

# Clinton lauds connection of business, community



EUGENE H. LOUIE — MERCURY NEWS

President Clinton pauses with choir members and a teacher from Costaño Elementary School during a stop in East Palo Alto early Monday. Clinton was visiting Plugged In, a non-profit center that aims to make information technology more accessible to everyone.

## A+ assignment: Clinton and crowd cheer Navajo girl

SHIPROCK, N.M.

**M**YRA JODIE did everything her teacher Ms. Earl told her to do. And when she stood up from her seat next to President Clinton on

Monday and walked to the podium with the presidential seal, many in the crowd stood and cheered.

Her mother cried.

And who wouldn't? Here was a 13-year-old girl. Smart. Stunning in her ankle-length

gown. And Navajo. Getting up to introduce the first sitting president ever to visit

the sprawling Navajo Nation.

Her trip to that podium was a long one, both in the big sense and in the little sense — as in the two-hour drive from

See **MYRA**, Back Page



MIKE  
CASSIDY

SILICON VALLEY  
DISPATCHES



GARY REYES — MERCURY NEWS

President Clinton joins Myra Jodie at the podium after she introduced him to the crowd at the Boys & Girls Club in Shiprock, N.M., on Monday, where he spoke about bridging the digital divide.

## Firms to give \$100 million for Internet access

BY TRACY SEIPEL  
Mercury News Staff Writer

East Palo Alto, a largely minority, low-income city set amid Silicon Valley affluence, was the setting Monday for President Clinton's crusade to close the gap between rich and poor in the new, Internet-based economy.

The president spotlighted Plugged In, a center providing technology training to East Palo Alto, as an example of how to close the so-called digital divide. And with a group of Silicon Valley leaders around him, Clinton announced some \$100 million in corporate donations to programs that will wire schools and community centers in disadvantaged communities, challenging others to follow in their path.

But access to technology alone is not enough, he cautioned. He challenged those in this community, and elsewhere, to take advantage of their presence in Silicon Valley.

"The one thing you have here is physical  
See **CLINTON**, Back Page

# Clinton praises bridging efforts

## ■ CLINTON

from Page 1A

proximity, and you ought to make the most of it," Clinton told a crowd of about 250 that included community leaders and local politicians. "These people," he said gesturing toward about two dozen Silicon Valley business leaders, "showed up here today for you, and now, to some extent, the community, the schools, you've got to make the most of this."

He added, "Frankly, all the computers and software and Internet connections in the world won't do much good if young people don't understand that access to new technology means ... access to the new economy."

"I think he had a point," said East Palo Alto City Councilwoman Myrtle Walker after Clinton's speech. "I think the community has to rise to the occasion."

This is Clinton's third "New Markets" tour, meant to highlight the problems and solutions of the digital divide, which he has labeled one of his biggest priorities for the remainder of his presidency.

### Public, private programs

Clinton offered a mix of private-sector commitments and government programs Monday. His proposed budget includes about \$3 billion in funding to hook up every school and library in the country to the Internet and pay for computers, software and teacher training in poor areas. This includes \$100 million for centers like Plugged In. In addition, Clinton said he will seek \$2 billion in new tax incentives for companies that donate or contribute computer-related equipment to schools.

In addition to the \$100 million worth of donations Clinton announced Monday, he said the Kaiser Family Foundation has committed to creating a public service campaign — to be run on all major television networks — to inspire young people to get online.

But government and business can do only so much. "The rest requires



EUGENE H. LOUIE — MERCURY NEWS

President Clinton, joined by Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, takes questions Monday at Plugged In. HP will help the East Palo Alto technology-training center move to a new building.

motivation, and that's what I want us all to focus on," Clinton said.

Lifting a thick San Jose Mercury News Sunday classified ads section, Clinton asked the crowd to take a good look at 10,000 technology-related jobs listed inside.

"If they could be held by every unemployed and underemployed person in East Palo Alto, this would be a better country today," said Clinton.

Seated alongside Clinton during his morning appearance at Plugged In — broadcast live on the Web via America Online — were the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Hewlett-Packard Co. CEO Carly Fiorina and Robert Knowing, CEO of Covad Communications, a Santa Clara-based digital subscriber line company.

### A deeper look

Knowing told the audience that something more than hard work needed to be addressed as why more women and minorities may not get many of those 10,000 jobs listed.

"Why don't they end up in jobs?" Knowing, an African-American, asked the crowd. "Is the issue they don't have the intellectual capacity? Is the issue they haven't the right grades? Well, I'm a firm believer ... that this is not about genetics; it's all about environment. We still live in a country where we don't value difference."

After Clinton's speech, audience members — and a few e-mailers — got to ask the president and his panel a few questions. Included was what kinds of internship programs are available for community youths at area companies (there are many, Fiorina said); what technology will be in the future (Fiorina said she hoped today's youths would help determine that); and what Clinton uses the Internet for (buying gifts and checking out new Web sites).

Clinton then joined about 30 high-tech executives, community leaders and a few politicians for a round-table discussion at nearby Costaño Elementary School.

One issue Clinton said he intends to address is the how the Internet can help change the lives of disabled people.

Some at the Round Table, like Andrew Cuomo, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, encouraged the president to push for more computers in the home, not just schools. Others, like Henry Cisneros, president and CEO of Univision Television, asked for better content for children and youths.

Jim Morgan, chairman and CEO of Applied Materials, the Santa Clara semiconductor equipment manufacturer, said he's learned the biggest hurdle the underserved have is more than finding access to the technology

or corporate willingness to help close the digital divide.

"The challenge of bridging the information gap really requires a local leadership," Morgan said. "It has to be some kind of local vision and accountability."

### Look at another group

Jackson pointed to another pool of potential workers that could be created for the new economy — by training many of the 2 million inmates in American prisons and jails to become computer-savvy.

After all, he said, American jails have more access to computers than many urban and rural school districts. If corporations have to fill jobs, there's an untapped market waiting for them. "If business leaders have the new money and the new power, they must accept new responsibility," Jackson said.

Meanwhile, Fiorina, whose company has funded Plugged In almost since its inception in 1992, said the center will move from its temporary location soon. HP will pay for a new building "as a part of our \$5 million grant" to East Palo Alto. "We will fund the building," she said. "The details are to be worked out."

Contact Tracy Seipel at [tseipel@sjmercury.com](mailto:tseipel@sjmercury.com) or (408) 920-5343.