

St. Odilo Catholic School

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September 1, 2001

Tech Corps Wisconsin, Inc.
1321 Racine Street
Racine, WI 53403

Dear Tech Corps,

At a recent meeting of the Saint Odilo Technology Committee, Chairperson Deborah Gorchos paused and reflected on the role Tech Corps has played in our efforts to bring computer-enhanced education to our school children:

“Do you realize our lab has been equipped nearly 100% by Tech Corps computers? We’ve got to find some way to show more support and gratitude for all that Mike and his team have done for us.”

We pledged to devote the proceeds of a fundraiser (a future “Burger King Nite”) to the Tech Corps group, even though we felt that wasn’t quite enough. But it’s been tough, working without a budget and around the schedule of some very busy, but dedicated volunteers. It’s been so tough that, without the startup infusion of aid and hope from Mike Pitsch and Tech Corps, our fledgling efforts to bring modern computing and networked education to our school would have stopped short. Tech Corps gave our plans the “critical mass” they needed to be carried forward. And because of the demonstrable success of our first efforts to equip our lab, our committee has been able to succeed in other areas: We’ve appealed to the School Board for a budget (and received one); we’ve recruited new committee members, with varying degrees of technical and educational expertise; we’ve conducted faculty technology skills assessments; we’ve provided faculty workshops in educational technology; we’ve built a new lab with the electrical capacity to run all the computers at once; we’ve begun to plan big in shaping a technology-enriched curriculum--and the list goes on.

Deborah Gorchos’s reflection was made in May, in reference to Tech Corps’ donations of last year. Little did she know that in a matter of weeks, Mike Pitsch would be contacting us all again with an offer too good to be true: twenty-five higher-end computers that would enable us not only to upgrade and complete our new lab, but also provide some computers to each classroom teacher. Because of the high quality of the machines and Tech Corps’ need for support, Mike asked for a modest donation, \$50 per machine. We jumped at the chance because now, as a committee with a track record of success, we had our budget, we had the trust of the school administrators--and we had a great desire to provide more financial assistance to Tech Corps. So we were able to get

"Committed to the Development of the Unique Gifts of Each Child."

the machines, finish the installation of our new lab, and shift our focus as to how the new machines would be used.

Our eyes have long been on the “how” computers can be used in education, but till now it’s been premature to focus on specific plans. I am now pleased to say that in a few weeks Saint Odilo School will not only have its first Internet-connected lab--it will have a pilot program for networked learning and teaching. Through a partnership with Saint Xavier University’s School of Education, the school will benefit from the development and implementation of a middle school, network-based language arts unit of study. A team of three pre-service teachers from Saint Xavier have developed and will teach a nine-week unit implementing an online reading-writing workshop. The planned activities include the posting of dialogue journals on class bulletin boards, MOO book talk discussions employing the “Literature Circles” methodology, the building of a class Web site, and the creation of a Web-based literary magazine on the novels read. The team will write up their curriculum as a part of a university assignment, but they will leave Saint Odilo faculty all the materials and resources they develop so the school can build on the innovations of the pilot project.

Randy Bass, the architect of the Crossroads Project (<http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads>) that has inspired many educators with the promise of technology’s role in education, has emphasized time and again the intense and extensive collaboration that is required for technology projects in education to move forward. The assistance that Saint Odilo has received from Tech Corps is a perfect illustration of the fruits of collaboration, built on a foundation of generosity and good will. We wish we could do more than make our modest donations and say thank you very loud. Perhaps with time, new opportunities for collaboration will present themselves and help balance the equation. Till then, we want to shout to Mike, and all the excellent people of Tech Corps: THANKS!!

Sincerely,



Angelo Bonadonna
St. Odilo Technology Committee