

## Free Is Just Another Word for Lots of Work to Do (with thanks to Kris Kristofferson)

*By Benjamin Burenstein, Program Administrator, Public Computing Centers*

Philadelphia-born comedian, actor, writer, producer and businessman Kevin Hart, decided to give back to the city that “made me who I am”. Mr. Hart’s generously donated 300 portable computers to District schools and 200 Sony All In One VAIO® desktop computers to Philadelphia Parks & Recreation to be distributed to 27 recreation centers. The Office of the Mayor requested OIT to deploy them as quickly as possible.

Working with John Piller from PPR and KEYSLOT Administrator Ben Burenstein to identify sites, the End User Services Group managed by Calvin Walker sprang into action to accomplish this challenging task. Recently hired Israel Ortiz, who as a former Computer Instructor at the Rivera KEYSLOT understands the world of the rec centers, went to the identified sites and performed inventories that reflected each site’s current status and needs. Armed with these insights, Ramone Edmunds, Michael Wise and KEYSLOT Coordinator Kevin Heller headed out to remove and decommission outdated computers (some more than 10 years old!) and replace them with Hart’s donated ones.

Work has been proceeding at an amazing pace, considering the challenges associated with rec center operating hours and the high-energy demands related to ongoing programs. None of the deployments have taken more than two days, and along with decommissioning and deploying, the team has been taking care of customizing many of the computers to make sure they work with PPR printers and software. (For instance, Carousel House, a recreation center that serves many individuals with autism, requested installation of a specific desktop designed to be less distracting.) In little more than two weeks, they have installed 68 computers at seven rec centers, and there are lots more scheduled for the next two weeks.

“I love my beautiful new computer,” says Erica Young, Facility Supervisor at Carousel. Susan Slawson, First Deputy Commissioner for Recreation, said, “This gift will help thousands of young people gain necessary technology skills, bridge the digital divide and provide access to computers that otherwise wouldn’t exist,” and it couldn’t have happened without the partnership of OIT and PPR. Kudos to the tireless and skilled deployment team and others at both departments who helped get this project done above expectations.