



## Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Launches

### Barrier-Busting Cell Phone Lending Initiative

#### *Another Example of Library Technology Bridging the Digital Divide for All Residents*

**LAS VEGAS (April 21, 2022)** –The [Las Vegas-Clark County Library District](#) is taking another significant step toward bridging the digital divide with a new technology initiative. Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museum & Library Services and the Nevada State Library, [Nevada Homeless Alliance](#) (NHA) and [Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth](#) (NPHY), are partnering with the Library District’s groundbreaking Cell Phone Lending Program, which provides smart phones to low-income residents, and those experiencing homelessness. Each phone comes pre-loaded with Library District apps that provide life-enriching and educational resources as well as critical social and community services.

“Access to technology is a basic human right and public libraries play an essential role making this possible for our most vulnerable residents,” said Library District Executive Director Kelvin Watson. “Our new Cell Phone Lending Program is a pilot initiative that is putting internet connectivity into the hands of 380 local adults and teens who are low-income or experiencing homelessness. These devices are a lifeline, reconnecting them with family, social resources, educational and employment assistance, and so much more. This program is yet another example of how the library uses technology to empower and uplift people’s lives.”

The Library District purchased 380 Moto G Pure phones, with cases, from T-Mobile through a \$200,000 grant provided by the Federal 2021 LTSA ARP Act through Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Nevada State Library. The Library District worked with NHA and NPHY, who selected individuals to participate in the 18-month Cell Phone Lending Program, which launched April 21, 2022. Premier Wireless pre-configured the phones for unlimited calls and 5G hotspots in the U.S., and programmed them with library apps for education and workforce services, contact information for employment and social service agencies, and job skills training.

“Many people may not realize the barriers that individuals experience when they don’t have access to a phone or Wi-Fi,” said Catrina Grigsby-Thedford, executive director of the NHA. “In this post-pandemic era, services are accessed via the Internet or platforms such as Zoom. The Library District’s new Cell Phone Lending Program will fill some of those gaps. We are proud to collaborate with the Library District on this barrier-busting partnership.”

Research shows that cell phones are especially critical to the health and well-being of both adults and teens. Those experiencing homelessness use their mobile device as their primary means of staying connected to friends, speaking with their families, and contacting essential services that most people take for granted, according to research conducted by Common Sense Media in 2018.

In addition to staying connected with social networks, a cell phone promotes safety and stability, enables them to communicate with case managers, health providers, employers, and makes it possible to seek housing opportunities and community resources. In fact, homeless youth report that paying the monthly subscription to a data plan for their smart phone is just as important as eating.

“Libraries serve as community anchors, providing residents of all ages with free, hands-on experiences with technology that they may not find anywhere else,” Watson said. “In our branches, you will find such advanced equipment as 3D printers, DJ Labs, robotics, music, audio and video production, and podcasting. The only way to fight the digital divide is to make this level of technology available to all.”

### **About Las Vegas-Clark County Library District**

The award-winning Las Vegas-Clark County Library District is an independent taxing entity that serves a diverse community across 8,000 square miles. Through its 25 branches and website, the Library District offers a collection of 3.2 million items consisting of books, movies, music (including streaming and downloadable), online resources, as well as free programs for all ages. The Library District is a vibrant and vital member of the community offering limitless learning; business and career advancement; government and social services support; and best of all, a place where customers find a sense of culture and community. For more information, please visit [LVCCLD.org](http://LVCCLD.org).

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