



BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION

Britepaths client Alicia Salmon receives her new laptop from Anil Atyam, whose company is part of ITServe Alliance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER WEBB

With some of the new computers are (from left) Shannon Bryant, Britepaths; Ashwin Puppala, TelligenTech; Jay Challa, Ace Info Solutions; Anil Atyam, Cloud Integrator; Lisa Whetzel, Britepaths executive director; Lax Chepuri, Technogen Inc.; Sudhakar Garlanka, Allwyn Corporation; Sateesh Gowrisetty, AdvanceSoft Inc.

# ‘This Gives Me the Opportunity to Follow My Dreams’

## ITServe Alliance donates new laptops to Britepaths.

BY BONNIE HOBBS  
THE CONNECTION

Valentine’s Day was Feb. 14, but a sweet treat came a few days earlier for Fairfax-based nonprofit, Britepaths. That’s because, on Feb. 10 and 12, the local chapter of ITServe Alliance donated 43 laptop computers to Britepaths for its clients to use.

Established in 2010, ITServe Alliance is a nationwide consortium of information technology services, staffing and consulting organizations. It has 16 local chapters across the U.S., and these laptops were from its DMV chapter, serving Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C.

“The laptops they gave us are new and were purchased through donations from ITServe’s members,” said Britepaths spokeswoman Heather Webb. “Most are for adults to use, and we’ll offer them to our clients who need them – particularly those in our Avenues to Career Training program.”

**THIS PROGRAM** provides skill-building support to Fairfax County residents interested in health-care careers to prepare them to seek the certifications and training they need to obtain a job in their desired field.

“Our training is via Zoom for the foreseeable future, and many of our clients don’t have laptops, so this will be a huge help for them,” said Webb. “Fifteen of the donated laptops are intended for K-12 students, so those will go to the children of our clients, as their needs are identified.”

ITServe Alliance’s DMV chapter comprises about 135 small and medium-sized businesses. All are primarily information-technology services and products companies.

“ITServe also has a CSR – corporate social responsibility – focus,” said Britepaths Development Director Shannon Bryant. “Each member defines what that means for their



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Alicia Salmon’s donated computer will enable her to receive training and connect with potential employers.

own company, and the DMV chapter decided to donate laptops as its project.”

He said the computers are particularly important to the people served by Fairfax-based nonprofit Britepaths. “Once schools closed [because of the pandemic] and everything went online, the conversation around racial equity and the digital divide was especially pronounced,” explained Bryant.

“People without computers at home couldn’t find jobs because they couldn’t write resumés or interview online. They also couldn’t attend classes at community college online or apply for services for food and rent assistance to prevent eviction.”

Therefore, said Bryant, “This donation keeps attention on the digital divide. And it sets an example for anyone wanting to know how they can look at their own skills and resources and reach out to bridge gaps to give everyone the same chance to achieve success. These IT professionals looked at what they had to offer, found a need to match it and contacted us.”

“We’re doing this effort as part of our CSR,”

said Anil Atyam, CIO of Cloud Integrator in Fairfax and president of ITServe Alliance’s DMV chapter. “We’re really privileged and humbled to support this initiative because we believe in giving back to the community.”

**THE FIRST RECIPIENT** of a laptop was Britepaths client Alicia Salmon, and she beamed as Atyam presented it to her on Feb. 12. “I’m so excited,” she said. “It’ll open up a world of absolute opportunities for me. I’ve been using my phone with a cracked screen to send out resumés, make phone calls and handle everything. And it’s just been so hard responding and keeping up with emails – it’s a lot.”

So, said Salmon, being able to have an actual computer of her own “lets me see everything that’s offered, communicate with people, apply for jobs and, hopefully, be in a better place. And I want to say thank you so much – I truly appreciate it.”

“This laptop gives me the opportunity to follow my dreams,” she continued. “I thank everyone for thinking of me. This opened up a new passion and inspiration inside of me

for a class I’ve taken during COVID-19 and for a new career.”

A mother of three children, ages 22, 20 and 9, she said the new laptop will also be a huge help to her youngest child. “He’ll be able to use it when he has to give back his temporary, school laptop to FCPS in the summer,” explained Salmon. “He’ll be able to keep learning.”

Pleased, Atyam said, “The primary objective is to promote and support STEM education. Lack of a laptop should not be a barrier to learning. And we want to help people wanting to pursue a job or learn something.”

All the computers donated are brand-new, fully loaded, HP laptops with 15.6-inch screens and AMD processors. Each is valued at about \$15,000. In addition, ITServe Alliance gave the recipients backpacks and mice for their computers.

“We also made a commitment to support any online training, internships and mentoring programs,” added Atyam. Identifying the need and seeing Britepaths’ and Salmon’s responses firsthand, he said, “gave me the encouragement and motivation to do even more.”

Indeed, Webb said Britepaths is looking forward to working with this group again in another capacity, as well. In the future, she said, “ITServe hopes to match professional IT mentors with Britepaths clients seeking employment in the IT field.”

ITServe’s members provide a highly skilled labor force to commercial and government clients across the country. They also partner with local schools and colleges to encourage STEM education. ITServe’s CSR helps local communities via various charitable programs aimed at educating the underprivileged and ending hunger through food drives.

Its leaders believe that developing skills and leadership abilities can contribute to lifting individuals out of poverty by improving access to jobs, increasing productivity and fostering sustainable, economic growth. Such development may occur in formal, informal and on-the-job settings, with the goal of reflecting the changing demands and opportunities of the community’s economy and labor market.