

Middlesboro DAILY NEWS

Article: 202 Bell County 6th graders to receive free computers

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MIDDLESBORO — What a way to end the week — over 200 Bell County sixth graders were notified Friday that they would be receiving an internet-ready computer and printer for completely free.

The students will be receiving their computers through a program with ConnectKentucky called No Child Left Offline (NCLC). This program was “designed to help close the digital divide among Kentucky’s youth,” says Kasey McCreary of ConnectKentucky.

Representatives from ConnectKentucky made an official presentation at Yellow Creek School Center Friday afternoon describing the program to both students and parents from all over Bell County, .

Jerry Lawson, Principal of Yellow Creek, welcomed guests and made a brief introduction which was followed by a student performance from a group of performing arts students from Yellow Creek. Dressed in patriotic red, white and blue and carrying American Flags, they sang “We Are the Children of America” for the audience.



George Thompson, Superintendent of Bell County Schools, also spoke to the audience. He discussed the NCLC program and introduced Mark Messer, Project Manager for ConnectKentucky.

To start things off Messer told the students in the audience about how technology shaped his future. He said when he was younger his father came home one evening with two big boxes. His father told him, “You are going to have to learn how to use these.”

Messer asked his father what they were and his father told him they were computers and that his company was going to be using them to do their books.

Messer went on to say he began learning about the computer, both hardware and software, and he told students this was how he developed a love for technology.

Juli Gaworski, a representative from Lexmark, also spoke to the audience. Lexmark, a global Fortune 500 company, donated an Inkjet printer to go with each computer given to the students.

Bell County Judge Executive Albey Brock spoke at the event as well, encouraging students to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity they are being given. He also recognized the teachers of Bell County saying that he appreciated what they did and felt they needed to be recognized.

Brock then introduced a special guest, Kentucky State Representative Rick Nelson. Nelson discussed the program and then said he wanted to show the students something. He pulled a basic calculator out of his front shirt pocket and told the students this was the first computer he was introduced to. He said in 1966 there was one boy in his class that had a calculator and that boy would charge 10 cents a minute for the other students to use to use it.

“We all saved our lunch money just to use that calculator,” said Nelson.

The ConnectKentucky NCLC program was made possible by a \$300,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The program donates over 1000 refurbished computers throughout the ARC region.

The 202 computers donated to students in Bell County are Internet-ready and were donated by Morehead State University. The computers will be paired with a Lexmark inkjet printer and will have security software donated by CA Inc., and XP operating systems and Office applications donated by Microsoft.

“This is a wonderful program to help boys and girls get a leg up in education since computers are the future,” said Representative Nelson. “I would like to congratulate ConnectKentucky on this great program.”

NCLC places computers in the homes of students who may not otherwise ever be able to own one. This gives these students the opportunity and resources to compete in today’s global technology based economy.

According to ConnectKentucky, “Connect Kentucky has already initiated and executed a successful pilot project of NCLC and has delivered nearly 2000 Internet-ready computers to middle school students and their families in 11 ARC counties.”

For more information on ConnectKentucky visit their official website at www.connectkentucky.org.

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