

D&PL Donates Computers to Rosedale High School

David Lush
BC Staff Writer

SCOTT - A Delta & Pine Land Co. van was loaded Monday with computers, laptops, printers, keyboards and other computer components destined for Rosedale High School.

The company donated the treasure trove of 24 computers, 12 printers and related computer equipment to the West Bolivar School District in a brief handing-over program at the Delta and Pine Land Community Center.

The donation of the computers is for use in the ExplorNet Computer Recycling (CPR) Project recently undertaken by the school district.

D&PL is a corporate partner with the ExplorNet CPR project. The school district officially joined the program this month.

The CPR project, through a certified and trained instructor, teaches high school students the high-tech job skills needed to upgrade old computers donated by business and industry into high-speed, modern machines, said Andrew L. Smith, state director of ExplorNet.

"This is an effort to provide rural school districts across Mississippi some much-needed computer equipment along with the educational opportunity to make these computers really usable in their school environments," Smith said.

Through the CPR project, students "learn real-world job skills which will make them more marketable, and they get valuable training in technology which will help not only the students, but the schools as well," he said.

Currently, 10 school districts in the state are participating in the pilot CPR project with only three of those schools in the Delta.

Smith said he was pleased to see West Bolivar "jump right in and get the computers. This is significant for a successful program in the making. The sooner we get the computers in the school districts, the sooner we can maximize the student's computer skills."

Mike Hendricks, West Bolivar's CPR instructor, is ready to go with the 10 students already enrolled in the program.

"The kids are really excited about the program and getting in there and fixing the computers," said Hendricks. "We're thrilled to get the computers here because the students computer skills could be significantly improved with the computers and the CPR program which will teach them how to take a computer apart and put it back together again better than it was."

Hendricks pointed out that through the CPR program, students learn how to disassemble a computer, look for problems and then put it back together again in better condition.

"This is part of our corporate giving program" said Ann Jennings Shackelford, vice president for corporate services for Delta and Pine Land. "This was a great fit for us. It is a pleasure for us to be able to donate this equipment through this program to a school district which can make use of it."

D&PL has a three-year cycle for its computers and after that time, the equipment is replaced, so why not give it to some place that needs it, said Shackelford.

"That's what this program is about and we're pleased to be a part of it," Shackelford said. "We really have not put a value on the donated computer equipment but it would be over \$20,000. We would have donated it somewhere else if not to West Bolivar. But we're glad to do it for one so close to us."

Audrey Pearson, West Bolivar's NETDAY and Digital Divide Initiative (DDI) Project director, was thrilled with the contribution and the efforts to get the school district involved in the project.

"The efforts came through the NETDAY and ExplorNet projects," said Pearson. "We don't have enough money for the technology needs of the school district, but this donation will help save the school district a great deal of money while giving the students marketable skills with computers and technology."

"This CPR program will help empower the students with marketable skills who are typically underserved and disenfranchised," she said.

"I feel great about the contribution to the high school," said Rosedale High School Principal Earl Phillips. "The computers and printers will be put to very good use."

Rosedale High School students Elosha Johnson, Tiffany O'Neal and LaDarius Jackson were present at the community center showing their skills so far with the computers.

Mary O'Neal, mother of Tiffany O'Neal, watched as the students showed the guests about the inner workings of a computer.

"I'm just thrilled with this," said O'Neal. "I think it will give the students hands-on experience. Anything they can do to get more knowledge is important for the students. I'm glad the school district is involved with this."

The donation of the computers will help the school toward its goal of having five computers in every classroom, said Pearson.