

Contra Costa County shares \$300,000 grant to give foster children better access to technology

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen Contra Costa Times San Jose Mercury News

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MARTINEZ -- iFoster, a California-based advocacy nonprofit for foster children, has selected Contra Costa County to share in a three-year, \$300,000 grant to expand access to computers and affordable Internet service to vulnerable youth.

In partnership with the California Emerging Technology Fund, led by former Contra Costa Supervisor Sunne Wright McPeak, the organizations this week launched the initiative and the county declared May Foster Care Month.

The grant will subsidize for foster families in Contra Costa and statewide the purchase of computers from \$120 to \$150 and Internet service for \$10 to \$20 a month.

Emancipated foster youth Bernard Naquin of Richmond was among the first recipients of a new laptop. The 19-year-old attends Diablo Valley College and plans to go into sports medicine, he told county supervisors on Tuesday.

Contra Costa has 1,000 youth in the foster care system and on average, fewer than half have access to a computer or the Internet and the technology required for their educations, iFoster co-founder Reid Cox told the county.

Foster parents, are paid 64 percent of what it costs to house, clothe and feed the children in their care, Cox said, making computers and wireless connections out of reach for many foster families.

Contact Lisa Vorderbrueggen at 925-945-4773, lvorderbrueggen@bayareanewsgroup.com, www.ibabuzz.com/politics or at [Twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen](https://twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen).