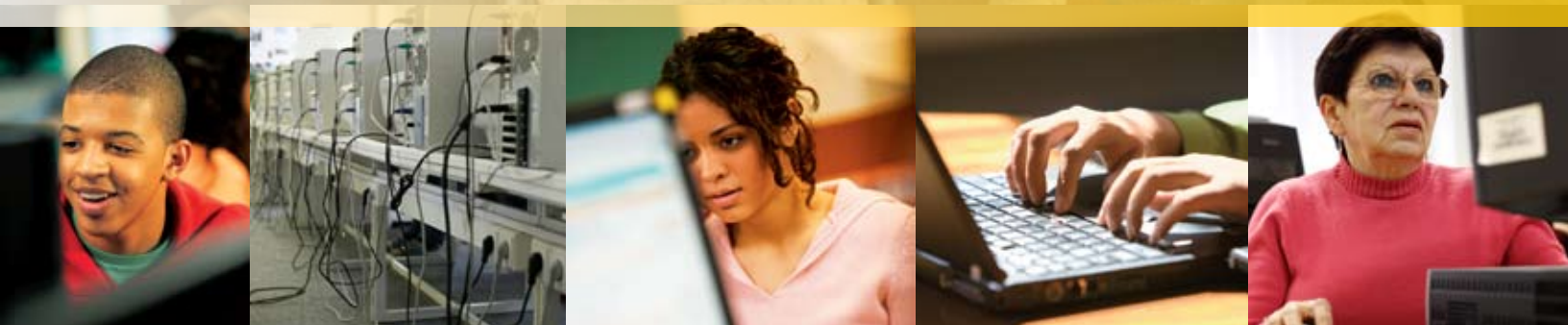Microsoft

AIRBORNE

Military families leave an Operation Homelink event, where they received refurbished computers.

A Second Life for PCs:

Empowering People in Need

Microsoft
Unlimited
Potential™ UP

Nancy Jo Craig, CACRC Executive Director (far right), with Steven Cheatham and Susan Hamilton from partner organizations, at an "electronics garage sale" in New Orleans sponsored by CACRC. 800 people snapped up bargain-priced computers and other electronic equipment.

Computers and the Internet have transformed the way many people work, learn and communicate. Yet for others, including many at the lower end of the economic scale, those with disabilities and people hard hit by disaster, even today's low-cost PCs are out of financial reach. To help address this issue, Microsoft is partnering with nonprofit organizations that refurbish PCs and provide them to those in need—including victims of Hurricane Katrina and families of U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq.

Refurbished PCs Help Improve—and Rebuild—Lives

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Secondary PCs Provide a Resource for Hurricane-Ravaged Communities

After hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated New Orleans, Louisiana, and surrounding areas in 2005, the Capital Area Corporate Recycling Council (CACRC), based in nearby Baton Rouge, assembled a coalition of more than a dozen public, private and nonprofit organizations to provide computers to schools and charities hard hit by the disasters.

More than 3,500 computers were collected and refurbished with support from the Community Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (Community MAR) program. The PCs were then donated to organizations like the Community Center of St. Bernard, which provides social services to residents of St. Bernard Parish and surrounding areas, many of whom were displaced when nearby levees failed and flooded the area. In 2007, local residents logged in 4,000 individual sessions on the dozen donated computers at the center to gain new technology-related job skills, polish resumes, find housing, communicate with family scattered across the country and complete federal paperwork.

What Community MARs Do

"I can't begin to describe what an invaluable resource CACRC was," says Iray Nabatoff, the center's executive director. "What happened here was beyond a disaster; it's a catastrophe, and these computers are vital for residents to regain their lives."

CACRC's Hurricane Relief Project continues today with help from the Community MAR program, which provides genuine Microsoft® Windows® and Office software at a deep discount to refurbishers who recondition used computers donated by corporations and individuals and then donate or sell them at low cost to nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and disadvantaged individuals.

Community MARs come in every shape and size, from large government-affiliated organizations to nonprofits such as the CACRC to one-person charities. More than 550 Community MARs are currently operating in the United States. Their common characteristic is a commitment to giving used PCs a second life and to share that technology with organizations and people who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford a PC. These efforts also serve an environmental purpose. Every year, millions of still-usable computers are discarded by businesses, individuals and organizations. Many of these PCs are just a few years old, but most end up in landfills, where they place a burden on the environment.

CACRC is one of the largest refurbishers and recyclers of computers and other electronic equipment in the state of Louisiana. In 2007, it recycled and refurbished more than 1,000 tons of used electronics. This reduced the amount of waste in local landfills and at the same time helped to provide reliable, low-cost computers to area schools, nonprofits and low-income families.

