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\$100,000 Grant Brings the Future to Special Education in Marin

Special Education in Marin County is getting boosted into the future with a huge infusion of the newest technologies available, opening new learning opportunities for students, families and educators.

The Tech Resource Center Marin has been upgraded with a \$100,000 investment from parent group Dedication to Special Education to bring cutting edge innovations to the county's most challenged students. The official re-opening and ribbon cutting will take place on Tuesday, September 12, from 3 to 5 pm at 1055 Las Ovejas in San Rafael.

Founded in 2001 by Dedication to Special Education (DSE), the Tech Resource Center Marin (TRC) is an internationally-acclaimed program that provides and showcases what's possible in the expanding field of technology in education. It offers consultations, trainings, open labs and lending libraries for educators, parents and 4000 special education students in Marin.

Dan Phillips, who directs the TRC for the Marin County Office of Education, has been a driving force in bringing tech to special ed students from the beginning. "When we opened the TRC in 2001, there were almost no computers in classrooms, and limited software for our kids. Since then we've been able to stay cutting edge with the help of the parents of DSE, but this latest infusion really blasts the future wide open for our students, families, and educators."

A few of the new innovations include:

- Virtual reality station putting students literally into a universe of learning. For instance, they'll be able to enter a beating heart to see how it works.
- Robotics and telepresence tools that enable medically-fragile and other students to interact with their classrooms when they cannot attend.
- Eye gaze technology to enable physically-challenged students to navigate the digital world.
- Interactive technology screens that bring learning alive.
- 3D technology to create interventions and tools for specific students' needs.
- More in fields of art, music, and tech.

Dedication to Special Education is the "PTA" for special education in Marin, raising money for the TRC in addition to its grants programs: Classroom grants where special educators can request money to purchase equipment; and the brand new Site Innovation Grants designed to have a larger impact. Since 1996, it has raised over \$2.5 million for its programs, while building community for students and families. The \$100,000 TRC investment is a Site Innovation Grant.

Atria Christensen is co-chair of Dedication to Special Education and has been overseeing the project. "We see this as an investment in the future of special education," she says. "When teachers, parents, and students come here, they will walk into a space where anything is possible. Tech plays a crucial role for all our students -- with physical limitations, cognitive issues, communication difficulties, or anything in between. What happens here in this center reverberates out into all our classrooms, like a pebble in a pond."

For more information: www.specialed.org and www.trcmarin.org We are happy to arrange a private media presentation showing the center in action.

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