

33 laptops donated to Yolo County foster youth

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Foster children in Yolo County will soon be receiving laptops to help with academic performance, social connections and life satisfaction.

Through a collaboration between the Rural County Representatives of California, National Homebuyers Fund and iFoster, those between 16 through 21 will be receiving 33 laptops through the 1 Laptop Program for Foster Youth.

Justin Caporusso, vice president of Rural County Representatives and National Homebuyers Fund's Vice president Craig Ferguson gave Yolo supervisors an update on Tuesday.

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, according to Caporusso.

A 2016 study by iFoster found that of the 730 youth across California who received the organization's computers, only five percent of rural foster youth have consistent access to a computer in their homes. When provided with a computer, 98 percent of kids reported using them on a daily or weekly basis and showed greater social media skills as well as improved abilities to interact socially others.

"You're going to see these kids react positively to this because these laptops will help them grow," Caporusso explained to the audience and supervisors. "Some don't have the luxury of using a computer like most of us can so I'm glad we can provide them the support that will allow them to improve in all these aspects as mentioned."

iFoster's 1 Laptop Program model moves through four phases. They begin by identifying eligible foster youth through agency partners and baseline assessment. Then they provide the new laptops with productivity software that functions offline. They follow up by conducting monthly surveys over the next year before evaluating the laptop's impact on academic performance, strength of social network, life satisfaction and depression, and reduction of system costs.

District 3 Supervisor Matt Rexroad gave his approval of the program and noted the number of computers and smart phones in each household that many take for granted.

"You don't realize how easy it is to type something up and press 'enter,'" he said. "You don't realize that this ability is something that they don't have. I happen to love this

program for being able to give these young people the opportunity to have something like this.”

Each iFoster laptop is designed by Microsoft and Intel and are built with a sturdy but slim design. They offer an 11-hour battery life and have a 64-gig hard drive that comes loaded with donated Microsoft Windows, Office Suite, and Adobe Reader software. They are even internet, HDMI and webcam ready.

Late last year, Rural County Representatives and National Homebuyers Fund’s Boards of Directors each approved providing \$200,000 to support the 1 Laptop Program for Foster Youth, a statewide program that sees more than 1,100 laptop computers distributed within Rural County Representatives’ 35-member counties with the help of iFoster.

iFoster is a nonprofit organization serving the child welfare community, including formal foster care, guardianship, informal kinship care, transitional-age youth, and probation. There are over 45,000 members across the U.S. who have delivered over 12,000 laptops to foster youth nationwide.

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