

Stay safe



March 30, 2020

Reuters
[Facebook commits \\$100 million to support news media hurt by virus crisis](#)

Bloomberg
[Tech's Shadow Workforce Sidelined, Leaving Social Media to the Machines](#)

Fierce Wireless
[AT&T taps Dish AWS-4 spectrum in Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands for COVID-19 response](#)

New York Post
[MSG Chairman James Dolan tests positive for coronavirus](#)

NBC News
[New dates announced for Tokyo 2020 Olympics postponed over coronavirus concerns](#)

Middletown (Dauphin Co.) Press & Journal

Decades ago, Comcast Corp. founder Ralph Roberts had an idea. The internet was new and promising for educational uses, and he wanted to get computers into every classroom in the Philadelphia School District. The donation never happened. District officials said they weren't equipped to accept the technology and they had no curriculum in place, Roberts' son Brian, now the Comcast CEO, said. But the idea lingered.

So, when Aileen Roberts read that Superintendent William R. Hite Jr. had said the school system would need to purchase millions of dollars worth of technology to make large-scale learning during the pandemic possible for Philadelphia's children, she told her husband about the need. Then, Brian, Aileen and their three adult children began talking about covering some of the cost.

An advertisement for Baker Installations. The background is a dark grey rectangle. At the top, the text "Solving installation challenges since 1976" is written in a light grey, sans-serif font. Below this, the website "www.baker-installations.com" and the phone number "1-724-260-2200" are displayed in a yellow-green color. The bottom half of the ad features a white silhouette of a row of houses with various rooflines and windows. In the foreground, overlapping the houses, is the Baker Installations logo, which consists of a red stylized 'B' icon followed by the text "Baker Installations" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

On Thursday, the family gave \$5 million to the Fund for the Philadelphia School District, the school system's charitable arm, to help pay for 50,000 Chromebooks for students in the Philadelphia School District. "It was just something that jumped out at us," Aileen Roberts said. "There's nothing much better than helping kids get on with their education, particularly at this time," Brian Roberts said. "Not being able to go to school was pretty stark."

PUC urges financially stressed Pennsylvanians to explore utility assistance programs to lower bills

Delaware County Daily Times

PUC offering options to Pennsylvanians regarding utilities

Harrisburg Patriot-News

Three Pa. government offices close in Philadelphia due to COVID-19 exposure concerns: 'This could have been prevented'

Beaver County Times

PA Cong. Mike Kelly (R-16th) has COVID-19

Allentown Morning Call

Pennsylvania Sen. Pat Toomey encourages public to wear homemade masks to prevent coronavirus spread: 'The idea is to protect everyone else'

Children in private schools and in better-resourced suburbs have made or are poised to make the transition to digital learning during the coronavirus outbreak because most of their families have computers and internet access at home, unlike the majority of Philadelphia students. District officials said only half of high school students and less than half of elementary school students have a computer at home.

Early guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education said that if a district could not provide education for all of its students, it could not provide it for any. Some teachers offered optional work, and the district provided paper packets with enrichment activities, but no formal instruction could take place without the Chromebooks.

The school board Thursday night approved the allocation of \$11 million to buy 50,000 Chromebooks from a company called Computer Dealers International; the Roberts' gift will offset the amount that needs to come out of the district's operating fund. An additional 40,000 computers will come from district schools, repurposed for students' home use during the COVID-19 closure.

Pennsylvania schools have been ordered closed at least through April 6; Hite has said the earliest students could return to classes is April 13, but the Chromebook purchase signals that the closure is likely to continue past that date. Hite has said the computers will be ready for distribution by April 8 and that instruction will begin by April 17. District officials are seeking volunteers to distribute the machines, and say families will receive time slots to pick up the Chromebooks, which will be handed out observing social distancing guidelines.

Aileen and Brian Roberts, who had previously donated to the Fund for the School District of Philadelphia, said they were glad to be part of the solution. "The fund is delighted to be the recipient of this most generous gift," Donna Frisby Greenwood, executive director of the fund, said in a statement. "We will do our part to implement this much needed and appreciated gift." Separate from the Roberts' family gift, Comcast has offered families living in poverty two free months of internet service.

– **Philadelphia Inquirer**

Atlantic Broadband, the nation's eighth-largest cable operator, has implemented a range of measures to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus among customers and employees, while continuing to serve its business and residential customers.

Remote Care: 100% of Atlantic Broadband's call center team members—all of whom are local residents of the communities they serve—are now working remotely from home while retaining full support capabilities so that they can continue to assist customers by phone, chat and email. In order to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the company closed its front counters on March 18 and informed customers of easy online payment options to eliminate the need for them to travel to office locations.

Virtual Support: The company has deployed remote virtual support tools that allow care agents and technicians to assist customers in real time via a live, interactive video streaming without the need for an in-home appointment. • Expansion of Self-Install Options: In order to reduce the need to deploy an installer to the home, Atlantic Broadband has

deployed new self-installation options for customers for services that do not require in-home technical support.

