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As life moves online during coronavirus, Adam Bouhmad is building high-speed links for Baltimore neighborhoods

Wilborn P. Nobles III

3-4 minutes

Adam Bouhmad, founder of Project Waves, is building high-speed links for Baltimore neighborhoods.

From Baltimore's rooftops, Adam Bouhmad has gotten a clearer view of the city while installing internet access points where many families can't afford the high cost of high-speed service.

Bouhmad is the founder of Project Waves, a nonprofit that installs Wi-Fi access and then asks families to pay what they can afford for the service — often \$10 a month. Now, after the coronavirus pandemic shut down schools and forced students online, Bouhmad said everyone can see the city's digital divide.

"COVID really shines a light on this issue," said Bouhmad, 23.

"Internet access has always been important ... without it, you're at a severe disadvantage."

School systems and tech organizations are rushing to [provide computers to](#) Baltimore students to get them connected to lessons. But [the U.S. Census Bureau](#) reported over a quarter of city households did not have a broadband internet subscription.

Bouhmad, a Rosedale resident, said Baltimore has internet providers, but often the service isn't affordable or available at every home. It's why he founded Project Waves in 2018, after Congress repealed [net neutrality rules](#).

The Digital Harbor Foundation, where Bouhmad used to work, sponsors Project Waves. Bouhmad also teamed up with the Langston Hughes Community Center in Park Heights and No Boundaries Coalition in West Baltimore to understand what different neighborhoods need.

Deborah Byers said the library was the only option for her to use the internet sometimes because she's in a wheelchair. She and her husband, Bishop, learned about Project Waves when Bouhmad was passing out information in their South Baltimore neighborhood. The Byers have been a part of Project Waves ever since.

"Without Project Waves we wouldn't have internet access at home," she said.

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“Even if you have a device, it doesn’t help unless you have connectivity, and certain parts of the city are just broadband dead zones,” Mullin said. “The folks there are very excited about having an option for their students.”

Waves hasn’t been an easy task for Bouhmad. The group handles installation and service expenses through grants and [contributions](#). His organization relies on [volunteers](#) for labor and [equipment from donors](#), which includes antennas, cable and firewall technology to protect people from unauthorized access. Bouhmad has spent \$3,000 of his own money.

But every set of antennas he installs could provide internet for hundreds of families.

“It’s definitely been difficult,” Bouhmad said. “This is something that I’m going to do because this is something that needs to happen.”

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