

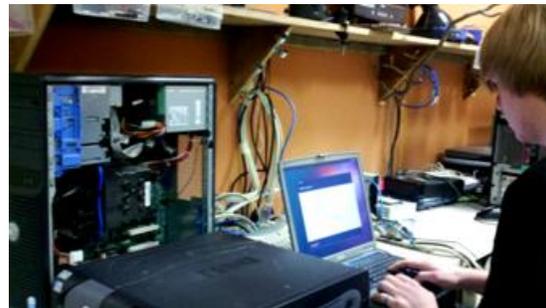


Technology Apprenticeship and Leadership Program

By Sherry Martin

The Finger Lakes ReUse eCenter and the Ithaca Youth Bureau Computer All Stars have teamed up to create the first Technology Apprenticeship and Leadership Program (TALP) at the eCenter in Ithaca, NY. The program immerses school-age students (16-18 years old) in an intensive, hands-on educational environment. Here, they learn how to repair and refurbish donated computers, Information Technology basics, and build essential social and leadership skills. TALP will be offered four times a year in ten-week installments to correspond with most Tompkins County schools' academic marking periods.

The technical aspects of the program include testing and installing various hardware components, installing operating systems, and networking. Participants discuss ways to protect computers and private data from spyware, viruses, and malware. Open source software solutions and freeware programs are another key learning component. Students learn setup, use and basic repair of printers, scanners, copiers, and back-up devices. Instructors (consisting of eCenter staff and IT professionals who volunteer) ensure that 100% of participants are able to diagnose, refurbish, upgrade, and repair donated computers by the end of the program. Computer systems fixed during the program are then resold to community members at a low cost.



The leadership aspects of the program include having students teach, share, lead, and gain transferable skills. Students will share their program experiences with the community through presentations at community events and technology workshops. Each participant will have the opportunity to help train other eCenter volunteers. Participants will leave the program with a Certificate of Completion in Technology & Leadership.

Interviews with three students demonstrated how interesting and useful they found the program after only 4 weeks. Chris O'Hara, a New Roots high school student from Lansing, stated that "(he) kind of love(s) it" and he wants to "be a computer technician and design and build computers." He will be presenting to community members during the latter weeks of the program on a new low-cost smartboard which he is helping to design and create. Currently, schools across the nation require use of such boards, though distribution is often limited due to skyrocketing costs of such advanced technology. Using a Wii remote, says Bailey Phipps, co-director of the program, "we'll disassemble [...] the infrared receiver and use free software" to create a cheap and readily useable smartboard display.



On one Thursday afternoon, Josh Wurgler, an Ithaca High School student, takes part



an Ithaca High School student takes apart a hard drive in just a few minutes then installs the new free linux-based Ubuntu 10.10 operating system on his laptop, excited for the new life he's giving to his computer and the incredible speed and flexibility the operating system offers compared to Windows, because it utilizes far fewer resources. Jack Closs, a Dryden High School student uses a free software program to kill viruses and make a laptop run smoother. Next, he uses a small screwdriver to disassemble a used laptop

and discover why it keeps crashing.

Finger Lakes ReUse taps the value of used material resources to strengthen the local economy, build community, and reduce waste. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping our communities benefit from reuse while teaching green job skills. Finger Lakes ReUse seeks provide programs for everyone in the community and, in time, to assist neighboring communities to develop reuse services.

The ReUse Center and eCenter are open to the public 7 days a week. Used furniture, salvaged and surplus building materials, housewares, furniture, and electronics are accepted for re-sale. Unwanted materials are redirected into productive new uses through our deconstruction services program, a green alternative to demolition. The computer reuse program reduces electronic waste and provides access to affordable technology.

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