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Nov. 5, 2013

## **CU-Boulder expands popular Computers To Youth program**

The University of Colorado Boulder Environmental Center is expanding its Computers To Youth program, including more students and making the activities more interactive.

Computers To Youth provides high school students from underrepresented communities with upgraded used computers and hands-on training from CU-Boulder student mentors. Its purpose is to benefit underserved youth in Colorado and protect the environment. The computer systems received by the high school students through the program are designed to enable academic achievement toward college.

“Not only do the high school students but also the college student mentors see this as an inspiring learning experience,” said CU-Boulder engineering student and Computers To Youth mentor Rebecca Miller. “The fact that CU-Boulder put together this program that saves resources, prevents waste and enables future scientists and engineers is completely brilliant.”

The next Computers To Youth event will be held Saturday, Nov. 9. Fourteen high school students from the Family Learning Center in Boulder, guided by CU-Boulder student mentors, will go through surplus computer components, bundle parts, load the latest software, and take their newly built computer systems with them. The day also will include a new competition in which teams will race to disassemble and reassemble a demonstration computer.

“As technology increasingly becomes a part of daily life, those without computer access risk falling behind,” said Jack DeBell, E-Center recycling program development director. “This consequence, known as the digital divide, tends to affect economically-disadvantaged populations, especially youth. With such a great amount of computer equipment being discarded by a technologically advanced campus, it only makes sense that some of this equipment be “upcycled” to bridge the digital divide.”

The CU-Boulder student mentors are part of the statewide MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement) program. CU-Boulder's MESA Center administratively is located in the Department of Pre-College Outreach Services in the Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement (ODECE).

MESA Colorado also refers high school students to the Computers To Youth program.

With two additional Computers To Youth events slated for the spring semester, about 55 youth will be served by the program this academic year. The Denver Area Telecommunications Educational Telecommunication Consortium (DAETC) has enabled the increase in the number of participants, up from 48 last year, according to DeBell.

The E-Center has held numerous computer-build events since it began restoring and redistributing computers in 2001. In 2005, it received the Dell Higher Education Leadership Award to collect unused personal computers from the campus community and divert the equipment from landfills.

Also part of the Computers To Youth program is CU's Property Services department. Other contributors have included the Community Computer Connection and Microsoft Corporation.

"Hopefully this project will create additional collaboration with community groups and corporate sponsors in Colorado," said St. Vrain School District teacher Karen Hunter, whose high school participated in Computers To Youth last year. "The students' new-found confidence as a result of the amazing folks at CU-Boulder tells it all."

For more information about Computers To Youth visit <http://www.colorado.edu/ecenter/other-programs/computers-youth>.

Editors: Media are invited to attend Computers to Youth Saturday, Nov. 9, held throughout the day in room 145 of the Benson Earth Sciences building. Media should contact Jack DeBell at 303-492-8733 or 303-817-3447 or [debell@colorado.edu](mailto:debell@colorado.edu) to schedule a time.