

California's Rural Counties Provide Laptops to Foster Youth

Lake County News
January 30, 2018

SACRAMENTO – Rural County Representatives of California, or RCRC and National Homebuyers Fund Inc., or NHF, have joined forces to contribute \$400,000 to provide an iFoster laptop computer to all eligible foster youth and former foster youth aged 16-21 within RCRC's 35 member counties.

RCRC and NHF's Boards of Directors each approved providing \$200,000 to support the 1 Laptop Program for Foster Youth.

Through this one-time contribution, more than 1,100 eligible foster youth and former foster youth in care will receive laptops within RCRC's 35 member counties.

The 1 Laptop Program for Foster Youth is run by iFoster, a national non-profit serving the child welfare community, including formal foster care, guardianship, informal kinship care, transition-age youth (16 to 24) and probation.

iFoster's mission is to ensure that every child growing up outside of their biological home has the resources they need to become independent adults and to have access to opportunities to reach their full potential.

The 1 Laptop Program is designed for foster youth and former foster youth ages 16-21.

A 2016 study of 730 youth across California who received iFoster computers found that only five percent of rural foster youth have consistent access to a computer in their homes, compared to 90 percent of all teens, and 79 percent of low-income teens (Pew Research Center, 2014).

When provided with a computer, 98 percent of youth reported using it on a daily or weekly basis, and statistically significant improvements were found in academic performance, social connectedness and life satisfaction.

Owning a computer addresses additional challenges for foster youth, including

accessing needed resources and the loss or misplacement of important life documents as youth move from placement to placement.

The iFoster Transitional Age Youth (TAY) Assistant includes a HIPAA compliant secure online digital locker, accessible anywhere, anytime, which is fully integrated into iFoster's resource portal and programs.

Currently, more than 6,600 iFoster TAY members are utilizing the TAY Assistant, resulting in fewer vital documents lost, access to more than 500 needed resources, and improved youth support networks.

All youth receiving laptops funded by RCRC and NHF will be provided with the TAY Assistant.

"I am proud to be part of two organizations that display overwhelming generosity to Californians in need," said Greg Norton, president and CEO of RCRC, and president of NHF. "The 1 Laptop Program for Foster Youth will change the legacy of many of California's current and former foster youth, providing them with access to essential resources, job training and the connectivity needed to succeed in today's online world."

iFoster will begin working with local agencies on determining youth eligibility, with a goal of distributing the laptops in 2018.

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