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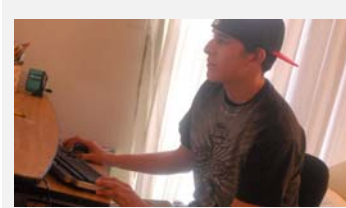
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## Family Connections program brings computers to the home

February 04, 2011 | By CHELCEY ADAMI | Imperial Valley Press Staff



CHELCEY ADAMI PHOTO

Knowing how to use a computer and surf the Internet can be critical skills for families, Family Connections Program Coordinator Mark Peres said.

Computer use and familiarity can help with education, obtaining jobs and even bring families closer together, said Sunne Wright McPeak, California's Emerging Technology Fund

president and chief executive officer.

Family Connections seeks to provide qualifying families in Imperial Valley with computer education, a donated computer and technical support.

The program was publicly launched Wednesday at The Family Treehouse in Imperial through a \$10,000 grant from San Diego Futures Foundations and a \$7,000 grant from California's Emerging Technology Fund.

Enolia Deiss of El Centro received a computer through the program, and her three children Evelyn Gutierrez, 10, Demile Gutierrez, 15, and Robert Gutierrez, 16, use the computer daily.

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"We always fight for it and say, 'It's my turn,'" Evelyn said. "I use it to do all my projects on the weekend."

While their apartment office has computers for public use, it closes at 5 p.m., and the children were limited as to when they could do their homework.

Deiss said it keeps her children at home more often instead of getting in trouble. She uses computer time as a bargaining chip to make sure they do their chores.

"It gives us more respect in the house to wait your turn and be patient," Demile said.

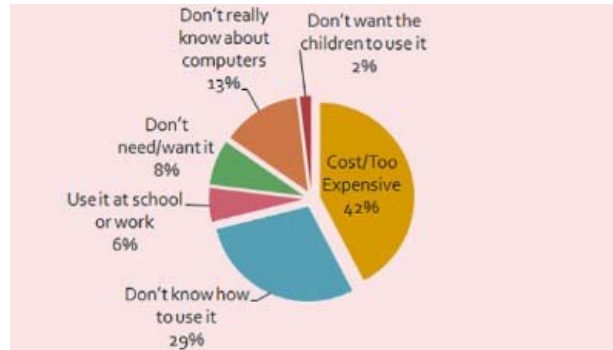
Qualifying families for the program can't already have a computer and must be low-income. Families with children under age 5 are targeted for the program, but there are exceptions, Peres said.

Peres said he has talked to people who don't know what a computer mouse is, and there are several reasons why people remain unfamiliar with computers. Through a local study, it was found that most people feel it's too expensive to own a computer while others simply don't know how to use it.

The program received 100 computers to distribute between September last year and September this year. Peres said they already have had 42 families receive a computer.

The public can learn more about the program and technology at the free "Get Connected tEXPO!" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 19 at Frank Wright Middle School in Imperial. There will be giveaways, food, games and workshops.

For information on Family Connections, contact Mark Peres at 760-355-1225.



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