

Volunteer Alexis Faro makes a difference at the YWCA School Age Childcare Center courtesy of the Kiwanis Club of Lititz and D&E Communications

17-year-old Alexis Faro is a young man who has gone out of his way to make a difference in the lives of 30 children (ages 5-12) who attend the YWCA's School Age Childcare Center in downtown Lancaster. The Manheim Township junior has been a volunteer at the center for over a year, helping the kids with their homework. When he saw a need for them to have access to computers and educational software to improve their math and reading skills, he methodically brought this about with the help of the Kiwanis Club of Lititz and the Haywire Group of D&E Communications. The center now has three 20GB computers with a full range of up-to-date educational software.

The YWCA's School Age Childcare Director Monica Kirchner says the computers are really important to the children, "They don't all have computers at home, and they need to become computer literate." She describes Alexis as "an awesome volunteer" whom the kids love. When he saw the center lacked reliable computer hardware, he carefully researched what was needed along with the software to go with it, and made a presentation to the Kiwanis Club of Lititz.

Kiwanis president, Caryn Griffiths, says Alexis' project is a perfect fit for the club's mission to make the world a better place for young people, particularly children. "When Alexis told us about this we got together with D&E and we both stepped up to the plate to provide computers and educational programs to give the children a head start with language and math skills, making it a fun learning experience."

Brian Weit is the marketing specialist for D&E's Haywire Group. He said they were happy to supply and install three reconditioned computers at the center for the children to work with, "We like helping out the community – that's what D&E is all about – and here was something in our own backyard. It's a great win-win situation."

There are a lot of ways the center will benefit from what Alexis has put into motion, "Right now," Monica said, "the computers are helping about 30 kids who come to the center each day, but it'll help 50 more when our summer camp gets underway in June." And the fact that the children have access to computers will also help the center qualify for considerably more grant money.

Monica says she's very grateful to the Kiwanis Club for taking such a keen interest in helping the children by providing the software and steering them to a source for the computer hardware. She was also full of praise for D&E, "D&E has been great. They set up the computers, brought in extra cords and headphones and are willing to come back and do whatever we need."

However, everyone agrees if it hadn't been for Alexis, none of this would have come about. As Monica says, "Alexis saw the need and made it all happen."

Alexis says he's really enjoyed working with the kids and has put in 350 hours of volunteer time at the center over the past year. Not that it's part of his school curriculum, "It doesn't go towards school credit," he said. "I've done it on my own time because I cannot tutor at my school until next year." Alexis hopes to become a tutor at Manheim Township in his senior year and looks forward to a career of teaching, "I would love to teach math and one day be the advisor for our school's service club, Key Club, like the current advisor Melissa Warner." Alexis explained, "It was her exhaustive efforts towards the club that inspired me to become a volunteer."

Photos with captions:



1. 17-year-old volunteer Alexis Faro shows Shea Robison (7) at the YWCA School Age Childcare Center, 110 N. Lime Street in downtown Lancaster, how to use a learning program on one of three computers he was instrumental in obtaining through the Kiwanis Club of Lititz and D&E Communications.



2. Celebrating the installation of donated computers and educational software at the YWCA School Age Childcare Center, 110 N. Lime Street in downtown Lancaster. Standing: Alexis Faro, 17-yr-old volunteer; Monica Kirchner, School Age Childcare Director; Brian Weit, Marketing Specialist, D&E Communications Haywire Group; and Chris Bryan, Business Manager, D&E Communications. Seated: Renna Sherriff and Louise Stickler, representing the Kiwanis Club of Lititz.



3. A group of children at the YWCA School Age Childcare Center, 110 N. Lime Street in downtown Lancaster, work with the three reconditioned computers and educational software donated by the Kiwanis Club of Lititz and D&E Communications. From the front: Julian Holland (6), Shea Robison (7), Jayde Cruz (10), Marqus Wise (8) and Jeremiah Holland (9).