

Northville dentist repairs computers as rewarding hobby

By Maureen Johnston
RECORD STAFF WRITER

At least once a week, Jim Payne opens a piece of mail from someone thanking him for changing their life.

The letters are gifts to him. "Doc Payne" is familiar to many as a Northville dentist who for 24 years has practiced the same profession from the same location. But in the past three years he has developed another passion: he repairs donated computers and gives them away.

Payne's payment for his efforts: gratitude from the recipients and the opportunity to witness the impact of his efforts.

"If I'm a little down, I go home and work on three computers," he said. Those machines networked in a lab benefit 30 people. "Would you like to have that job satisfaction?"

"We wanted to write and express our gratitude to you for the gift of the computer for our son John. Because of his deafness and his multiple disabilities his body has its limitations however, his mind is very active. We believe this computer will open up a new world for him..."

The computer-donation concept grew from Payne's frustration with the frequency of repairing his own office machine. After an 18-month computer-store internship, the dentist learned to apply his delicate touch to the intricate circuitry integral to today's communication systems.

Deliveries in the past two weeks have pushed to 1,200 the tally of computers his non-profit venture, JDS Computers, has put in places previously modern-day technology.

Technology starved

Poor parochial schools, vandalism victims, military personnel, churches and individuals with special circumstances are among those who have benefited. Payne evaluates requests and matches equipment contributed to worthy recipients.

For individuals, he applies social security eligibility criteria, plus: "It has to have some

HAVE COMPUTERS?

For more information on Dr. Jim Payne's non-profit venture, visit www.jdscomputers.net-firms.com.

impact on their life," he said. "We've done a nice cross-section."

"(The recipient) is a 54-year-old man with multiple sclerosis that is confined to his home unable to go out without assistance.... I sincerely hope God will continue to bless you with the ability to continue your work, as it makes a real difference in a disabled persons life."

"He had no way to get out of his house," Payne said. Now, he can bank from home and shop on-line for supplies.

"In that case, we had a profound effect on his life.

"That's what we're after."

JDS recently made e-mailing and instant messaging possible for Grand Rapids-based soldiers on their way to Iraq. "I'm going to provide them with laptops so they can communicate with the folks back home," he said.

Education is the first priority, the mission founder said. In the past three years, 20 schools in and around Detroit have benefited from Payne's brainstorm and follow-through.

"The inner-city parochial schools — they have nothing."

"When I stand in our new computer lab and look around I am totally awestruck by what I see. It isn't the 28 donated computer systems, it is the students eagerly engaged in using them to enhance their learning.... What a transformation! We truly are touching the future now as we teach and facilitate the learning process in our school."

St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School, First United Methodist Church, Civic Concern clients and Allen Terrace are local JDS beneficiaries. All the better when use of school equipment is extended to the rest of the community, Payne said.

