



Local foster children get free laptops

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On Monday, Connected Tennessee presented 72 foster children throughout West Tennessee with brand new Dell laptop computers through the Computers 4 Kids program. Connected Tennessee's Computers 4 Kids (C4K) initiative places computers into the hands of underprivileged children and their families across Tennessee. C4K is an innovative project designed to positively impact the future of disadvantaged children in Tennessee by distributing computers to children and families facing economic challenges, in the foster care system or that struggle with behavioral disorders and other issues. The recipients hail from 20 counties throughout West Tennessee (Lake, Obion, Dyer, Crockett, Weakley, Gibson, Henry, Carroll, Benton, Lauderdale, Tipton, Haywood, Fayette, Madison, Hardeman, Henderson, Chester, McNairy, Hardin, Decatur) and were targeted for inclusion in the program by the Department of Children's Services (DCS) based on specified behavioral and academic expectations. Almost half of low-income families in Tennessee cite a lack of a computer at home as the reason they are not accessing the Internet. Since computer skills and Internet access have become essential components necessary to participate in the global economy, the need to help Tennesseans disadvantaged residents join the Information Age is apparent.

"The opportunities that are being afforded to these deserving youth through the Computers 4 Kids program are virtually immeasurable," said Madison County Mayor Jimmy Harris. "This contribution will serve to help our community give these kids access to the Internet and its many educational resources. The digital divide is a concern in both the urban and rural areas of West Tennessee and the Computers 4 Kids program is designed to meet both of those challenges."

The distribution, held at the St. Paul CME Church in Jackson, also featured a performance by the Tennessee Christian Youth Choir.

"The City of Jackson is thrilled to be a part of this very important initiative," said Ernie Brooks, Vice-Mayor of Jackson. "Thanks to Computers 4 Kids, West Tennessee youth who wouldn't otherwise have access to a computer are now going to have a world of opportunities right at their fingertips."

Along with the computers, recipients also received educational DVDs from valued Connected Tennessee partner, the Internet Keep Safe Coalition (iKeepSafe). The DVDs are designed to teach children of all ages in a fun, age-appropriate way the basic rules of Internet safety, ethics and the healthy use of connected technologies. iKeepSafe is a broad partnership of governors and/or first spouses, attorneys general, public health and educational professionals, law enforcement and industry leaders working together for the

health and safety of youth online. C4K joined forces with iKeepSafe to ensure that children and families are well-informed about responsible ways of using technology.

Connected Tennessee is a non-profit organization that develops and implements effective strategies for technology deployment, use and literacy in Tennessee. Connected Tennessee is coordinating the Computers 4 Kids project with the State of Tennessee, the Department of Children's Services and the Department of Human Services. Through the Computers 4 Kids program, Connected Tennessee has already awarded more than 1,000 computers to children in need across Tennessee.