Students recycle AUB computers for local communities in need
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While the average AUB student cannot unplug—not even for one day—from the digital world of computers, dozens of other students from less-privileged corners of the country have never switched on a computer in their lives.

To help redress this imbalance, the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), in partnership with the Computing and Networking Services (CNS) department began a Computer Recycling Program in 2009 which collects, refurbishes, and distributes discarded computers from across campus.

As a result, Microsoft dubbed AUB the official Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR), making it the second institution in Lebanon to be given this title, first granted to charity organization Arc-En-Ciel.

Not only does the initiative help underprivileged children, but it also promotes ethical values of using legal software, and beneficiaries are guaranteed to receive professionally-refurbished computers equipped with legally-installed Microsoft operating systems and software.

The computers are then distributed by CCECS to facilities and municipalities who lack funding and have limited access to computers.

AUB volunteers then repair and maintain these computers on site and, providing updates, software and literacy skills workshops, as needed.

Bassem Dghaidy, a second-year computer science major, played a key role in leading the program and was responsible for the refurbishing of over 40 PCs.

"It is very good to make use of consumer resources that have become worthless to AUB and make them valuable to other parties," said Dghaidy.

Beneficiaries include Home of Hope in Kahhale, the Bhannes Center for Brain Paralysis, and the municipalities of Marwaheen and Taibeh in the south.

"We do not get funding from the government. Some of our children cannot write because of their handicap and need assistance which only software can provide. Now that we have the computers, we can use the software. These computers are a blessing for the children," said Ramona Mosallem, a Bhannes Center representative.

For members of the municipalities, the program offers a better future to their youth. "Now our youth can do better. They can progress in their school work, and they will be able to apply for good jobs in the future. These computers will give us a better future," said Hussein Mattar, a municipality of Marwaheen representative.

CCECS aims to develop a culture of service and civic leadership within the AUB community and provide opportunities for AUB students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds to study and respond to pressing social and civic issues surrounding them.

To fulfill this mission the Center has adopted Community Service Outreach Activities, Community-Based Projects and Research, and aims to implement Community-Based Learning into AUBs curriculum.

"We are trying to invest in different types of projects and it is interesting to see the community's reaction. The Center's work is not only limited to humanitarian causes, and we are trying to help wherever needed by any means possible," added Dghaidy.