



Case Study

Bridging the Digital Divide & Creating Opportunities for Rural Students and Families



Problem: At Technology Leadership High School (TLHS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, many students lacked consistent internet access—a basic necessity for modern learning, communication, and future opportunities. Without it, their ability to thrive academically and imagine a better life was severely limited.

Solution: Say Yes 505, a grassroots nonprofit founded by Technology Leadership High School social worker Sean DeBuck, partnered with Mission Telecom to deliver free, reliable internet access to students and their families—removing a critical barrier to success.

Technology Leadership High School serves about 330 students, most facing far greater challenges than academic ones. For these students, poverty, trauma, and instability are daily realities.

“We can offer restorative justice in the classroom,” says Sean DeBuck, a social worker at the school, “but if a student doesn’t know where their next meal is coming from, nothing else really matters.”

After years of working closely with students who often fell through the cracks of traditional public education, DeBuck realized a broader support system was needed—one that could meet students’ basic needs while helping them envision a bigger, brighter future.

“

Most providers wouldn’t even return my calls while we were still fundraising. Mission Telecom sent us hotspots before we could even pay.”

– Sean DeBuck
Social Worker, TLHS

Quick Facts

- **Seamless Onboarding.** Mission Telecom delivered 15 hotspots and SIM cards upfront, enabling immediate impact without barriers or delays.
- **Custom Solutions That Fit Your Budget.** Mission Telecom created a customized pricing plan tailored to Say Yes 505’s limited funding.
- **Reliable, Life-Changing Connectivity.** The program provided students with new pathways for learning, work, and community engagement.
- **5G Hotspots:** Leveraging the latest high-speed 5G hotspots, students stayed connected across multiple group homes, jobs, and learning environments.

A Nonprofit Takes Root

In response, DeBuck founded Say Yes 505, a nonprofit dedicated to closing gaps that limit student success. Whether through providing scholarships for art classes and sports, covering registration fees, or delivering food boxes to hungry families, Say Yes 505 aims to break down the everyday barriers that hold students back.



By taking care of the basics, like reliable internet, we give kids the space to focus on their education, their growth, and their dreams.”

– Sean DeBuck
Social Worker, TLHS



Closing the Connectivity Gap

One pressing need that stood out to DeBuck was internet access. Many families simply couldn't afford \$80-a-month internet bills, leaving students disconnected from assignments, classes, and opportunities.

Finding a provider willing to work with a fledgling nonprofit was challenging until Mission Telecom stepped in.

“Most providers wouldn't even return my calls while we were still fundraising,” says DeBuck. “Mission Telecom sent us hotspots before we could even pay. I was skeptical—but they came through.”

Mission Telecom delivered 15 hotspots and SIM cards upfront, with custom pricing that fit Say Yes 505's limited budget. As donations grew, so did the program, allowing even more families to get—and stay—online.



Life-Changing Impact Examples

The results have been profound. Students who were once isolated from their education are now fully connected.

One foster youth who moved between group homes around the state received a device and stayed connected to school and friends, earning several credits toward graduation. As DeBuck says, “He’s been able to have a semblance of being a regular teenager because of his internet access. I’m not exaggerating when I say that the connection may have saved his life.”

A 19-year-old student balancing school and work to support her siblings is staying on track academically thanks to her hotspot. Now, one of her younger siblings is attending virtual classes too.

Families who once struggled to afford food and faced impossible choices between internet and other essentials can now learn, work, and stay connected.

Looking Ahead

Thanks to Mission Telecom’s affordable, flexible partnership, Say Yes 505 is not just closing the digital divide—it’s opening doors to education, opportunity, and a future filled with possibility for Albuquerque’s young people.



Technology is more than just homework access—it’s about restoring imagination. Our kids can now dream bigger because they’re connected to their community, their education, and to hope itself.”

– Sean DeBuck
Social Worker, TLHS



info@missiontelecom.org

missiontelecom.org

About Mission Telecom

Mission Telecom provides affordable and reliable best-in-class broadband to schools, libraries, and nonprofits, ensuring that connectivity is never a barrier to learning, innovation, or community development. With affordable plans, no data caps, and no overage fees, we empower mission-driven organizations with the reliable internet they need to serve their communities and maximize their impact.