Computer aid keyed up for summer

Clark students excited to offer free community help

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Students enrolled in Clark College's Computer Tech 200 course know that learning means helping people out of the toughest of technological binds. Even during summer.

For the second year, Clark's student-run computer help desk was busy enough during the academic year to now be operational during summer term as a resource for the technologically frustrated in the community.

The program, which is free to the public, gives students hands-on experience of what computer repair is like and a chance to hone their skills — all the while bringing desktops and laptops back from the brink of disaster and delivered into the hands of their grateful owners.

William Hafer, the course instructor who sees his role as more of a supervisor, said people have been told by other computer repair shops that their machine in unrepairable, but the Student Run Help Desk has been able to bring the computer back to life.

"We offer the same services as Geek Squad but at a way cheaper price," said James Panter, a student technician in the program.

Students technicians come to the help desk program with prior knowledge of computer repair and use the program as hands-on training.

"This is a great opportunity to work in a professional computer repair environment," Panter said.

The help desk's customers are split about evenly between students on Clark's campus and the general public, but the number of repair jobs from both groups is down during the summer session.

Panter, a three-term technician, is working to bring more computers into the shop by putting an emphasis on advertising the help desk's services. He hopes to fill the now sparse storage shelves with more computers in need of virus removal or general PC repair.

Panter's initiative is an example of a special project each student takes on to help the Student Run Help Desk work as a business. These special projects might include something like Panter's or something like creating a new call tracking system, a project from a past student technician.

The students said if they can't help with a problem, they are happy to point a customer in the right direction. That might also include a customer going out to buy a necessary part and bringing it back for the students to install.

According to Hafer, the 12-year-old class is taught like a job. The students see about 20 computers a week for repair during the school year, but with a lighter workload during the summer it's a perfect opportunity to have a computer repaired with a quicker turnaround.

The students said depending on the problem, a computer can be fixed and back to its owner in as short as a couple of days.

The technicians said the best way to take advantage of the Student Run Help Desk is to stop by their shop in the AA4 building on Clark's main campus, Room 110. The help desk also takes calls at 360-992-2562.