



Boys & Girls Club gets computer lab

<http://www.starhq.com/news/html/news/articles/articles.asp?day=Sunday&article=nw-boysclubcomplab.html>

BY Steve Burwick
4/3/09



Photo by Eveleigh Stewart U.S. Congressman Phil Roe and Tennessee House Speaker Kent Williams were on hand for the formal announcement of a new computer lab at the Elizabethton-Carter County Boys & Girls Club Friday. Pictured with Roe and Williams are (left to right) Boys & Girls Club staff member Moe Malone, Whitney Andes and Kaelyn Andes.

The Elizabethton-Carter County Boys & Girls Club has a new computer lab, provided through Connected Tennessee's Computers 4 Kids Program.

U.S. Congressman Phil Roe and Tennessee House Speaker Kent Williams were on hand for the formal announcement Friday afternoon, along with Elizabethton Mayor Curt Alexander and Carter County Finance Director Jerome Kitchens, who stood in for County Mayor Johnny Holder.

John Malone, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club, welcomed the guests.

"The Boys & Girls Club has always been known as a place where kids can come and learn about playing fair while being safe and in a good environment ... a place where everyone fits in and everyone stands out," said Malone. "Now that experience can go beyond the fields, the ball courts and the game room, and into the computer room. We want to thank you guys for the opportunity to be able to teach these kids the importance of computer literacy and on-line safety, to show them how to research information and how to use that information to achieve a high level of success in school and beyond."

Corey Johns, project manager for Connected Tennessee, introduced the special guests.

"Computers and information are powerful, and when you know something, you're powerful," said Roe, who praised the public-private partnership that is working to provide computers for underprivileged children and non-profit organizations. "Everybody knows Google. I 'Google' everything."

Rep. Williams said he grew up in the Boys Club (before girls were included) when it was in a small building in the Black Bottom section of town.

"I can barely remember, but it seemed like it was just two rooms and one little ball field," said Williams. "The biggest room was a boxing ring. I was nine, maybe 10 years old ... and I walked into the room and they were boxing. As soon as I went in, they put the gloves on me and they put me in the ring with Moe Riddle. Being the shy little fellow I was, I didn't want to take a swing at Moe. So he beat my ears off. That was my first experience with the Boys Club, and look what we've come to now."

Williams said the rural communities don't have the same advantage that bigger communities have, adding that the Computers 4 Kids program is a tremendous opportunity.

"I want to thank the staff at the Boys & Girls Club. You all do tremendous work," said Williams.

Brady Parlier, the Boys & Girls Club 2008 Youth of the Year, described the club as his "home away from home."

"I have made life-long friends and learned life lessons as youth of the year. The Boys and Girls Club has opened many doors in my life," said Parlier.

Boys & Girls Club Board President Danny Smith offered closing remarks.

Computers 4 Kids is a project designed to positively impact the future of disadvantaged children in Tennessee by distributing computers to children and families who are facing economic challenges, in the foster care system or that struggle with behavioral disorders or other issues.

The program is also placing computer labs in non-profit organizations that work to enhance the lives of children and families in their area, such as the Boys & Girls Club. This donation of eight computers is part of a grant from the AT&T Foundation.

Connected Tennessee partners with technology-minded businesses, government entities and universities to accelerate technology in Tennessee's communities. Through Computers 4 Kids, Connected Tennessee will award at least 1,000 computers per year over a three-year period to children, families and organizations in need in the state. For more information, visit www.connectedtennessee.org.