In addition to its Hurricane Relief Project, CACRC operates Computers for Louisiana's Kids, a program that encourages state agencies to donate unneeded PCs, which are then refurbished and made available to hard-pressed Louisiana public schools. In 2007 alone, the program distributed more than 800 computers and nearly 500 monitors. Another CACRC program, Computers for Louisiana's Families,

The Community MAR program (*www.microsoft.com/ communitymar)* helps refurbishers supply PCs preinstalled with genuine Microsoft software to schools, nonprofit organizations and other specially approved recipients. Participating refurbishers, called Community MARs, pay Microsoft a nominal fee for each installation of Windows 2000, Windows XP Professional or Microsoft Office 2003 Standard. Community MARs typically then donate the refurbished computers to such organizations or sell them at low cost. At the end of 2007, there were more than 1,000 Community MARs in over 60 countries. Organizations that want to explore acquiring secondary computers through Community MAR can go to the program's Web site (www.microsoft.com/ communitymar) and use the directory there to find the nearest Community MAR location and contact and qualifying information.

Featured Organizations

Capital Area Corporate
Recycling Council
Baton Rouge, La.
www.cacrc.com

Operation Homelink
Chicago, Ill.
www.operationhomelink.org

Solutions at Work Inc.
Beachwood, Ohio
www.ccbmrdd.org/sawinfo.asp
www.sawinc.org

As a part of CACRC's Computer for Louisiana's Kids program, students sort their electronic waste at the end of the school year. CACRC distributes refurbished computers to schools in need around the state.

Donating a PC

Here are some questions that organizations may want to ask a refurbisher before donating used PCs:

- What tools will you use to erase the hard drives? How is the tool certified? How many wipes do you do?

- Do you do your own refurbishing, or do you contract out the work? If you contract out, to whom, and how can I find out about their refurbishment policies and practices?

- To whom do you supply or sell refurbished PCs? What warranties do you offer them?

- How do you track the refurbished PCs you supply?

- How do you dispose of unusable parts? Do you offer a recycling audit?

- Do you sell or give away your PCs? If you sell them, what do you charge?

- What indemnity do you offer donors?

- Are you a Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR) or a Community MAR?

has provided more than 1,000 low-income families with a fully equipped refurbished computer for less than US$200.

Central to the success of CACRC's efforts—as well as the Community MAR program—are corporate donors such as Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, whose Michoud Operations facility is near New Orleans' hard-hit Ninth Ward. In 2008, Lockheed plans to donate 1,200 used laptops to CACRC, which will refurbish them and provide one to every seventh-grade student in the New Orleans Recovery School District, a group of distressed schools operating under state oversight. The hope is that the computers will help children who have fallen behind on their education and relieve some of the heavy demand for PC use at local libraries.

Marion LaNasa, Lockheed's local communications director, says it's gratifying to know that Lockheed's surplus computers will help some of the children most affected by the hurricanes. "It's important that we share our surplus resources with organizations and people who can benefit, and that we invest in our communities," says LaNasa.

Keeping Soldiers and Their Families Connected

In the year following September 11, 2001, Chicago real-estate agent Dan Shannon was inspired by news coverage of departing soldiers bound for Afghanistan and other locations outside the U.S. Though he never served in the military, Shannon wanted to help. He was drawn to the idea of offering military personnel and their families free computers that would allow them to stay in touch after the soldiers were deployed.

The nonprofit he created in 2002, Operation Homelink, is Shannon's personal effort, supported by a handful of other volunteers, to help ease the challenges faced by military families in a time of war. To date, the charity has donated

Operation Homelink presented more than 100 families of Fort Campbell soldiers with refurbished Dell computers. The computers help the families to keep in touch with their loved ones serving overseas.

more than 850 refurbished computers to service members and their families. Shannon keeps overhead low by contracting with authorized refurbishers to do the necessary testing and software installation.

To kick off his cause, Shannon wrote letters to the top executives of major corporations nationwide, asking if they had any computers to spare. A few large companies responded with donations, and eventually word spread through the local media.

The computer hardware and services firm CDW, an $8 billion private company based in Vernon Hills, Illinois, has been a major donor to Operation Homelink. Sandy Pierantoni, who works in community relations for CDW, says her company donates some of the computers that customers return for various reasons. "They're in pristine condition," she says.

For instance, in 2006, CDW donated a batch of more than 100 computers, mice and peripherals worth $50,000 to families and soldiers at Fort Drum, New York. CDW erases all data before donating the computers, but Pierantoni trusts Operation Homelink to certify that the machines have been wiped clean and set up for the next user with genuine Microsoft software available through the Community MAR program.

