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Cutlines:

Greater Latrobe High School junior Shane Somers excited to touch hardware he's only read about during online simulations

Excela's Eric Pickup and Aaron Burd discuss router donation with class instructor William Beldham

**TOMORROW'S COMPUTER ANALYSTS
SUPPORTED BY EXCELA HEALTH TODAY**

LATROBE, PA, June 15, 2012 ... Finding qualified network administrators is a challenge when technological advances outpace the knowledge and skills of potential hires. Excela Health is helping computer-savvy young people overcome these barriers to future employment through a new relationship with Eastern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center.

The health system made what promises to be the first of many annual donations of excess inventory to William Beldham, instructor of the Computer Engineering Technology class which is part of the Cisco Networking Academy of Cisco Systems, Inc. Cisco considers the academy the world's largest classroom with over 1 million current students.

May 30, Derry Area graduate Aaron Burd, Excela's manager of Network Operations, and Eric Pickup, network analyst, delivered a number of routers, switches and wireless access points retrieved from various locations across the system, which will be used for hands-on training of high school students from his alma mater, as well as Greater Latrobe and Ligonier Valley School Districts.

“We have been using simulation software because we do not have the devices necessary to complete some practice networks,” noted Beldham. “Because the simulator software does not have all the router or switch features, we have been limited. There is nothing like having actual devices to configure, recover and reset, etc.”

Burd was delighted to find a new home for the well maintained Cisco hardware that had reached its useful lifetime saying, “As we sunset equipment, we realized the tremendous benefit that a donation to the EWCTC program would have now and in the future.”

Cisco Systems is a leader in its field, with approximately 75 percent of all computer networks worldwide operating via its equipment. In its prime, the health system’s hardware would be worth thousands of dollars. While gently used, this gift will enable the school to strengthen its curriculum at a time when few schools have discretionary dollars to invest. Excelsa also benefits because the donation provides a positive alternative to costly disposal or recycling of obsolete computer equipment.

In corresponding with parents and school administrators regarding the value of his program Beldham wrote: “No other subject will open as many doors in the 21st Century, regardless of a student’s ultimate field of study or occupation, as Computer Engineering Technology. At a time when computing is driving job growth and new scientific discovery, it is unacceptable that the country has too few qualified IT professionals to fill available positions. There is a clear and compelling need for IT students to be prepared to fill computer and Information Technology needs of industry; while the rate of job growth continues to exceed the supply of certified professionals to fill these positions by more than 200 percent, schools are training fewer students for these positions year after year. It is a failure to America’s youth as well as a failure to America’s global competitiveness.”

Beldham plans to use the Cisco equipment to help further his students’ ambitions after graduation. The computer technology program is a three-year course. The highly interactive class gives students a practical look at computer networking and

troubleshooting. Those who work hard are able to leave EWCTC with several certificates and 23 college credits that will accelerate them to a career after high school.

Shane Somers, 17, a junior at Greater Latrobe is one of the few advanced students in the training program. The teen was pleased to see firsthand the new equipment that he had only read about thus far, "In the computer world certificates are more valuable than degrees," Somers said as he admired the equipment. Somers has completed his third year at EWCTC, and leaves with four certificates. Somers expects the certificates to help springboard him to college and the Navy where he will study security and access control.