

Wicker Completes Ambitious Eagle Scout Project

Frederick Wicker, Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 100 of Bellingham and high school junior at Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational-Technical High School, believes in giving something back, especially if it will help others as he himself has been helped.

Frederick suffers from a serious case of dyslexia; in fact, his entire family—he, his parents, and his two sisters—are all dyslexic to one degree or another. He has had to cope with this disability throughout his school years, and then came a breakthrough: a software program for people with special needs that cause them to struggle to read, do research, take tests, and write. Called Kurzweil 3000, it can help students increase fluency with words, learn vocabulary, increase reading comprehension, write, acquire study skills, and take tests independently. Providing access to

“virtually any text or curriculum, including print, electronic, and web-based documents,” this program opens up a whole new way of learning for struggling readers, such as those, like Frederick, with dyslexia, those with attention deficit disorder (ADD), and English Language Learners (ELL).

The program provides both auditory and visual access to print materials. Scan a document into the system or pull up something from the web and click on a few buttons, and a voice will speak the words. Using a double highlighting device, it shows the sentence being read in yellow and the word being read in green. The user can choose a male or female voice and the speed at which the text will be read. The user can also type in his or her own text, and the software speaks each letter or word so that the user can recognize and correct any misspellings. It enables students who would otherwise find it difficult to keep up to be in control of their learning and to gain a sense of independence.

Because he was able to use this technology at Valley Tech and found it very helpful, he decided that providing it for others was the Eagle Scout project that he wanted to undertake. So he raised enough money to buy a computer,

large scanner, the software program, and the internet connection, all of which he installed as “an Adaptive Technology Workstation Featuring Kurzweil 3000” at the Bellingham Public Library. The cost was \$3,200.

Part of the money was a gift from International Power of America, where his father works, and the rest came from two bottle-and-can drives that Frederick conducted. He

even has some money left over and plans to use it to buy books on CDs for students at BMMS and BHS to do research. He has asked teachers in those two schools to suggest titles.

The Kurzweil 3000 software itself came with a special disk that contains the complete texts of scores of books—more amazing technology.

The Kurzweil 3000 integrated software has been around since 1996; it just keeps

being improved.

On May 15 the Bellingham Library held an open house to introduce Frederick and the new workstation to the public.

Both Sen. Richard Moore and Rep. Jennifer Callahan were on hand to congratulate him and to see a demonstration of the new equipment.

Frederick is the son of Maureen, a Girl Scout leader in Bellingham, and Frederick Wicker. He is in the culinary arts program at Valley Tech and upon graduation plans to continue in that field at, he hopes, either Johnson and Wales or the Culinary Institute of America.

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Frederick with his parents, Maureen and Frederick Wicker

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story & photos by DR. FLORENCE AMES
Bulletin Editor



Frederick demonstrates the program to Sen. Moore