Operation Homelink's computers go to people such as LeeAnn and Chris Williams. Chris, 25, is an Army sergeant with a Stryker Brigade that was deployed to Iraq from Fort Lewis, Washington. At the end of 2007, Chris was home on leave for the birth of the couple's son Gabriel, but he had to return to Iraq just one week later.

Shortly afterward, he received a donated laptop from Operation Homelink after his story appeared in local newspapers. The laptop allowed him to stay in touch with his wife and track the baby's progress. LeeAnn, 23, says the laptop has made their separation at a particularly stressful time more bearable.

"We talk a lot on the Internet," she says, "almost every day." Best of all, LeeAnn can send Chris photos and videos of baby Gabe. Chris can download the photos onto his laptop for frequent viewing—a rare treat for soldiers in a war zone. Otherwise, LeeAnn notes, Chris would be stuck in long lines waiting for just a few minutes of computer time at his military base in Iraq.

"This way, he sees how big Gabe's getting, and he can even hear the little sounds he makes," LeeAnn says.

Adapted PC Gives Disabled Man a Sense of Mastery

Cerebral palsy and mental retardation make it difficult for 22-year-old Jimmy Cerovac to do many things. But with the help of a specially adapted refurbished computer, he can do the things he loves most: listen to music, create art and play educational games at his Strongsville, Ohio, home.

Since Jimmy can't use a keyboard or a mouse, his computer has been outfitted with a large red button that he presses to execute commands. His mother, Deborah Cerovac, says the computer has multiple benefits. Controlling what's on the screen has given Jimmy a sense of self-mastery, and the time he spends on the computer gives his mother a much-needed break from the demands of caring for an adult with severe disabilities.

"He just loves it," she says. "He seems calmer after he's been on it."

Jimmy's computer was provided by Solutions at Work, Inc. (S.A.W.), a Cleveland-based nonprofit that offers services to adults with disabilities, including providing refurbished computers to families of people with disabilities and other organizations that serve adults and children with special needs.

S.A.W. receives the used computers from individuals in the community, Cuyahoga County offices and major corporations. In the last five years, S.A.W. has refurbished and distributed more than 1,200 computers, says Hank Bitterman, habilitation supervisor for the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities (CCBMR/DD), which partners closely with S.A.W.

Acquiring a Refurbished PC

If you're interested in purchasing a secondary computer, it's important to be an educated consumer. For information about where to find a Community MAR, go to *www.microsoft.com/communitymar*

Below are some questions to ask to make sure you are getting a reliable machine with legitimate software:

- What are the full specifications and capabilities of this computer? Is it a name brand? Can I see it working?
- Where did the PC come from? Has it been upgraded with any new or used parts? Has it been tested for electrical safety?
- Does the PC have a warranty, and if so, what does the warranty cover?
- What is your return policy? What is your return or failure rate?
- What percentage of your computers is returned because of operating problems?
- Does the PC include genuine operating system and software?
- Where can I get support?
- Do you offer end-of-life take-back, and if so, is there a charge?
- What sort of customer support do you offer?
- Are you a Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher or Community MAR?

Microsoft Unlimited Potential **UP**

In 2007, Microsoft launched Unlimited Potential, which brings together the company's corporate citizenship efforts and many of its business investments to significantly broaden the reach of technology in underserved communities. Unlimited Potential aims to deliver the benefits of relevant, accessible and affordable software to the 5 billion people who today have no access to technology or the opportunities it affords, with a goal of reaching the next 1 billion people by 2015.

For more information, visit **www.microsoft.com/ unlimitedpotential**

To learn more about Microsoft citizenship programs and investments, visit **www.microsoft.com/citizenship**

Cover photo courtesy of Steve Humbert

A student uses a computer fitted with a large red button that can be used to execute commands. The device, provided by S.A.W., helps those with disabilities who cannot use a mouse and keyboard.

"We received some from a county agency last year," Bitterman says. "Two hundred really nice Pentium IV machines that were outdated for them but for our purposes were excellent." Two adaptive computer specialists from the CCBMR/DD assistive technology department and a small group of volunteers work with Bitterman to prepare the donated computers for distribution to people with disabilities once they are refurbished.

At Clear Channel Radio in nearby Independence, Ohio, IT manager Marty Kilroy says that in the past, obsolete computers would end up in the basement of his building. Because of limited storage space and environmental concerns, Clear Channel chose to donate its computers to S.A.W. after learning about its mission of providing computers to clients of CCBMR/DD.

Over the past two years, Clear Channel has donated 40 PCs and a similar number of monitors to S.A.W. Clear Channel expects to donate more computers as they are replaced by newer models.

Over the last five years, Solutions at Work has refurbished more than 1,200 computers for use by people with disabilities. When needed, the PCs include adaptive technology.