

Corporate Giving: Porter-Leath centers get kid-friendly IBM computers

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Thanks to 16 KidSmart Young Explorer computer stations donated by IBM, even the toughest, most rambunctious preschooler at Porter-Leath's Head Start centers can't put a stop to technological progress.

These new computer stations, worth \$35,000, will be put through their paces at Porter-Leath's American Way and Douglass Head Start centers, serving 3- to 5-year-old, at-risk children who would not normally have access to computers.

"This is a second gift -- we have older (Young) Explorers, so now we have enough for all classrooms," said Mike Warr, executive vice president of development and new business for Porter-Leath.

The computers were unveiled Sunday in a small ceremony at the American Way Head Start Center, 4207 American Way, attended by U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen.

Dot Neale, corporate citizenship and affairs manager for IBM, said discussions about increasing the number of computer stations at Porter-Leath's disposal have been under way for years.

Neale said the computer stations are part of IBM's KidSmart Early Learning Program and come equipped with more than just IBM hardware in a multicolored play station by toy company Little Tikes.

"We love to bundle technology with other resources that include training, a Web site, training materials and volunteers," Neale said.

The computer stations are put together voluntarily by IBM employees exclusively for the company's corporate giving program. IBM has donated more than 42,000 computers to 21,000 child care centers and schools in 60 countries.

Teachers at the American Way center welcomed the new computers.

"The children learn fine motor skills, math, science, counting, alphabets, sharing, weather," said Keisha Curry, a teacher with the center for six years.

Karen Harrell, vice president of early childhood services for Porter-Leath, said the computer stations serve a role in the development of the centers' children.

"It helps children develop mentally and helps teachers with their programs," Harrell said.

Cohen said he sees it as a step toward making sure all children are prepared for the 21st century.

"It's essential for kids to learn computer skills," Cohen said. "Who knows what may come later on?"



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