

LOS ANGELES - Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30) was the master of ceremonies for the grand opening celebration of the Hillside PowerUP Center in Echo Park. Kids from around the community joined Rep. Becerra and representatives from Hillside, PowerUP, the Cathedral Center of St. Paul and AOL, for the ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration.

The Hillside center is the 100th PowerUP site to open in California and is home to 10 Gateway computers with Internet access, two HP laser printers and a fax machine. Kids and their parents from around the community can use the technology center anytime at no charge. In addition, center director Michelle Bielman has put together a comprehensive schedule of seminars and classes for community youth and their parents to visit the center and utilize all it has to offer.

Yesterday's ceremony began with a list of speakers that included Rep. Becerra; Ernesto Medina, the Provost of the Cathedral Center of St. Paul; Arnulfo Cedillo, Regional Program Manager for PowerUP; Michele Bielman, Director of the Echo Park PowerUP Center; Sylvia Levitan, Director of the Hillside Family Center Program; Susanne Crummey, Associate Executive Director of Hillside; and Jillian Misrack, Community Relations for AOL Time Warner.

During his remarks, Rep. Becerra spoke about the benefits the PowerUP center brings to the community of Echo Park. "I am encouraged by the opening of the Hillside PowerUP center not only for the technological opportunities it will bring for the countless kids and parents of this community, but also for what it means to Echo Park," Rep. Becerra said. "With the beautiful park across the street, the PowerUP center here at Hillside, and soon, the new library being built on Sunset Boulevard, I see Echo Park rapidly becoming a child-friendly neighborhood."

Following the speeches, Rep. Becerra, with the help of a number of anxious kids, cut the blue ribbon that hung in the PowerUP doorway, officially opening the technology site for the community's use. Once the ribbon was cut, the children rushed in to grab a computer to either surf the Internet or play "Where in the

World is Carmen San Diego?"

"Computers are as essential to a child's education as books and multiplication tables," said Rep. Becerra, who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus' Telecommunications and Technology Task Force. "But computers are expensive. With the opening of its 100th high-tech center, PowerUP is providing a terrific educational service to our community and giving young people the tools to make a positive difference in their own lives."

Founded in 1999 with a grant from the Case Foundation (founded by AOL-Time Warner Chairman Steve Case and his wife, Jean), PowerUP is a leading national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping young people succeed in the digital age. PowerUP partners provide technology, funding, trained personnel, innovative interactive programming, in-kind support and other resources to help close the digital divide between technology haves and have-nots. PowerUP's founding national benefactors include: the Case Foundation, the Waitt Family Foundation; the AOL Time Warner Foundation; Hewlett Packard, and Cisco Systems. PowerUP also partners with: Corporation for National Service/AmeriCorps*VISTA; YMCA of the USA; Boys & Girls Clubs of America; ASPIRA Association, Inc.; Communities in Schools; National Urban League; Save the Children; the U.S. Department of Education; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. PowerUP Centers are located in more than 950 locations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.