



Computers donated to children in need

<http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2008/dec/16/chattanooga-computers-donated-children-need/?local>

BY Matt Wilson
12/16/08

They were nervous speaking in front of about 50 people, but teenagers Kaitlin Smith and Aurelya Taylor managed to show their appreciation to the donors of the new computers they'll soon get to use.

"Thank you for donating them," 15-year-old Kaitlin said at a Monday news conference at the Partnership for Families, Children and Adults' building on McCallie Avenue. "They're really awesome."

Both girls live at North Bridge Group Home, one of the Partnership homes set to receive eight new Dell computers through Connected Tennessee's Computers 4 Kids program. Connected Tennessee, a public-private partnership, works with technology-minded businesses, government entities and universities to accelerate technology use in the state, according to a news release.

The Children's Home/Chambliss Shelter is set to get six computers from the program, while three are headed for the Partnership's Building Stable Lives program based in East Lake.

Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield said access to the computers and the Internet is essential for the children served by the Partnership and Children's Home/Chambliss Shelter.

"The tools and the skills that they're learning today are the ones that are going to be driving this community," he said.

One thing is for sure: It'll make homework easier, said 13-year-old Aurelya.

"Right now, it's really hard for us to get our homework done," she said.

Kaitlin said teachers often assign homework that requires Internet access.

The computers at Children's Home/Chambliss Shelter and in East Lake won't just be available to children. Families also will have access to search for jobs or do other business, officials said.

Raquel Hidalgo of the Building Stable Lives program said giving people the opportunity to walk to a computer is a big help, since many of her clients lack transportation to other locations with free computers.

Steve Buttry of Connected Tennessee said the computers would help "close the technological divide." He said the Computers 4 Kids program has supplied 1,000 computers statewide.