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DTV Assistance Centers Open for Twin Cities' Residents

One Month Before Digital TV Transition, Assistance Centers Offer Information and Technical Support to At-Risk Population

[Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN] – Today the Lao Assistance Center and the Main Street Project, in partnership with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund (LCCREF), launched the Twin Cities' DTV Assistance Centers. The Minneapolis-St. Paul opening will be one of seven in cities nationwide marking the one-month countdown to the digital television transition on February 17, 2009.

Each of the two centers will assist the community with the conversion and act as hubs for information and technical support during the transition to digital television. The Twin Cities' Assistance Centers will be located at:

Lao Assistance Center
503 Irving Avenue North, Suite 100A
Minneapolis, MN 55405
(612) 374-4967

Main Street Project
2104 Stevens Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55405
www.mainstreetproject.org

“We are working to make sure everybody in our community knows what to do to make the transition and to help them do it, so that they don't get left behind,” said Bryan Thao Worra of the Lao Assistance Center, which will be serving Southeast Asian communities in the Twin Cities.

In the midst of an economic recession, many families are concerned that they may need to buy an expensive new television or subscribe to cable in order to continue to have access to emergency announcements and television programming but that won't be necessary.

Viewers who use rabbit ears or a rooftop antenna for over-the-air television signals will need a converter box to continue getting a TV signal after February 17. LCCREF is urging residents to act now before the DTV transition next month changes the way millions of Americans watch TV. By signing up for the coupon waiting list now and taking the necessary steps to convert at least one television in their household, residents can prepare themselves and prevent their televisions from going dark next month.

The Twin Cities' Assistance Centers will hold coupon application drives, and conduct trainings about the different converter box options and the installation process.

“The Main Street Project, together with the Minnesotano Media Empowerment Project has produced bilingual PSA’s and materials to reach the Spanish-speaking community, as well as numerous trainings around the twin cities geared at reaching community groups and staff that serve the communities we are the most concerned about,” said Amalia Anderson of the Main Street Project. “We will also be opening a tech assistance center in Moorhead, because we know the DTV transition will also affect rural communities as well,” Anderson added.

The DTV Transition will require millions of Americans to take action in order to maintain access to free over-the-air television. Communities of color, people who rely on languages other than English, low-income working families, older Americans, and people with disabilities who rely on over-the-air TV for emergency public service announcements will be most affected.

“Access to communications in the 21st century is not a luxury, it’s a necessity, said Paula Fynboh, the LCCREF coordinator for the Twin Cities. “While we usually think of television as entertainment, it also provides educational programming that strengthens communities and critical emergency alerts. Families need immediate communication in case of tornado warnings, schools closings, and other breaking news.”

LCCREF is teaming up with local organizations nationwide to provide trainings and DTV-related assistance to members of impacted populations in seven major cities: Atlanta, GA; Detroit, MI; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Portland, OR; San Antonio, TX; San Francisco- San Jose-Oakland CA; and Seattle-Tacoma, WA.

For more information on how the DTV transition will impact vulnerable communities, visit: <http://www.civilrights.org/dtv/>. To order coupons or for more information on the DTV transition, go to: www.DTV2009.gov or call 1-888-DTV-2009.

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