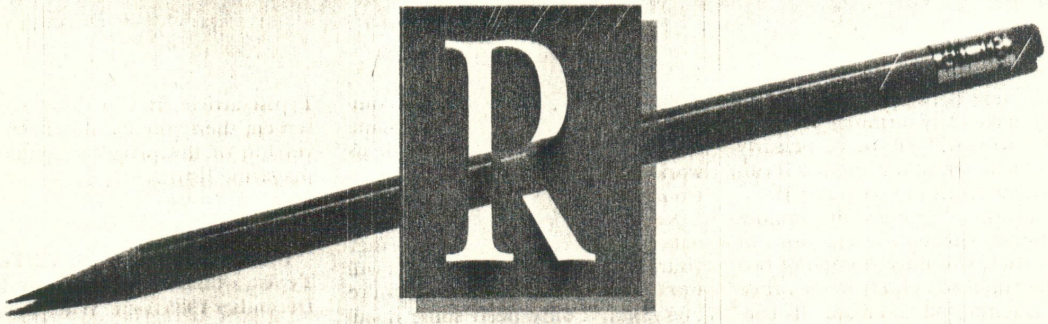
THE RESOURCE CENTER



By MARGARET MORABITO

This month—two Commodore support services; Commodore's third-party developers; the Young Astronaut Program; new online education SIG.

I often get questions from people wanting to know what Commodore actually does to support education. Recently, I spoke with Commodore's key educational people to find out what the company is doing in this area.

Many educators have asked whether or not there are support services for teachers using Commodore computers. Pat Walkington, Manager of Educational Marketing at Commodore headquarters in West Chester, Pennsylvania, told me that Commodore does indeed provide a good deal of teacher and system support. They have two primary service support programs to help schools set up their own computer classes and maintain their equipment.

Commodore-Authorized Education Dealers

Commodore has over 100 authorized education dealers across the nation. (A list of them is included at the end of this column.) These dealers have personnel trained to handle school needs. They can advise schools as to what Commodore hardware they need to buy and recommend the software appropriate for particular courses.

In addition, these dealers are all required to have a Commodore service department, so a school that purchases equipment from one of them can rely on that dealer for service and maintenance.

Commodore gives these dealers special hardware discounts, which are then passed on to school customers. Educators are thus better off buying from these dealers than from mass merchandisers, because of both the low prices and the support services they so badly need.

School Service Program

What about those schools in remote areas that don't have a local authorized education dealer? What do they do? To address this problem, Commodore implemented their School Service Program last year.

This program is run from Commodore's West Chester headquarters. Any school district or regional service agency (such as BOCES in New York) is eligible for training in the maintenance of its Commodore equipment. The training is free, but the school district or agency must pay for travel costs and the training materials used.

After the service training, your staff member can order parts for the school's equipment directly from Commodore or from any authorized education dealer.

To qualify for this training, your school district or regional service agency must own at least 100 Commodore products. This may include computers, disk drives, monitors and other peripherals.

Pat Walkington told me that there had been tremendous response to the School Service Program from school districts across the country. The classes are always filled. Each training session, by the way, lasts for a day and a half, and new sessions are held monthly.

For more information on the School Service Program, contact the Education Department, Commodore Business Machines, 1200 Wilson Drive, West Chester, PA 19380, or call 215-431-9100.

Support for Third-Party Software Developers

In addition to these two service programs for schools, Commodore also encourages continued production of quality C-64 and C-128 educational software through its support of third-party software developers. Much of this support comes in the form of promotional efforts. At education conferences, Commodore invites software producers to exhibit their products in its booths and provides computers so they can demonstrate their software at their own booths.

Commodore also advertises third-party software, and is currently distributing a new list thereof at educational trade shows. This list comes directly from EPIE (Educational Products Information Exchange) and includes a description of each program, along with its title, subject matter and appropriate grade level. The computers covered are the C-64, the C-128 and the new PC-10, which is IBM-compatible.

Another new project involves the

Photo 1. Students at the Winchester elementary school (see Feb. 1986 issue).

bundling of educational sampler disks with its C-64s and 128s. This directly benefits every new user. Commodore is putting some of the best software from the educational market on these disks, so you can see what a commercial educational program does before you buy it.

They are beginning this new project with samples from MECC (Minnesota Educational Computer Consortium), which makes approximately 22% of all educational software now in the schools.

Young Astronaut Program

Commodore also contributes to education by sponsoring national education projects. A major example of this is Commodore's backing of the Young Astronaut Program. I spoke with Dr. Daniel Kuntz, former director of Commodore's Education Division and now on loan from Commodore to act as the national launch director of this program.

According to Dr. Kuntz, there are over 5000 chapters of Young Astronauts throughout the U.S., representing about 20% of all of the nation's school districts. There are also 34 chapters in foreign countries. Commodore's sponsorship of this program includes promotional efforts, donations of equipment and software and developmental costs for software products and curriculum materials.

