

EPA New England donates computers to Mass. High Schools

Lawrence High School and the Lynn Classical High School this year received free computer equipment through a seven-year-old program of the New England office of the US Environmental Protection Agency. The computer equipment, purchased new, would have cost the schools an estimated \$80,000.

As part of a larger effort, partnering in the Federal Electronics Challenge program, to promote sound management of in-house computer equipment while helping communities throughout the region, EPA New England has donated nearly 600 personal computers and related technology to schools and other non profit organizations over the seven years. This year, Lynn Classical High School received 10 personal computers and a printer and Lawrence High School received 37 personal computers and 20 monitors.

In the last two years, EPA donated 151 cell phones to woman's shelters through the same program.

The computers are donated through a federal government program called Computers for Learning. In 1996, the federal government passed a law mandating federal agencies to give preference to schools and nonprofit organizations for donations of educationally useful federal equipment.

"The PC donation process works out well for everyone involved," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England office. "Schools get much-needed equipment to help them with online learning and computer education, while the environment benefits when computers are used for a longer period of time, and not scrapped or disposed in landfills."

In addition, Varney noted, the EPA saves on the cost of having an outside vendor recycle or dispose of the equipment while schools save money on computer purchases that can be

re-directed to meet other needs.

Before the computers are donated, they have to be sanitized to remove all EPA data. In addition, EPA dedicates staff time to test and reconfigure the equipment to ensure that the donated equipment is fully operational. Finally, EPA coordinates with schools to arrange for the logistics of transferring the equipment.

EPA officials estimate it would have cost the agency about \$4,000 to send the 600 computers to a recycling plant.

In the past, EPA New England has donated computers to Framingham,

Brockton, Somerville, Malden, Winthrop, and Dorchester, as well as schools in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Maine

Schools and educational nonprofit organizations can request excess computer equipment through the web site of the Computers for Learning Program at <http://www.computers.fed.gov/public/aboutProg.asp>. Although the website is a great tool, agencies do not need to use the CFL website to make transfers under the EO 12999. The primary goal is to increase the number of computers going to the schools, whether through the website or not. ■

