

Alexander City Outlook

January 8, 2002

\$2 MILLION WORTH OF COMPUTERS COMING TO STATE

By Stephanie Rebman

Over the next year, the Beaumont Foundation of America will be allocating \$1,987,200 worth of Toshiba computers to Alabama's schools, community organizations and individuals.

Alexander City has several schools, groups and individuals that can benefit from the grants, which are a part of the foundation's nationwide effort to provide information access for everyone.

Alabama is one of the 21 states that are receiving the Community, Education and Individual Grants in 2003. The remaining 29 states will receive the grants in 2004. Overall, the Beaumont Foundation will be awarding \$350 million worth of computers across the United States.

"This is such a massive operation that we have to divide it into two shifts," said Beaumont Foundation Spokesman Mark Sanders.

The \$350 million came from a class-action lawsuit against Toshiba, an electronics corporation. Toshiba had to pay \$2.1 billion in the settlement; however, there was \$350 million left over, and the judge and lawyer decided to create a foundation for the money.

The Beaumont Foundation has formed alliances with companies that have divisions and many participants in the Alexander City area, including the Boys & Girls Club of America, Boy Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of the USA. Each organization has the opportunity to apply for computer hardware if they fit the requirements.

Lt. Gov.-elect Lucy Baxley said the initiative will benefit many people in Alabama.

"I am excited about this program which benefits Alabama's children and working families without placing another burden on the taxpayers," Baxley said.

"Accessibility to today's technology and the knowledge of how to use it can only help our state in its' effort to provide the best all-around education possible. I commend the Beaumont Foundation for their commitment to digital inclusion."

Sanders explained the process of how Alabamians can receive the grants.

"We are accepting applications from now through March 31, and we will have an

award announcement around the end of March,” Sanders said. “We will deliver equipment in the fall around August. \$1.9 million in computer hardware will be awarded to groups in Alabama.”

There are several types of groups that qualify, according to Sanders. Non-government, community-based groups that serve those in need are eligible as well as educational schools of any type from Kindergarten through 12th grade and individuals over 18 who are in need.

“An example of an individual in need would be a poor single mother who wanted to get a computer for her child and couldn’t afford it on her own,” Sanders said. “\$1.9 million worth of computers is a lot of computers, and it is a wonderful, once in a lifetime opportunity.”

The Beaumont Foundation wants every child to have access to computer technology according to the Foundation’s Executive Director W. Frank Newton.

“I’d like to see to it that there is not a child in this country who is denied access to a computer, nor is there a child in this country who has access to a computer but does not have a teacher who can teach him how to use it,” Newton said.

In order to get the word out that organizations and individuals in Alabama have the opportunity to receive free computer hardware, the Beaumont Foundation has a national advertising campaign that primarily consists of print publications.

In 2005, the Beaumont Foundation will award grants to Alabama again. The foundation can only provide computer hardware; however, they have teamed up with various companies to form alliances that can provide assistance with the computer hardware.

“We have teamed up and formed partnerships for three reasons,” Sanders said. “One is that the companies can help get out the word that we have computers available. Two, if these companies are eligible for the computers, they can take advantage of the opportunity. Three, many of these companies have the technical support that needs to go with hardware and people that know the ins and outs of computers and can work with them.”

The Beaumont Foundation formally began the Alabama program on Tuesday with Baxley in Montgomery. To access information on the program or apply for computer hardware, contact the Beaumont Foundation at (866) 505-COMP or www.bmtfoundation.com.