

## **New data network unveiled**

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Darrell Edwards walked to a table full of laptops and dropped her bag next to an open seat.

The Jackson resident's fingers wrapped around the mouse and with a series of clicks, she began to navigate the Jackson County Data Network -- a new centralized Web site containing local data.

Edwards joined about 25 people Wednesday at the Jackson District Library's Carnegie branch to celebrate the Web site's kickoff. The Carnegie branch also launched a help desk for the network Wednesday.

Data coordinator Tessa Eger said the site will become the central location for anyone from grant writers to students seeking statistics and information about the county.

``We're going to try and gather all that together," she said. ``We're calling every single nonprofit in the county and asking them to contribute."

A group of grant writers met about three years ago and discussed the community's need for a data network, said Jeanne Donado, grant coordinator for the Allegiance Health Foundation.

Scott Schmidt, the United Way of Jackson County's community solutions manager, said the idea for a data repository began about 10 years ago, but the idea never progressed until he met Donado and the group of grant writers.

The United Way awarded the program a one-year, \$20,000 grant to fund the project and the Jackson District Library provided about \$31,000.

Edwards said she liked the idea of finding county information all on one Web site.

``I think this is wonderful for Jackson County," she said. ``I would have associated this kind of thing with metropolis cities, but I think Jackson is finally coming into the 21st century."

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