RESOURCE CENTER

*User's groups can play an important role
in promoting computers in education, and you can get
the ball rolling with these suggestions.*

By MARGARET MORABITO

In last April's Resource Center, I discussed various ways to obtain low-cost educational software. That article struck a chord, and many readers have sent letters of thanks. I suggested at that time that user's groups could make an important contribution to promoting the use of good, yet affordable, programs by evaluating public domain educational software and distributing their findings to schools and parents.

In response, I heard from Dr. Robert Agostino, a professor at Duquesne University's School of Education in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Robert is an ardent Commodore user and is active in the Pittsburgh Commodore Group (PCG), where he's the software librarian.

Agostino says that user's groups can help in many ways to promote educational use of computers within their groups and within the community. For example, school districts using Commodores often maintain lists of the educational software their schools use. These lists can be collected by user's groups and made available to parents who want to use a computer at home for education. PCG has compiled a five-page list of such materials from the Pittsburgh-area schools.

The PCG has also been instrumental in evaluating the CBM educational software series that I mentioned in my April column. Club members Dan and Nora Siewiorak have classified many of the programs in the series according to grades K, 1 and 5 and have compiled a disk based on this classification. The disk was offered by PCG as a disk of the month, and it's now helping parents figure out which programs do what for a given grade level.

Agostino points out that many user's groups get so caught up in mainstream activities, such as monthly meetings, BBSs and local computer shows, that they relegate education to the back burner. However, education should be a mainstream activity of user's groups, and it can easily be incorporated into existing group activities. All you need are some members with time, energy and interest in education.

Here are some educational activities PCG has undertaken. Your user's group can implement similar activities to promote computers in education.

DONATE PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE

One of my goals for the Resource Center has been to disseminate free and low-cost public domain educational software to teachers and parents, and user's groups can do the same.

Like many user's groups, PCG has a library of programs it sells to its members for low prices. Periodically, the group donates selected disks to educational institutions. Their first major donation was to the famous Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh, to enhance its newly established software lending library. Your user's group can play a similar role in helping local libraries establish software collections by following leads for public domain software. PCG has also presented educational software to several local children's centers and a Christian school.

FEATURE EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE AT MEETINGS

Another way user's groups can promote computers in education is by featuring educational products at their meetings, along with the usual business, programming and entertainment products. Agostino's group sent for copies of the Resource Center's public domain education disks last year. Members immediately acclaimed two programs from Volume I—Lexikos, by Robert Croswell, and the Junior High Math Series, by Ricky Brewer, a junior high teacher. (By the way, I now have an updated version of Lexikos.) These disks were featured by PCG in a demonstration at one of their meetings and in a write-up in their monthly newsletter. Copies of the programs were also made available to members.

Commercial software can be featured at meetings, too. Agostino points out that some of the larger user's groups attract commercial software sales representatives who come to demonstrate their wares. Such companies should be encouraged to stress the educational applications of their products.

Many programs that aren't tagged as "educational" have educational merit. PCG members are on the lookout for latent learning possibilities in game programs. For instance, they've noted that Tass Times in Tonetown (reviewed in *RUN*'s Software Gallery, February 1987) has potential for developing vocabulary and skills in gathering evidence and making inferences.

INVOLVE CHILDREN IN CLUB ACTIVITIES

User's groups should look for ways to involve children in club activities. For instance, youngsters can gain experience in speaking to groups by giving software demonstrations at monthly meetings, thus perhaps inspiring adults in the audience who are new to computing to try new software.

Agostino further suggests that children get involved in newsletter production, perhaps by helping to fold, staple and label the finished product. This kind of activity brings young people into contact with adults, as they share in a project of benefit to the whole group. Says Agostino, "There's no better social studies lesson about democracy in action than a good newsletter production team on folding night!"

Helping to serve refreshments at meetings is another way to incorporate children into group activities. They'll learn about selling, handling money, maintaining inventory and records, serving food in a sanitary manner and even cleaning up. PCG "coffee kids" earn money for their work and sometimes use it to buy their own software from the club's store and library. Furthermore, they're recognized by the club at meetings and in the newsletter—a powerful motivator and confidence builder.

ASSIST TEACHERS

Teachers are certainly aware that computers can help in educating their students, but many still need guidance ►

and training in computers and the use of software. Your user's group can be a valuable support vehicle for local school teachers who are interested in learning about computers. This support might consist of sharing software from the public domain, doing demonstrations for teachers and students, and recommending commercial and public domain programs of merit.

