



Camphill School's new computer centre was opened on Wednesday 10 April and at the event were (back from left) Jeanne-Marie Botha (admin and finance manager, Camphill School), Dr Matthi Theron (principal, Camphill School), Ricus Groenewald (CAMI), Mike Chiles (member of the Computer Society of SA) and Stephen Smith (Papillon Foundation). Seated in front are Moira de Roche (member of the Computer Society of SA) and Marian Smith (Papillon Foundation). Absent: Stephan Cloete of Overberg Computers.

PHOTOS: KERRY VAN RENSBURG



Upper School pupils Mabuthi Fetu and Trimaïne Booyesen with teacher Karin von Maltzahn at work in Camphill School's new computer centre.

Camphill now just a click away from a whole new world

KERRY VAN RENSBURG

Camphill School, which offers an idyllic environment for children with special needs to develop to their full potential, has stepped into the new millennium.

The opening of Camphill School's computer centre on Wednesday 10 April was a significant event, as it is the first time the school will be able to offer their pupils computer-based education.

This computer lab project materialised thanks largely to the generosity of the Computer Society of South Africa (CSSA) and the Papillon Foundation. Mike Chiles, a member of CSSA, as well as a friend and former colleague of Dr Matthi Theron, principal of Camphill School, instigated the project, and together with Moira de Roche, also a member of CSSA, the ball was set in motion. They mobilised the CSSA, together with the Papillon Foundation, to make a

dream come true.

The Papillon Foundation provided ten refurbished computers for the children to use, and CSSA paid for additional security for one of the school's classrooms, which was converted into a computer lab, as well as carpeting, workstations and the necessary cabling to make the lab fully operational. Cecil Nurse donated 10 chairs and Overberg Computers supplied mouse pads and headsets.

Elaine Davie, PR and fundraising coordinator at Camphill School, said the last piece of the puzzle was the installation of software by CAMI, which has been specially designed for the education of pupils with special needs.

"These special needs educational programmes will open up a whole new world of experience for our learners and give the teachers an additional teaching tool for the development of the children, most of whom respond particularly well to visual stimuli," explained Davie.

Camphill School currently has 52 intellectually disabled children between the ages of six and eighteen. "More than 80% of the children are from local disadvantaged communities, where the parents are able to pay little or nothing in school fees," said Davie.

"The fees, together with a small subsidy from the Western Cape Education Department, account for less than 40% of the school's budgetary requirements. Just surviving is a challenge, let alone acquiring luxuries, like a computer lab."

Additional computers donated by the Lions Club of Hermanus and the Papillon Foundation will enable the school to put at least one computer in each classroom too. While thanking the donors at the opening of the centre, Dr Theron said the computer lab will be particularly meaningful to pupils who are unable to communicate through speech. "Through a computer they could make contact with others for the first time."