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Cumberland County Benefits from Free Public Library Internet Access

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, PA – Cumberland County Commissioners learned about the growing number of citizens who rely on the Cumberland County Library System's public access technology services at a public meeting held today.

"The library system received 4,182 completed technology surveys from citizens this past fall," Jonelle Prether Darr, Executive Director of the library system said. The survey provided solid data on how county citizens use and benefit from the library system's free access to computers and the Internet.

Currently, the library system "provides 104 public access computers at 8 locations across the county, plus free Wi-Fi Internet connections for library visitors and assistance from trained staff."

This past year, use of public Internet access technology grew 130%, with library users logging on to use high speed Internet access 353,077 times, or more than a 1000 times each day.

Of the survey respondents who reported visiting the library in the past year, **54%** used a public access computer or the library's Wi-Fi network during their visits. Highlights from the survey include:

- **13%** of public Internet users are low income (below 200% of the poverty line).
- **4%** do not have regular Internet access (other than the library).
- **18%** of public technology users indicated they had used public Internet access for employment needs, with **13%** of users searching for a job online and **8%** applying for a job by online.
- **21%** of public technology users used library technology for educational activities. **12%** of users completed coursework or homework using public access technology.
- **16%** of public technology users used library technology to get information on health and wellness topics.
- **22%** of public technology users reported using library resources to stay in touch with family and friends and to build and maintain social networks.
- **42%** of public access technology users also received help from a librarian when using the computers or Internet at the library. Of those users requesting help, **93%** have access to the Internet at home, school, or work but still choose to use the library's technology.

Darr said that the survey results demonstrate that the "library system offers critical resources and services even as people increasingly have their own Internet connections and devices."

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