Call Ahead Verification: Atlantic Broadband agents are calling ahead before in-home appointments to assess the wellness situation in the household. Technicians also re-confirm this at the door on the day of the appointment if inside work is necessary. "We are facing a new reality in which we must adjust our operational practices in the wake of the COVID-19 virus, even as we find new ways to serve our customers," said Frank van der Post, President of Atlantic Broadband. "With the goal of protecting our team members and our customers, and reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in our communities, we have implemented a range of measures that will significantly reduce the need to enter customers' homes, while continuing to provide the vital connections our customers need at this time."

Atlantic Broadband also announced an expansion of its video previews for customers. Starting today, Starz/Encore, MSNBC and CNBC join a growing list of programming—including EPIX, CNN, Fox News and Hallmark Channels—being made available to all video customers at no additional cost for a limited time. These efforts follow other measures already announced by the company in recent weeks. In support of the FCC's "Keep Americans Connected" initiative, Atlantic Broadband will not terminate service and will waive late fees for any residential or small business customer because of their inability to pay their bills due to disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition, to ensure that households have access to internet during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly households with students, the company last week announced that it would offer "Atlantic Broadband Internet Assist." It is available for a limited time to serviceable residents in Atlantic Broadband operating areas who are in financial need and who do not presently have internet from Atlantic Broadband. Normally priced at \$9.99 per month plus taxes and fees, will be offered free for 60 days with free installation and a free modem. – **ABB news release**

Facebook Inc. is pledging \$100 million in grant money and promised ad spending to help struggling news outlets weather the financial blow of the coronavirus outbreak.

News outlets—particularly smaller, local newspapers—face substantial advertising revenue declines as shuttered or disrupted businesses pull back spending. While [readership has spiked](#) and some media companies have enjoyed increases in online subscriptions, the advertising drop is already forcing many outlets to reduce pay or lay off workers.

The tech giant said it wanted to help news outlets avoid such cuts. "This is a time when we need this reporting the most," Campbell Brown, Facebook's head of news partnerships, said in an interview. "Advertising money is shrinking fast and even though news consumption is up, it is not making up for those losses, so we are trying to help bridge that gap."

Facebook's [offering falls into two categories](#): \$25 million in emergency grant funding to help smaller news outlets with immediate needs related to coronavirus coverage, and \$75 million in ad spending to help news outlets of all sizes—both in the U.S. and abroad—make up for the expected revenue shortfall.

"Every business is suffering right now, but the news industry has really been struggling, and we are in a privileged position to be able to help," Ms. Brown said. She said Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg "feels that getting accurate news about the virus is vital and that he has a real responsibility here."

The aid from Facebook likely would still leave the industry with an enormous gap in advertising money. Gordon Borrell, an advertising market analyst, estimates that local advertising will drop by 25% this year, amounting to a decline of roughly \$30 billion.

Earlier this month, Facebook announced [a separate program](#) to offer \$100 million in cash grants and advertising credits to up to 30,000 eligible small businesses.

News publishers have a tense and complicated relationship with Facebook and [Alphabet](#) Inc.'s Google. The tech giants drive a large share of traffic to many news sites, but also compete with them in digital advertising sales. Facebook and Google were expected to earn 61% of all digital ad revenue in the U.S. this year, according to estimates from eMarketer before the crisis.

Many news outlets have argued that the tech platforms should pay licensing fees. Late last year, Facebook agreed to begin paying some publishers whose headlines appear in Facebook's news tab, which launched to a test audience in October. The Wall Street Journal is among the publications Facebook is paying to license news. Google has been in early [talks with publishers to pay for the use of their content](#), people familiar with the matter have said.

Last week, Facebook warned that while it has seen substantial boosts in user engagement during the crisis, it will be hit by [declines in digital ad spending](#).

Facebook's grant funding will be an extension of a \$1 million pilot program the company launched earlier in March as the outbreak began picking up steam in the U.S. The company says it received more than a thousand applications within days.

With the grant's backing, the Post and Courier in Charleston, S.C., was able to take down its paywall on coronavirus stories and set up remote workstations in rural parts of the state, Facebook said. El Paso Matters, a digital news outlet in El Paso, Texas, used the money to hire freelancers and translators to extend its coverage in the city and across the border in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. – **Wall Street Journal**

Pennsylvania is just more than two weeks away from the worst of the COVID-19 and more than 3,000 people in the state will succumb to the virus, according to a recent analysis by researchers at the University of Washington. The virus will reach its [peak in the state in 18 days — on April 17 — according to the analysis](#). It projects 109 deaths from the virus on that day and 3,094 death projected out to Aug. 4. The projected peak day for the country is April 14 with 2,341 deaths projected that day.

There's some good news in that the projections are lower than other recent analyses. If the projections for Pennsylvania hold up, the research shows the state will need an additional 428 ICU beds on April 17. Researchers at Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation compiled the research. The analysis, published on March 26, predicts [COVID-19 impact over the next four months](#). The estimates are based on Pennsylvania maintaining current social distancing measures throughout the pandemic. – **Associated Press**



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