

## Rotary clubs welcome generous GPRC computer donation

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Local Rotary clubs are teaming up with GPRC to lend a technological hand to students in a Central American country.

On Monday, the college donated about 50 of its computers to Rotary District 5370 – which includes the Sunrise, Grande Prairie, Swan City and Rotaract clubs – as part of a project that will send them to classrooms in Belize.

“(Belize) is so poor but it’s also so young,” said Connie Korpan, an instructor at GPRC and Sunrise Rotary Club member who organized the computer donation. “If there is a way to improve the opportunities of a country like that and to improve their educational opportunities, then there is real hope for that country.”

Korpan came up with the donation idea recently after spotting computers being replaced in various labs and offices around the college. She approached the college’s computer department about the possibility of giving the old equipment to the Belize project.

About 50 computers are part of the first shipment, but more will be available as upgrades continue over the next months.

Although the computers are no longer suitable for use in GPRC classrooms where the most up-to-date programs are used or taught, with some repairs and upgrades provided by Digital Blues of Grande Prairie, they will be serviceable and useful as an educational tool in Belize classrooms.

“You can actually improve the education of the youth, make them more employable, make them more competitive in the world market and this is a great opportunity to pull them out of poverty,” said Korpan. “I think it’s a way to get down to the root of the problem.”

Nicole Baker, president of Sunrise Rotary club, said she was overwhelmed by their luck at finding so many computers at once.

“I had collected about 20 from clients that no longer wanted their systems or other sources, but to get 50 at a time and be told today there’s probably more coming – it’s a incredible thing,” said Baker.

“I think (students in Belize) will be thrilled, seeing as right now they hardly have a desk. It will be an incredible thing for them.”

For the three-year Belize project, Rotary District 5370 is trying to get together 4,400 computers for the first year to be delivered.

“Once they are all together, we are hoping in May we will be able to ship them down,” said Baker.

The computers will be sent off with a team of Edmonton teachers who will be going to Belize to train teachers there and also provide workshops and curriculum materials to have them equipped to work with the technology.

Baker said this will be the most expensive donation to be sent off to overseas from Grande Prairie rotary clubs. Because the time and effort are all voluntary, the Rotary clubs have to deal with only the shipping cost.

“I am hoping next year I’ll be able to get down there and give some tech support and get everything up to speed with the computers,” said Baker.