

## Pilot program offers free access to the internet in Yonkers

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Yonkers residents are getting free access to the internet through a pilot program known as "Y-Zone."

Up to 50 families already signed up for the program - and there's room for hundreds more.

Elyer Soto says the internet is a necessity after his computer broke down five months ago.

"I use the internet not only to pay bills, research, entertainment, movies, talking to family all over the world through video -- everything -- the internet has become so essential," says Soto.

It sounds similar to the lives of many people, including students, as the internet advances through the nooks and crannies of everyday life.

But there's a deep digital divide, driving limited access to underserved communities in some parts of Yonkers.

That's why the pilot program is there to help bridge that gap, allowing hundreds of Yonkers families to access the internet at no cost.

"We think this is a critical pillar of improving the regional economy and for smart growth, that's why we wanted to galvanize these communities and set an example of the possible," says Michael Romita, CEO of the Westchester County Association.

The Westchester County Association is spearheading this pilot project, with a \$450,000 grant from a nonprofit called U.S. Ignite.

The pilot program reaches hundreds of households from Glenn Park to Park Hill Avenue, and from downtown Yonkers to Nodine Hill.

Access through Y-Zone goes beyond just connecting to Wi-Fi. Users can get a router, tech support, digital training and a Chromebook for free.

"But it's only a pilot, so we need funding to expand and allow this to continue and make it more sustainable," says Romita.

Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 are two upcoming distribution dates that will happen in the lobby of the Yonkers Library. No registration is needed, just walk right in.