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MAXIMIZING POTENTIAL

>>>>> Future scientists equipped with laptops

"But vision without resources is delusion. Today's donation is a reinforcement of our foundation's commitment of resources to education."

— JEFF ROBERTS, COORDINATOR OF THE MATH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MST) PROGRAM



Keith Bergeron, Jack Sharp, Ollie Tyler, Vernon Chance and Ken Wood

Looking like the professionals of tomorrow, 35 well-dressed, well-mannered students awaited an announcement in the counseling complex of Southwood High School's beautifully manicured campus. They gathered, along with local education dignitaries, teachers, sponsors and proud parents, to hear of plans that would further facilitate their learning process.

The school, known for its progressive science programs, will receive a \$40,000 expansion to its Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) Lab and a donation of laptop computers to its Biotechnology Magnet Program.

The announcement of the new resources was made by Ken Wood, principal of the school, after he praised the students. Wood said, "Biology II AP in your freshman year is not an easy task," which was met with a resounding chorus of "Amen!" followed by high-fives by the deserving students. The members of this inaugural class of the Biotechnology Magnet Program received the laptops (courtesy of Capital One Bank, the Committee of One Hundred and the Biomedical Research Foundation) that will allow them to more

arena" for the contributions the foundation has made to the school. Sharp, who acts as Louisiana's representative to the Southern Growth Policy Board, spoke of how that organization's goals all "wind up being a discussion of education."

He continued, "But vision without resources is delusion. Today's donation is a reinforcement of our foundation's commitment of resources to education." He then referred to the laptops as "lunchboxes," eliciting laughter from the students. But he was quick to stress the tools would be part of the "responsibility the students shared to maximize their potential."

Among those receiving the laptops were several students willing to share their thanks and plans for the future. Demri Robinson, who had a desktop computer at home, was enthusiastic about the options the new laptop would give him for handling the information he needs to train as either "a doctor or a game designer," keeping his options open.

Dustin Smith, who aspires to enter either bioengineering or bionics, said, "It will help with researching on the Internet and my homework, especially biology."

"Having (the laptop) in the classroom will really help with all we have to do," added future genetic engineer Akliah Green.

Marie Christophe, mother of Chris Christophe, chimed, "We're excited! It will help with the loads of paper and ink cartridges we go through printing out study guides. He can keep it right here," she said, with a pat to the new tool in its protective carrying case. Marie Christophe laughed that she is "all up in his studies" to show her son support. Chris is currently aiming toward a career as a chemist, after considering several other scientific options.

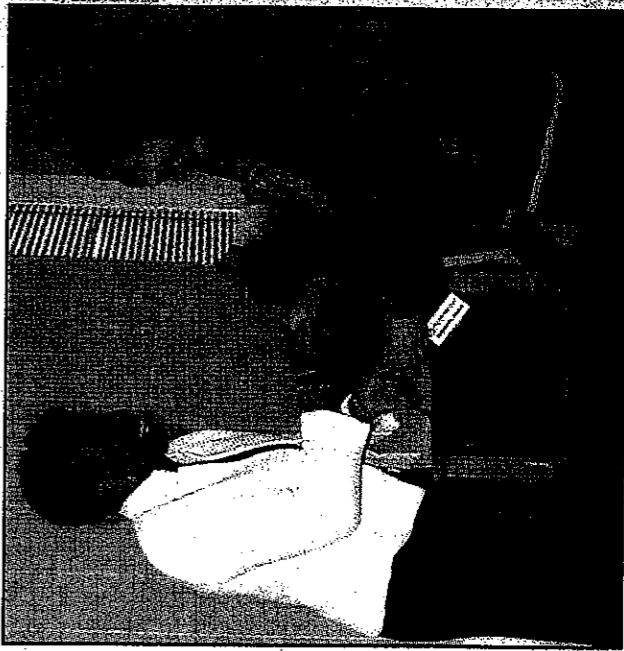
EAST, MST, the Biotechnology Magnet, and For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) classes offered at Southwood are all part of the school's commitment to project-based learning and the integration of technology into the learning process. EAST stresses real-world applications of traditional learning that result in the better understanding of modern tools of communication like computer-aided design, desktop publishing, database management and many others.

The magnet program at Southwood hopes to encourage continued growth and development of the biotechnology industry in northwest Louisiana. FIRST classes are offered to students as a mentoring and leadership-based program for engineering design and robotics. Together, these programs make this neighborhood school like no other in the parish. Other magnet programs are available but do not include the higher-level curriculum addressing bioscience standards, nor do they include Southwood's mentoring and interning aspects.

As the dignitaries and donors formed a receiving line to shake the hands of the laptop recipients, one couldn't help but think this line would be first of many for these ambitious young people. These students were accepted into the magnet program based on their GPA, standardized test scores including LEAP, and good attendance and discipline records. They represent not only the potential of Southwood's various programs and teaching styles but also hopes for the future of their chosen fields.

Bearing with the joy of their new computers and standing among many current scientists, they looked ready and armed to become the scientists of tomorrow.

— Noma Fowler-Sandlin



Caddo schools Superintendent Ollie Tyler presents Southwood High School student Brendi Goldsmith with a laptop.

Photo by Lora Fairchild

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