What is The Young Astronaut Program? It was developed to encourage the study of mathematics, science and technology in elementary and junior high schools. The program supplies curriculum materials and project ideas to help teachers integrate the study of math and science into non-technical subjects such as language arts, history, social studies and art. The materials also enhance existing math and science courses. The theme behind many of these curricular materials is our exploration of space.

Teachers will be interested in the fact that membership in the Young Astronaut Program costs only $20 per year per chapter (with up to 30 members each), and for this fee they receive lesson plans, wall charts and other helpful teaching aids. Members get a monthly newsletter concerning our space program, activities of other chapters, contest information and sponsored field trips to launches and summer camps.

There is also an on-line information network, AstroNet, which members can log onto without charge. AstroNet is accessible through Tymnet and includes features such as monthly space updates from the National Space Institute, a serialized space story called "Space Camp Alpha" and chapter news.

Commodore has also developed software for the Young Astronaut Program. Dr. Kuntz mentioned a new program, Word Shuttle, which is an icon-based word processor for elementary school students.

If you're interested in more information on the Young Astronaut Program, you should contact the Young Astronaut Council, PO Box 65432, Washington, DC 20036.

The Resource Center On-line

I receive letters from teachers, parents and community groups all across the U.S. and Canada who are using Commodore computers for educational purposes. You all have interesting and important contributions to make, and I would like to share

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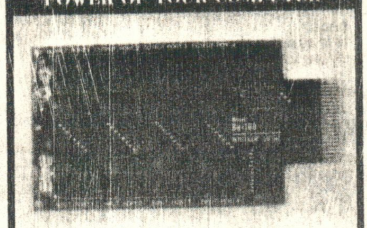

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The Resource Center

Photo 2. Students using C-64s in the Augustana College music lab, as described in the May issue.

all of your experiences with others through The Resource Center.

Because there's been so much interest in The Resource Center and because we're limited to only 12 columns a year, I am using telecommunications to get information out to you more quickly. The Resource Center will now also be on QuantumLink for those of you who want to communicate via modem with others who are using Commodore computers for education.

This on-line education SIG (special interest group) will be an extension of The Resource Center in *RUN* magazine and will act as a clearinghouse of information from you, from Commodore, and from national and state education departments. The information will apply to all educators who are looking for advice on how to use computers in the classroom, at home, and in the community, and it will specifically address Commodore computers.

There will be a software library for downloading programs that have been written and tested by educators; public message boards for asking questions, giving answers and otherwise sharing information; and databases of articles and reports on computers in education. There will also be regular on-line conferences, run by myself and guest speakers, in which you can all participate.

If you'd like to contribute your own materials to the software and article databases, please send them to me on disk here at *RUN*. All programs should include the intended user's age or grade level, the subject area covered and how you have been using the programs in your school or home.

Articles (without programs) that discuss your experiences using Commodore computers for education should be sent on disk as a Commodore word processor file.

All materials should include your name, the name of your school and an address. That way, if you don't have a modem, people can contact you via regular mail. (For those of you who already have a modem and are members of QuantumLink, you can upload files to me on-line.)

The materials you contribute will benefit a great many people, will be considered part of the public domain and will be made available only through The Resource Center. We cannot pay for these materials.

I encourage all of you to join this on-line SIG and to continue to contribute your experiences and advice to The Resource Center—whether in *RUN* or on-line. For information about QuantumLink, contact Quantum Computer Services, 8620 Westwood Center Drive, Vienna, VA 22180.

More calls for help

By the way, I am getting many requests for curriculum guides to help schools start integrating computers into their courses. Some of you have already sent me copies of what your school is using. I would like to collect as many curriculum guides as possible, to share with other interested schools. If you've created a guide that you'd like to share with others, please send me a copy.

Also, I'd like to include more photos of students using Commodore computers for education. Please send along such photos and a brief description of the software and the Commodore hardware system being used. I'll try to include these in The Resource Center whenever possible. R

If you are using Commodore computers for educational purposes (at home or at school) and would like to share your experiences through The Resource Center, write me a letter detailing the equipment you're using, the subject areas involved, the age or grade level of your students, software you have found effective and any other information you feel like including. Send letters to:

Margaret Morabito
The Resource Center
c/o RUN *Editorial*
80 Pine St.
Peterborough, NH 03458

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

List of Commodore's authorized educational dealers.

ALABAMA

ABAX Data Systems
2806B South Memorial Parkway
Huntsville, AL 35801
205-536-7292

Universal Computer Systems
3662B Airport Blvd.
Mobile, AL 36608
205-343-7597

ARIZONA

Copperstate Cash Register
3125 E. McDowell Road
Phoenix, AZ 85008
602-244-9391

Dean Computers
1115 S. Waldron Road
Fort Smith, AR 72903
501-452-7985

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2201 Washington Ave.
Conway, AR 72032
501-327-1375/3315

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10225 Barnes Canyon Road
San Diego, CA 92121
619-455-6114; 800-368-0011

Century Computer Systems
1040 E. Whittier Blvd., Suite 102
La Habra, CA 90631
213-697-6977; 213-694-8426

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