various clinical units across the city.

His "St. Silicon's Hospital Information Dispensary" was quickly investigated by citizen computer buffs and became so popular he conceived the "electronic city," now composed of many units open to everyone and constantly being expanded.

Youngstown FREE-NET's "city" will have: Administration Building, Post Office, Public Square, University Circle, Hospital, and later Government House, Courthouse, School and Industrial Park.

Like the public library, all are free to users. The network is sponsored jointly by Youngstown State University and St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center.

MORE

ADD TWO

The system is literally operated by the community. On a day-to-day basis, each area is run by community "sysops," or system operators who volunteer their time and expertise to answer questions, upload files and help manage their areas.

In The Hospital, for example, personnel will update the calendar of events and seminars, physicians and health authorities will answer questions about poisons, diet, treatment for burns, AIDS and others. They will not, however, diagnose or prescribe.

At University Circle, there will be an Information Booth, YSU Newsletter, Sportsline, Continuing Education Office, Computer Center, Admissions Office, Ohio Technical Transfer Organization (OTTO) from Cushwa Center, and many other areas.

Public Square offerings include The Cafe, where you can chat with others, an Employment Office with a Jobs Board, and a section for Special Interest Groups, which can include items for the handicapped, science fiction fans, joggers, etc.

This "electronic city" opens many, many doors, starting with the world of education and knowledge at the University and the Medical Center's vast medical/health resources, including St. Elizabeth's Nursing Library, the largest in this part of the country, and the unique Jeghers Research Library.

Founders of Youngstown FREE-NET are Dr. W. Robert Kennedy, director of Medical Education at St. Elizabeth's, Lou Anschuetz, associate director/academic consulting at YSU's Meshe'l Hall Computer Center; Dr. Leonard Caccamo, St. Elizabeth's Director of Medical Education Emeritus and now consultant in Jeghers Research Library; and Dr. Janet Del Bene, YSU professor of Chemistry and noted computer authority/innovator.

MORE

ADD THREE

They, in turn, had full support for the concept from University and Medical Center administrators, including YSU President Neil D. Humphrey, Provost Bernard T. Gillis, Thomas W. Doctor, director of the University's Computer Center, and Sister Susan Schorsten, H.M., executive director of St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center, and Ms. Cindy Myers, director of St. Elizabeth's Health Education Center.

Their combined efforts today turned on all the lights/computers in Youngstown FREE-NET's "electronic city," making it a special place for everybody.

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