

## RINGWOOD

# Education foundation to buy 20 laptops for Ryerson School

## Grant for \$37,500 authorized

BY TIM FOX  
Staff Writer

Although computers have become an integral part of society, not everyone has the luxury of their own personal desk or laptop. That may soon change, however, at Martin J. Ryerson Middle School, thanks to the Ringwood Education Foundation, a 15-member board of ambitious and dedicated parents who raise funds on behalf of the borough school system.

The REF unanimously voted two weeks ago to grant \$37,500 to the school for the purchase of a mobile computer cart able to transport about 30 laptop computers.

It will serve as a computer lab on wheels conveniently enabling all teachers to bring technology into the classroom.

Board members expect the cart to be ready for use at the start of the 2007-08 school year.

This grant is the largest and most far-reaching the REF has given.

To date, the REF has raised about \$240,000, excluding its most

recent endeavor.

"This is the wave of the future for children to have this kind of (computer) accessibility," said REF President Denise Benson. "Not every child has access to a computer at home.

"Certainly not every child has had access to a laptop. So it's another way to expose them to current technology that they will either use in higher education or a work environment."

The steel-framed cart holds up to 30 laptops and provides access to devices like a network printer, a projector that will allow students to easily share their work, and even wireless Internet.

The cart would also bring computing capability to the classroom where, because of time constraints and a limited number of machines, computers often become an afterthought for research and support instead of an integral part of learning, said REF board and technology committee member Jean Speer.

Board members are hoping students will utilize the laptops for computer-driven research projects. Teachers will be able to help students navigate through Internet research resources in an extremely supervised environment, said Benson.

The board granted approval to immediately pursue the acquisition of the computer lab at its meeting June 13. The board expects to have the cart in its possession sometime in July after the purchase is finalized and the computer maker, Gateway, ships the computers out.

At that point each will undergo standard configuration to be compatible with the district's computer standards.

If all goes well, the board is hoping students will have access to the lab the first week of school in September, according to Speer.

Currently, students looking for school computer access must go to the library to use the lab. REF members are hoping the computer cart will make usage easier for everyone.

"This will be an entire mobile lab that can be wheeled into the classroom," said Benson. "So teachers that would normally have to schedule time in the lab now can have the computer lab come to them. So it's doubling classroom access to computers."

The long-term goal of the REF is to bring technology grants to the district's three elementary schools - E.G. Hewitt, Robert Erskine and Peter Cooper. Currently, the group provides teacher-requested grants

and other gifts.

The donations are directly tied to its fundraising success, and the group is hoping its newest gift will spur further donations.

"It's not the one and only technology purchase that we're hoping to make," said Benson.

"We're using this as a catalyst, so when parents in the community see our fundraisers are going to long-term improvement projects like this, we would hope that our fundraisers would raise more money. This is just the beginning of the direction the REF is going in."

Those interested in becoming REF members, giving a contribution or looking for more information about the group, should log onto its Web site, ringwoodef.org.

District Superintendent of Schools Dr. Patrick Martin echoed the administration's appreciation for the gift.

"On behalf of the entire Ringwood Public School community I want to thank you," he said in an e-mail to board members.

"The cart truly does move us farther into the 21st century! The time and effort you put into this acquisition is greatly appreciated."

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