
Youth Club for the people, institutions, factories

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There is no other institution that has contributed more, from the cultural and educational perspective, to the processes of computerization of Cuban society and digital transformation, than the Computing and Electronics Youth Club.

The program of the Youth Clubs, which began with one in the Cuba Pavilion Center in July 1987, proved right Fidel's vision of the future and allowed several of his ideas to materialize: introduction of new concepts and a different model of teaching computing; that computing was accessible to everyone, by promoting a more social and intelligent access to these technologies; in the hardest years of the special period he created the Central Computing Palace and founded TinoRed, one of the first computer networks in the country. His idea of ??creating a perspective of insertion and access to knowledge and culture for all, which gained momentum with the Battle of Ideas programs, as well as his constant struggle to not be left behind with respect to the scientific and technical development of the world, led him to say in 2006 that,

“our fundamental points of progress at the moment are medicine and computing, and we will see what happens when all these talents are deployed or dedicated to creation.”¹

The first 35 facilities were completed in 1989 with 252 workers and the first mobile Youth Computer Club was built in Villa Clara. The following year, the number of 73 centers was reached and a national meeting for the exchange of computer experiences for children and young people, called Infoclub, was held for the first time in the province of Cienfuegos, which is currently held every two years.

The tenth anniversary of the organization, in 1997, was commemorated with 155 facilities spread over 141 municipalities of the country. On April 4, 2001, 126 new Youth Clubs were completed and the number of 300 was reached and celebrated in an event where Fidel attended at the Central Youth Club. With this effort, facilities were provided to all municipalities in the country. From that date on, an intense work began for the general introduction of computing in elemental education with the decisive involvement of this movement. In February 2006, the number of Youth Clubs with 6448 computers in operation was reached.

In their 37 years of work, Youth Club have trained more than 5 million Cubans free of charge in three different course modalities: face-to-face, blended and distance learning, and provided important services to the community, health centers, schools and other institutions in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), which has generated a privileged situation for the computerization of production and service processes, scientific creation, cultural and educational development, the assimilation of technologies and the confrontation of subversive campaigns against our nation.

For several years now, they have led several projects with a broad impact on Cuban society. Such is the case of the Collaborative Encyclopedia, **EcuRed**, which has more than 270 thousand articles with a decolonizing vision; the blog platform **Reflejos**, with over two thousand blogs that remains accessible from any .cu space and with international visibility; and the cultural product **Mochila**, which is distributed on a weekly basis to an increasing number of people.

Over the past year, the Computer and Electronics Youth Clubs accompanied the digital transformation process underway in the country and the implementation of banking procedures in operations, contributing to the development of digital skills and the training of more than half a million Cubans, including some 40 thousand older adults and 2,261 people with disabilities. Together with the Union of Computer Scientists of Cuba, they visited 158 nursing homes and 301 grandparents' homes and Chairs of the Elder nationwide, where in association with the territorial health directorates, diagnoses of the functional capacity of these were carried out to assess the real possibility of learning and the best accompaniment and communication.

They also participated in some 800 e-commerce fairs throughout the country, facilitating the competence building, enabling accounts and digital businesses in the payment gateways of state and non-state entities.

The province of Villa Clara, due to the work results achieved last year, is a worthy venue for the national event for this 37th anniversary. Fidel would be very happy to know that his statement on September 8, 1987, "The Youth Club must be a factory, of the institutions and the Youth Club must be popular, because they are the ones who are next door like the family doctor, the family computer."² And the goal has been greatly achieved.

Notes

¹ Fidel Castro Ruz: Speech delivered at the event for the 15th anniversary of the Central Computing Palace, March 7, 2006.

² Idea expressed by the Commander in Chief, Fidel Castro, on September 8, 1987, in a meeting with the National Bureau of the Youth Communist League, occasion on which the Computing and Electronics Youth Club Program was created.

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