

Middle school students' tech skills help others learn from home

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created many difficulties in our lives. Perhaps one of the most complicated issues has been figuring out how students should go to school.

With the school year underway for many, the decision has been to learn from home. While that may keep students and staff the healthiest, the need for technology has created potential disparities.

Before the pandemic reached the community, the Penguin Corps, a group of middle school students at Aspen Academy charter school in Savage was doing work that would benefit their fellow students during the pandemic.

Using their technologically advanced minds, the Penguin Corps has been refurbishing and fixing donated computers that have now been given to students in need.



"Some of the kids this week were reflecting upon the fact that they know they're making a difference," Stu Keroff, director of the Penguin Corps and social studies teacher at Aspen Academy, said.

"We're loaning [the computers] out this time around so we can clean them up and reuse them later, but we've sent over 200 computers out the door," Keroff added.

Even after more than 200 computers finding useful homes, Keroff says they're still looking for donations of computers that may need some TLC or are not being used.

Just like many communities and schools, the COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges for the Aspen Academy — the need for technology was one. On top of that, increased demand has made computers and other tech needed for learning harder to find online and in stores.

"These are kids from all walks of life," Keroff said, about those who have received the loaned computers.

"We have some kids who may be from poorer backgrounds and some that you wouldn't picture they're needing a computer at all in those homes. But, this whole crisis caught everybody off guard – so, we've seen lots of people expressing a need."

Keroff says this is a problem that is fixable – there are computers out there that can be donated and students with the drive to learn this skill. To help, he's created a **free guide** (<https://sites.google.com/site/startlinuxclub/>) to help others start programs like the Penguin Corps.

If you'd like to donate, **email Keroff directly** (<mailto:studieslinux@gmail.com>).

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