RESOURCE CENTER

This month: the nation's schools are gearing up for Computer Learning Month, and a teacher shares a program he wrote.

By MARGARET MORABITO

October has been designated National Computer Learning Month by the U.S. Congress. During this month, education and computer industry leaders will focus on encouraging students, teachers and parents to explore computers as tools for learning in the home and in the school. This type of focus is nothing new for many readers of the Resource Center, but it's significant to see a national movement to promote awareness of computers in education.

Here are some of the activities that will occur during this month-long event. Perhaps you can get involved in your hometown.

NATIONAL CONTESTS

The month will be highlighted by five national contests that are open to students and teachers in grades K-12, with participants classified according to primary, middle and secondary level. The prizes will include Apple IIcs computer systems (where are you, Commodore?) and educational software; certificates of participation will also be awarded. Entries must be received by the project's coordinating group no later than October 20, and the winners will be announced in November.

There will be a student essay contest for the three age groups. The essays must be less than 750 words long, and the winning entries will be published in Computer Learning Month '88 press materials.

Following are some sample essay starters for this contest.

Primary: * "In 2001, I'll use my computer to..." * "If my computer could talk, it would say..." * "Middle: * "If I invented a computer, it would..." * "Computers can help a person understand..." * "Secondary: * "In 2087, I'll use my computer to..." * "One thing I've always wanted to do with a computer, but never have, is..." You can get other essay topics by contacting the Computer Learning Month group at the address mentioned below in this article.

Two of the contests are devoted to student art. In one, the art must be completely computer-generated. In the other, the work to be done in any medium other than a computer, but its theme must address computer learning or computer use.

Another contest involves teacher's ideas for lessons. Here, teachers will submit lesson plans or ideas they've had for integrating computers into the classroom in an interesting way. The lesson plans may not exceed 1000 words, and the ideas must include objectives, materials, class time required, students' prerequisite skills, procedures, follow-up activities and references.

The fifth contest is for group projects where four or more students and a teacher have used a computer in an interesting learning situation in any subject area. The entries must include two parts: a project report of 1000 words or less and a document that demonstrates the work done for the project.

PARENT BOOKLETS AND BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHTS

In another Computer Learning Month project, the EPIC Institute is putting out a 16-page booklet called What Every Parent Should Know About Educational Computing. It suggests how computers can be used as learning tools in the school and at home, and how parents can work with schools to further their children's education. Walden Bookstores will distribute the booklet, beginning in September.

Many schools will be sponsoring "back-to-school computing nights" for parents. These events will highlight local school technology programs and offer parents a chance to use computers. They will also serve to promote community participation in funding and Katharine Borsehnik, Project Director, Computer Learning Month, PO Box 19763, Washington, DC 20036-0763; 202-225-4338.

LEARNING ABOUT MONEY

This month, I've decided to include a program listing in my column. The program, called Money, works on the C-64 and was written and donated by...
Michael McKellips of the Lexington School, 1130 W. Co Rd. B, Roseville, Minnesota. McKellips has been using C-64s in his special-education classroom for the past four years, but he’s had difficulty locating software for moderately retarded students. To solve this problem, he started writing his own.

He’s also written programs to assist teachers in managing student data and generating reports. In the future, he hopes to market a program called IEP Writer, which helps teachers generate individual educational plans (IEPs).

His Money program provides practice in recognizing coins and counting change. It’s appropriate for elementary-age students and foreign-born adults who are trying to learn our currency, as well as for its intended audience, the moderately retarded.

If you’re using Commodore computers for educational purposes (at home or in school) and would like to share your experiences through the Resource Center, write me a letter detailing the equipment you’re using, subject areas you teach, grade level or age of your students, software you’re using and any other information you feel like including.

Also, if you’d like to donate public domain educational programs to the Resource Center for sharing with other educators or parents, please send along a disk with a brief description of the program. Send correspondence and disks to:

Margaret Morabito
Resource Center
c/o RUN Magazine
80 Elm St.
Petersborough, NH 03458

You can also leave mail in my online mailbox: CompuServe (78061,714) and QuantumLink (MARGM).