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*Computer donation links Trigg students with cancer research*

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In 1969, Brenda Southward's husband, George, returned from service in Vietnam to learn he had testicular cancer. Of the six soldiers in his hospital wing, only George survived, said Southward. And that was due to experimental treatments he received.



Emily Burton | kentucky new era

**Brian Gupton (left)**, executive director of Kentucky DataSeam Initiative, encourages students at Trigg County High School on Thursday to start learning computers as much as sports at a young age. Ben Cundiff looks on. Cundiff donated the funding needed to purchase 30 new Apple eMac computers for the school.

"Back then, they didn't have chemotherapy," Southward said. "I feel like, because of cancer research I was given a gift, my husband."

On Thursday, Southward was on hand to witness the start of an innovative cancer research program launched in Trigg County High School's new computer lab.

The school's 30 new Apple eMac computers are



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linked with others across the state to form a type of supercomputer workhorse for cancer researchers at James Brown Cancer Center at the University of Louisville. While students focus on science and math problems on the screen, the computers will be constantly working in the background to find elements that could be effective against cancer, much like a giant math equation.

Rather than studying 50,000 petri dishes, researchers are using the computer grid to compare chemical combinations to various cancer elements to see if any might be effective. There has already been a hit in Caldwell County, where several treatments were identified as possibly effective against cancer elements.

The research is fueled by a computer's "think" capacity not being used by students during the day or after hours. Students' work will not be hindered or affected by the research.

The program was launched by Kentucky Datasam Initiative and made possible by donations from the Cadiz Rotary Club, Benson International and local businessman, Ben Cundiff.

Datasam executive director Brian Gupton said the 30 machines in Trigg County are able to complete about 47 years of cancer research in about 120 days.

"That's a big deal, especially when the state of Kentucky has some of the highest cancer rates in the country," Gupton said.

What it means for cancer patients is more efficient drug therapies, more cost-effective therapies and, in some cases, less toxic chemotherapy drugs, said Gupton.

What it means to Cundiff, who donated thousands for the computers, is not just better drugs for his friends with cancer, but a stronger learning environment for his community.

"The motivation for me was the local com-

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puter lab," said Cundiff. "I hope it gets more kids in college," and those who do pursue a

higher education are better prepared when they arrive on campus.

For Trigg County High School educators, the implications of the new lab are boundless, taking science lessons from textbooks to real-time on-line.

"It means for me I can get in here and actually apply the new emerging technology to my science class. This gives the students hands-on knowledge," said Science Survey teacher Simone Parker.

The new computers have vastly improved the scope of design and photography classes as well, said art teacher John Paul Jones.

"It's just a whole new world for them. This will get them on-line and up to speed," Jones said.

While students are excited because of the entertainment capabilities of Mac computers, and teachers are looking forward to their educational values, to Gupton there is a far-reaching implication for Kentucky's future.

Through the use of high-tech tools, including his research initiative, Gupton hopes more students will be encouraged to pursue careers in science and math, and keep those careers in Kentucky.

"Cancer research is not a guy in a white lab coat looking down the barrel of a microscope. It's this," he said, sweeping his arm over the row of computers.

His program affects approximately 130,000 students in the state, eight counties in all with another 50 possible in the future. The National Institute of Health has identified the program as a possible national model for research.

But to Southward there is a much more fundamental gift at work.

"My children and grandchildren can benefit from it," she said. "Just for students to know that, 'I'm sitting here at this computer doing a math problem, but behind that screen, they're saving someone's life.' What better education for our students?"

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