

Springfield Sun News

Getting connected - Computers, Internet brought to more Washington Countians



By Jeff Moreland

The Internet and high-speed access to the Web have grown by leaps and bounds in Washington County over recent months, and that growth continued on Friday as 18 new computers and printers made their way into the community.

ConnectKentucky, a non-profit organization working to connect people to technology across the state, brought the computers to the county with the help of its Computers 4 Kids program and a donation by AT&T.

The computers will benefit the Washington County High School's Laptop Loan Program, with 15 of the laptop units being available to students to provide computer access to those who may not otherwise have it in their homes. One computer will be placed at the Mackville Community Center for use by the general public as well as the YMCA's after school program. The other two computers will be given to the WCHS DECA club, which will present one computer each to two students in the Youth Entrepreneurial Program.

"What an investment for our school system from AT&T and ConnectKentucky. With the Laptop Loan Program, we will help those students who need the technology at their homes and the computers for the YMCA after school programs will help the younger students in improving their skills," said Hal Goode, SWEDA Executive Director. "The computers for the DECA Youth Entrepreneurial Program and the Mackville Community Development will help with outreach to the community on the importance of using computer technology, the Internet and using computer technology with business."

Mike Cyphers, technology coordinator for Washington County schools, said he hopes the Laptop Loan Program will be up and running before Christmas break, but if not, he said it will definitely be in full swing when school starts back after the new year.

"We will have to have everything configured, but we hope to have it done soon," Cyphers said. "The students will have to have a parent sign to approve them to check out a computer, and there will have to be some sort of proof of homeowner's insurance or something so that we can be assured the computers are returned in good working order for use by other students. We will also use the computers on a day-to-day basis here in the school, as well."

Cyphers said checking out a computer will normally be a one-day process, with the computer returned the following day. He said in a situation where a student is homebound, circumstances

may allow for different arrangements if necessary.

The donations to purchase the computers were made possible because of a \$150,000 grant from the AT&T Foundation, the corporate philanthropy organization of AT&T. AT&T's partnership with Computers 4 Kids is designed to deliver computers to charities that support and deliver services to disadvantaged children and their families after school hours across the country. Last year, C4K distributed over 150 computers and laptops, network printers, a server, and server software licenses to non-profits in Kentucky through the first \$75,000 provided by the grant. Today's donation also includes 18 Lexmark Inkjet Printers generously donated through ConnectKentucky's partnership with Lexmark International.

"We are pleased to support the Computers for Kids program and their work to provide computers and Internet access to neighborhood children and adults seeking to further their education," said Joan Coleman, President, AT&T Kentucky. "These are great programs that will extend the benefits of technology and communications to more Kentuckians."

Computers 4 Kids, a project of ConnectKentucky, is the most innovative and comprehensive initiative of its kind undertaken by any state as it is intended to help bridge the digital divide by placing computers into the hands of families and organizations that support education. "Computer 4 Kids continues to transform the lives of Kentucky's families and communities," stated Rene True, Executive Director of ConnectKentucky. "Through the generous contribution of the AT&T Foundation, the support of our corporate partners and working with local community leaders, ConnectKentucky is closing the digital divide, one family at a time."

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