
Published Aug. 12, 2018 at 10:03PM

Redmond School District's tech interns reprogram, fix student laptops

District supervisor calls them 'superstars' for handling tech duties this summer



Redmond High School tech interns Nicholas Cantwell, left, and Josh Hair, right, both 18, work with other tech interns to take apart and rebuild computers at Redmond High School on Aug. 6, 2018. (Andy Tullis/Bulletin photo)

[Buy photo](#)



REDMOND —

When Redmond School District realized it had more than 4,000 electronic devices and laptops that needed to be programmed, fixed or scrapped for parts this summer, and not enough information technology staff to handle the workload, officials tried a new strategy: student interns.

According to Mike Nye, assistant director of instructional technology for the district, the plan has worked beautifully.

“They are more than kicking hiney,” Nye said of the four teenage interns. “I can’t say it enough of how impressed I am with their level of professionalism and skill.”

According to Nye, the district received slightly fewer than 20 applications for the tech internships, and four were chosen: incoming Redmond High School seniors Isaac Hathaway and Owen Goodrich, and recent graduates Joshua Hair and Nicholas Cantwell, who graduated from Redmond and Ridgeview high schools, respectively.

“We pretty much found a core of superstars,” Nye said. “These guys bubbled to the top, but everybody that applied for this were more than capable.”

The teens say they’re enjoying their \$12-per-hour, 30-hours-per-week summer job, which is providing valuable experience and is more pleasant than some other high school summer jobs.

“(Getting selected) was really exciting, because I’m not going to have to be working in some kind of fast-food restaurant,” said Goodrich, 17.

The interns are helping the district with many tech-related tasks, most of them revolving around the Chromebook laptops that each middle and high school student uses in class. Nye said the district ordered 2,000 new Chromebooks for the high schools, and the interns had to get them ready for classes in September. To save time and effort, the interns programmed a collection of tiny, single-task computers called Arduinos to automate the process for coding all the laptops. They simply plug the Arduinos into the laptops and walk away.

Another project involves about 2,000 old Chromebooks, some going to the middle schools and others to be stored for spare parts. The interns check each one to see which are in good condition, which need fixing, and which should be scrapped.

“Every device is different, every one has a different problem, and they are diagnosing it on the spot,” Nye said.

The interns have also refurbished computer lab computers for the middle and high schools.

If the four teens weren't helping the school district, many of these projects would have been postponed until the school year started, Nye said.

"We had such a massive summer in terms of what we needed to get done that we honestly couldn't get it all done with our team that we run every day," he said. "We just didn't have enough hands to do everything that we needed to do."

All four interns said they planned on pursuing a career in the tech field. Cantwell, 18, will attend Drexel University in Philadelphia to study computer science and computer engineering, and said he's deciding between a couple of different types of computer work. He said he has been interested in computers since he was 4, and recently built his own laptop.

Hathaway, 17, who commutes out-of-district from Powell Butte to attend Redmond High, said he got hooked into the tech world while playing video games as a kid, particularly Minecraft. In high school, he started tinkering with his gaming laptop, and eventually built his own PC this summer. He said he wants to work with artificial intelligence after college.

Goodrich said he was destined to be interested in computers, since everyone in his generation "was born with an iPhone in hand," but he always had a drive to pursue tech deeper.

"As I got older, (I became) more curious (and asked), 'Why does this work?' and not just accepting that Instagram works the way it is because magic," he said.

As an adult, Goodrich said he wants to engineer rockets for the space

exploration company SpaceX.

Hair, 18, was also sucked into the world of computers through video games, and will be studying computer science at Linfield College in McMinnville. He said working with the three other interns has sharpened his computer skills.

“The funny thing is, I’m really interested in this stuff, but ... these guys are way above where I’m at,” he said. “It was really nice to be able to learn a lot from them and use what I know and share with them.”

The teens have passions and skills outside of tech as well. Goodrich said he plays three instruments and competed at state with his baritone horn. Hathaway is a two-sport athlete — cross country and tennis — and has maintained a 4.0 GPA. And Hair, a star basketball player for the Redmond Panthers, will play hoops for Linfield in the winter.

Nye said the internship program has been so successful that he wants to expand it to the school year by having students either earn an elective credit or cash by helping the IT department during one period of the day.

Regardless of whether an IT internship is available as an elective this year, Hathaway said he’ll definitely apply to intern again next summer.

“It’s better than any other job I could reasonably expect to get around here,” he said.

—Reporter: 541-617-7854; jhogan@bendbulletin.com