The dentist's knack for com-

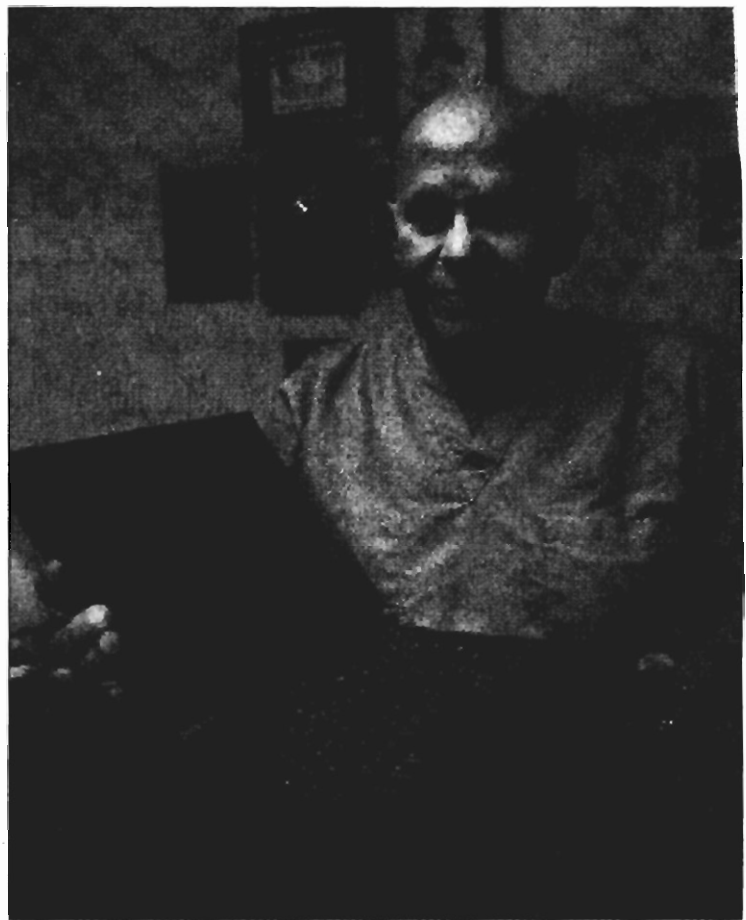


Photo by JOHN HEIDER/NORTHVILLE RECORD

Thanks to Northville dentist Jim Payne and the philanthropic group "JDS Computers," hundreds of computers have been donated and restored on behalf of City of Detroit schools since 2003.

puter repair has touched lives in 13 countries.

Payne knows the computers he sent to the island of Bali are used from 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The non-profit agency that received four laptops told him the inhabitants have electricity until noon; an additional 90 minutes come from a battery charge.

Hub for exchange

Payne's 434 N. Center St.

office now serves as an information hub for the community-service enterprise. Between check-ups and fillings, his patients often serve as links to who has computers they no longer need and who needs them.

The donated Web site Payne, Drake Davis and Scott Montgomery created when they established their non-profit corporation serves also serves as a clearinghouse for the

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Controlling

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exchanges. Broken computers worthless to companies unable to afford replacing them become priceless tools after they pass through the hands of the JDS Computers crew.

The network is a dozen volunteers, including Northville residents Chris Fairbairn, George Ginger, Alan Hedler, Don Jones, Bob Kramar and Ray Mitzel. "Not one organization has paid us one penny to do this," Payne said.

The JDS gang lugs tons of machinery down and up Payne's Livonia home basement stairs — to his workshop. It's there Payne is transformed into technology Santa.

Payne's intrigue with tinkering had a simple beginning: the desire to return his business' system to working order. "The interesting thing was, when I started to read it, I understood it," he said.

That story told to a patient, he received a machine to repair. He presented it to a low-income client. And from there it went.

"It's like this great big spider thing that happens with patients," Payne said. "It's been purely a situation it's been mostly word-of-mouth.

Generous donors

In addition to individual donations, major sponsors include the Eaton Corporation in Ann Arbor, Comcast, Henkle Surface Technology in Madison Heights and National City Bank, Payne

said.

"Every month (National City) ships me computers from Atlanta, Georgia to repair at their expense," Payne said. "What's happened is they've gotten so cheap — it's like a toaster — they toss it out instead of repair it. People who can repair them are rare."

But one man's junk...

"They're still viable," Payne said. "Putting them in a school — where they're doing word processing, this and that — they're absolutely wonderful.

"All of them have gone up and down my basement stairs."

In the mail, Payne receives the certificates and plaques proclaiming gratitude he hangs in his Northville dental office.

"It gives you a real feeling of success," he said. "I'm just trying to make my little corner of the world a little better. That's all."

"I recently received the computer that you reworked and so generously sent and I am so excited. I am an unmarried woman on my own, working two jobs, trying to continuously better myself... I wish you so much happiness in your field and in helping others fulfill a dream of self-improvement. Thank you so very much."

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