



# Santa Barbara County Education Office

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**To:** All media  
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## **Partnerships help bridge the digital divide**

Since 1996, Partners in Education's Computers for Families (CFF) program has delivered computers and technology training to more than 11,000 families in need. The Computers for Families program was created in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Education Office to provide computers and Internet access to south Santa Barbara County elementary school students lacking these important educational tools at home.

Teachers identify students lacking technology at home, and their families are invited to a distribution event. There, families receive training and a refurbished computer as well as information about applying for discounted Internet from Cox Communications or Frontier Communications. Through strengthened and new partnerships, in just one evening families can now get pre-qualified for discounted internet by speaking with an on-site Cox Connect2Compete representative, and can also learn directly from Equalitech about resources available at their technology training center in the Goleta Valley Community Center.

The computers the families receive have all been donated by local community members and businesses, with LogMeIn supplying more than 350 computers so far this year. The computers are then refurbished with the help of youth from Los Prietos Boys Camp (LPBC), a rehabilitation program for incarcerated youth, run by the Santa Barbara County Probation Department. A few days per month, in the Los Prietos Boys Camp Business Center, located in the basement of the Santa Barbara County Board-Supervisor's building, Rubén Orozco, Cottage Health Manager IT Operations Support, volunteers his time to teach the youth marketable technical skills that both benefit CFF operations and the young men's future.

The culmination of these efforts occurs each Thursday evening in the fall, when volunteers and LPBC youth assist with distribution events and experience firsthand the positive impact they make. Held at schools and community centers, the distribution events provide

families with opportunities to practice with and explore the educational programs installed on all CFF computers. After families complete the interactive exercises, they participate in a brief training presentation, learning how to set up their computer, how to keep their kids safe online, and how to access the free tech support offered by CFF, and more.

At the end of the evening, families walk away with a desktop computer, flat screen monitor, keyboard, mouse, and often, low-cost Internet.

After having a CFF computer for two years, a sixth grade student said her grades have improved, and she no longer has to go to school early or to stay late in order to complete her homework. She said, “Now I can do all my homework at home!”

Thanks to a recent partnership with ParentSquare, CFF will be able to better communicate with families beyond the distributions, ensuring they have the support they need to maintain their computers and to get connected to the Internet. Through ParentSquare, CFF will be able to message families to learn about their needs and offer assistance, as well as to let them know about additional trainings and community events they can participate in to better help their children be successful using their new-found technology at home.

You can join Partners in Education, local businesses, and educators to celebrate successful partnerships at the Business & Education Partnerships Breakfast on Wednesday, Nov. 8 at Earl Warren Showgrounds from 7 – 9 a.m. While the event is complimentary, registration is required. To learn more, visit [partners.sbceo.org/partnershipsbfast](http://partners.sbceo.org/partnershipsbfast).

*Partners in Education fulfills needs in K-12 schools and youth programs through the coordination of volunteer and business resources. The organization was formed by local business and education leaders in 1977, and is administered by the [Santa Barbara County Education Office](http://santa-barbara-county-edu.org). In Santa Maria, the Countywide Volunteer Program is operated in partnership with the Santa Maria Valley YMCA. Thanks to the power of partnerships, more than 200,000 volunteer hours have been served at K-12 campuses and youth-serving nonprofits across Santa Barbara County, more than 11,000 computers have been delivered to families in need, and 500 plus high school students have received paid job readiness training and internship experience in the workplace. For more information, visit: [partners.sbceo.org](http://partners.sbceo.org).*

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