

Bowman Gets Special Technology from Local Best Buy



United Cerebral Palsy of the Golden Gate (UCP) and Best Buy donated more than \$35,000 in equipment to Bowman in an effort to raise awareness and promote the use of technology in special education. In the photo above, Savanna Rose, 7, and her mother, Lisa Rose, test out the new equipment. Read more below.

Tech support - Bowman accepts aid for special-needs kids

By Kristofer Noceda, Daily Review Staff Writer, April 10, 2008

HAYWARD — Ally Cunningham lost the ability to speak last year as the result of a traumatic brain injury she suffered in a car accident. The 9-year-old Bowman Elementary School student will now be able to communicate with family, friends, teachers and anyone else she wishes thanks to technology equipment recently donated to the school.

"This is just wonderful. I was crying in joy when I found out about the programs and equipment donated to the school," said Kathy Zembik, Ally's grandmother. "We've been waiting for this for so long. Now Ally will be able to tell us when she's thirsty, hungry and all the little things that we take for granted."

United Cerebral Palsy of the Golden Gate (UCP) and Best Buy donated more than \$35,000 in equipment to Bowman in an effort to raise awareness and promote the use of technology in special education.

"We just wanted to give the best opportunity possible to help these children reach their academic potential," said Barry Gardin, UCP board president.

The organization provides services to encourage people with cerebral palsy — a chronic condition that affects body movements and muscle coordination — and similar disabilities to be independent, officials said. Gardin said the organization received a grant through the Elsie S. Bellow Fund to provide assistive technology to individuals with disabilities.

"We have a number of parents on our board and (we) decided we wanted to use those funds towards education," he said.

Gardin contacted Best Buy, which then donated an additional \$5,000 to the project from its community foundation. Best Buy's "Geek Squad" also assisted in setting up the equipment in Loren Spina's special-education classroom at Bowman.

"I still can't believe it," Spina said Wednesday during a reception to introduce the new equipment to students, family and staff.

In addition, Jill Rivers, a speech and language pathologist and assistive technology specialist with the California Department of Education, volunteered to assess Bowman students.

"We can donate money and equipment just to donate," Gardin said. "But we wanted to provide the most appropriate equipment to the students we're going to serve."

The donated equipment included a touch-screen computer and communication devices for students.

"This will help me be creative in the way I teach," Spina said. "But more importantly, it will help kids access the curriculum."

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MAGGIE MAHONEY (above, left), a consultant at DynaVox, assists Bowman Elementary School student Ally Cunningham, 9, on Wednesday with one of the learning devices that will be used in a special-education classroom. (Photo credit: Mike Lucia)