The PCG has found that three kinds of commercial programs initially attract teachers to computers: Print Shop-type programs and those that create word-search and crossword puzzles. Once teachers get interested in the applications of these programs, they quickly move on to more sophisticated software, such as word processors, database managers and programs for specific areas of study.

User's groups can play an on-going role in promoting computer use in local schools and educational computing in the home. If your group isn't active in this area yet, get it started with some ideas from the Pittsburgh Commodore Group.

The Pittsburgh Commodore Group is offering Resource Center readers its Siewiorak CBM educational disk for grades K, 1 and 5 ($4) and its five-page list of educational software used in schools (44¢). To get them, write to PCG, PO Box 16126, Green Tree, PA 15242. You can contact Robert Agostino on QuantumLink under the name Robert A17, or by letter at 701 Reamer Drive, Carnegie, PA 15106. ∎

If you're using Commodore computers for educational purposes (at home or in school)

and would like to share your experiences through the Resource Center, write me a letter detailing the equipment you're using, subject areas you teach, grade level or age of your students, software you're using and any other information you feel like including.

Also, if you'd like to donate public domain educational programs to the Resource Center for sharing with other educators or parents, please send along a disk with a brief description of the program. Send correspondence and disks to:

Margaret Morabito
Resource Center
c/o RUN Magazine
80 Elm St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

You can also leave mail in my on-line mail boxes: CompuServe (70616,714) or QuantumLink (MARGM).

MAGIC

§410 IS THIS YOUR EXIT?

When I add a menu to a program I'm working on, I include a Quit option. I also put in Print statements to remind me of lines I'll need to change, the values of variables, and so on. When I'm finished with the program, I remove any statements I used while I was debugging. By putting this option's code at the end of the listing, deleting such lines will not disturb the order of line numbers in the main program.

—BOB DAY, MONROVIA, CA

§411 SIMPLE NO-PROMPT INPUT

Once in a while, the question mark prompt gets in the way when I'm using the Input statement. My two-liner puts an end to this pest:

```
10 PRINT "PLEASE ENTER YOUR NAME":PRINT ":";
20 OPEN1,0:INPUT#1,N$:CLOSE1:PRINT
```

The Print statement at the end of line 10 prints a prompt, but you may drop the line if you wish. The Print statement in line 20 moves the cursor to the next line when you're done with the Input statement.

—DAVE BIUNNO, JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY

§412 NO-SCROLL KEY DISABLE

You can disable the no-scroll key on the C-128 by entering POKE 247,PEEK(247)OR64.

—DAIHUNG DO, EAST MOLINE, IL

§413 SPELLING PRACTICE

Students of all ages will enjoy this program as they improve their typing, spelling and word-recognition skills. It should run on any Commodore computer.

A word from the word list is displayed on the screen in turn, then wiped out, and the student types in the correct spelling. The program displays any misspelled word to give the student a second chance before advancing to the next word.

To change the word list, enter your new words in the Data statement in line 200 of the listing. Add extra Data statements to accommodate additional words. To save the listing in 128 mode, list the directory, move the cursor to the filename, enter DSAVE"@FILENAME": and press the return key. For 64 mode: SAVE"@FILENAME",8: and press return.

```
10 REM SPELLING PRACTICE-JOE CHARNETSKI
20 INPUT"{SHFT CLR}DISPLAY SPEED 1-12";S
30 READW$:R=1
40 PRINT" {SHFT CLR} {CRSR DN} {CRSR DN} {
   CTRL 9} "W$
50 IFW$="END"GOTO150
60 X=1:FORZ=1TO1400-50*S:NEXT
70 FORZ=1TO10:GET A$:NEXT
80 T=T+1:INPUT"{SHFT CLR}{2 CRSR DNs}THE W
   ORD IS";A$:PRINT
90 IFA$=W$THENW$="<<OKAY>>":C=C+1:R=0
100 PRINTTAB(13)W$"{CRSR UP}"
110 FORZ=1TO150:NEXT:X=X+1:IFXAND1GOTO100
120 IFX<12THENPRINT"{CTRL 9}";:GOTO100
130 IFRTHENR=0:GOTO40
140 GOTO30
150 PRINT"{CRSR DN}RIGHT=";C
160 PRINT"{CRSR DN}WRONG="T-C
170 INPUT"{CRSR DN}WANT TO PRACTICE MORE (
    Y/N)";K$
180 IFK$="Y"THENRUN
190 PRINT"{CRSR DN}BYE..."
200 DATA ACCOMMODATE,WEIRD,SUPERSEDE,PSYCH
    OLOGY
999 DATA END
```

—JOSEPH R. CHARNETSKI, DALLAS, PA