

The Carmel Pine Cone

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Foundation debuts new tech lab

Ribbon cutting May 18

By MARY SCHLEY

THANKS TO an anonymous \$100,000 gift, The Carmel Foundation has overhauled its technology lab, bringing in new computers and other devices, furniture, carpeting and paint. There, foundation members, who have to be at least 55 years old to join, can learn any number of technological skills and tricks, from how to make movies and run the new Windows 10 operating system, to understanding the basics of iPads, iPhones and Samsung devices. A ribbon cutting is set for Wednesday, May 18.

After hearing news last fall that the foundation might receive \$100,000 from an anonymous donor, administrators were asked how they would use the money if they did get it, foundation president Jill Sheffield told The Pine Cone.

"We said we always wanted to update our tech center. And, lo and behold, we got the check," she said. "For us, this was perfect: We've wanted to do it for a really long time, but it's not something you can easily find the extra funds for."

The foundation opened its learning center in 1995, and while the computers had been replaced with newer donated machines over the years, overall, it was quite shopworn, according to Sheffield. The donation provided for new carpet, paint, electrical, lighting, window coverings, updated infrastructure like WiFi, tables and chairs, a wall-mounted smart TV that can connect with any computer in the room or students' phones and

tablets, 10 new Hewlett Packard PCs with 23-inch touchscreens, two new iMacs, an iPad and a Samsung tablet, wireless keyboards and mice, a multi-functional printer, high-speed internet, and updated software.

"She wanted to see the money used and not get caught up in a lot of red tape," Sheffield said of the unnamed donor. "And we've let her representative know that we're finished."

Beth Bates, who oversees the computer program and is the finance director, said she worked with vendors to get the best prices on equipment and software.

Even though we had this tremendous gift, we were very diligent in pricing," she said. "We didn't spend the entire sum, by any stretch, and are keeping a reserve for upgrades and updates," Sheffield said.

Bates said having a fund reserve in the nonprofit world is "a luxury."

And the nearly dozen volunteer instructors who have been idle during the renovation are ready to go, according to Bates. The youngest instructors are in their 30s, she estimated, and the oldest is in his 80s. Some are foundation members, but not all.

"We start off with two new classes on Monday," she said. "We already have a wait list for Windows 10." That class will be handled by Roy Hilts, an 89-year-old foundation member who has been teaching computer classes there for more than a decade.

"It keeps me off the streets and out of the bars," said Hilts, a retired executive from Crown Zellerbach Corp.

A ribbon cutting has been organized by the Carmel Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the new technology center. It will take place Wednesday, May 18, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. and is open to all, while a members-only preview will take place May 13.

