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Robert F. Smith Challenges Baltimore's NPower Graduating Class to Give Back, Offers Incentives for Community Investment

First-ever NPower program in Baltimore offered tuition-free training in information technology for young adults in underserved communities.

BALTIMORE, MD – December 13, 2016 – Robert F. Smith, Founder, Chairman and CEO of Vista Equity Partners and Founding Director and President of the Fund II Foundation, delivered a commencement address to NPower Baltimore's first graduating class of 24 young adults who recently completed NPower's 22-week IT training program. Congratulating the students, Mr. Smith reminded the students that they will have the opportunity to pursue careers in technology that can lift up not only themselves and their families, but also their entire communities. He noted, "You will not face challenges alone, you are a part of NPower's first graduating class, Class 1, you now have a family, and that includes me. We're all in this together."

Mr. Smith also personally offered several incentives for students who commit to neighborhood reinvestment in Baltimore: \$1,000.00 to every student who becomes a homeowner in their community within five years, \$10,000.00 to be split equally between the students once they achieve 100% ComTIA A+ certification – which covers technology topics including servers, software, cyber security, networking and troubleshooting -- and \$100,000.00 to be split equally if 100% of the class become homeowners in Baltimore in a 10 year time frame. Smith implored the graduates to "Join civic associations, help others, act as role models, be a homeowner – all the things that rebuild the social fabric of a community."

NPower Baltimore was made possible in large part due to funding from Fund II Foundation. Other major funders include Abell Foundation and Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, both also in attendance for the graduation, as well as the France-Merrick Foundation. The NPower program has also been acknowledged by Congressman Elijah E. Cummings as a valuable service to the Baltimore community.

"NPower gives young people the tools they need to take charge of their lives," said U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings. "I am confident that each graduate of NPower Class 1 will go on to make great contributions to the Baltimore community. I am very proud to



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see them change their life trajectories and commit to making a positive economic and civic impact in our communities.”

“The students who graduated this past week in Baltimore have achieved a great deal in a very short amount of time,” said Dan Petrozzo, Chairman of NPower’s Board of Directors. “They took a chance on NPower and put their lives on hold to pursue something better for themselves and that alone should be commended. We owe it to these individuals to back them with the necessary support to succeed both in their careers but also as members of the community of Baltimore. Robert Smith leads the way in helping them set aspirational goals and committing to financial rewards.”

The training program aims to meet the needs of students both in and outside of the classroom. NPower has partnered with several community organizations and the University of Maryland BioPark to help facilitate recruitment and to address a range of social issues the young adult participants face.

“We are inspired by the support we have received from the Baltimore community, and by the Fund II Foundation and other generous funders, since we opened in July. Success for us means finding jobs for our students and a number of visionary organizations have given our students their first professional IT opportunity,” said Bertina Ceccarelli, Chief Executive Officer of NPower. She continued, “Our students were hired as interns at a number of exceptional organizations: Under Armour, TD Ameritrade, DNS Technology Group, Greater Baltimore Urban League, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Data Flow Computers, Black Men Achieving Greatness, The Sand Gallery, Loyal Services Unlimited, and the Black Mental Health Alliance for Education and Consultation.”

In closing, Mr. Smith let the graduates know that he and NPower were here to help them activate their minds to create solutions in their community. He encouraged graduates to occasionally “put down your devices” and engage in conversation with one another, with friends and family, in order to meaningfully explore the issues of the day.

About NPower

NPower is a national nonprofit that creates pathways to economic prosperity by launching digital careers for military veterans and young adults from underserved communities. We empower under-represented talent to pursue tech futures by teaching the digital and professional skills demanded by the marketplace, and engaging corporations, volunteers and nonprofits in the long-term success of our students.

NPower is the link between non-traditional job seekers and companies hiring diverse technology workers, creating an alternative fast-track to IT jobs on a national scale and



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engaging employers in our curriculum design. Over 80% of our graduates are employed full time or enrolled in higher education within one year of completing our program, which is offered at no cost to qualified students.

For more information, visit [NPower.org](https://www.npower.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Fund II Foundation

Fund II Foundation is a charitable foundation, at the heart of which is a deep commitment to advance social change, create opportunity, respect and protect the environment, and preserve our culture. Fund II Foundation is focused on improving lives and opportunities for African-American and other vulnerable populations. For more information on Fund II Foundation, visit www.fund2foundation.org.

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