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## **City classrooms make cyberspace connections**

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Items ranging from paint for school wall murals to video parenting lessons will be funded for city schools through a national Web site that connects donors with school projects.

Trenton schools are leading the state in the number of proposals submitted to the site DonorsChoose.org, and have received \$19,000 from donors through the site, officials announced at P.J. Hill Elementary School on East State Street on Monday.

DonorsChoose founder Charles Best, a former Bronx social studies teacher, praised Trenton teachers and officials for pushing for the proposals.

"Something is special about the Trenton public school community," Best said.

Trenton Mayor Douglas H. Palmer met an official with DonorsChoose and told Superintendent of Schools Rodney Lofton about the program. Lofton then encouraged schools to apply for the donations.

Palmer said he is proud that the district has had success with the site.

Lofton described DonorsChoose as a "bottom-up initiative" rather than coming from the top down.

While 22 of the 90 projects posted by Trenton teachers have been awarded donations, eight city schools also have won \$1,000 bonus awards for having five or more proposals.

Teachers post one-page proposals on the Web site, asking for supplies and material that is not available through the school budget. Donors then review the proposals and choose how to make donations, which average \$450. Best said the idea for the site came from his experience as a teacher, and from talking with other teachers who had project ideas that were blocked due to a lack of funding.

Not all projects are tied to the classroom. For example, a teacher obtained smoke detectors for children to take home and learn about fire safety, according to Lauren Siciliano, state coordinator for DonorsChoose.

P.J. Hill was chosen as the site for the announcement after leading the district with 16 proposals. School art teacher Lori Barstow applied for the materials to paint a mural "The

ABCs of Black History," which will feature historical black figures whose names begin with each letter of the alphabet.

Barstow said the project is a good example of the learning and collaboration sparked by DonorsChoose, because students will research the figures in a language-arts class and work with Trenton Central High School teachers and students who have experience with mural painting.

TCHS health and physical education teacher Ruthann Bailey has received \$513 to buy video discs to help students who are pregnant. She said the videos help girls and their families with difficult issues.

"I'm thrilled," Bailey said of DonorsChoose.

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