ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

World Computer Exchange (WCE) was formed in 2000 as a global non-profit education and environment organization that was to be primarily staffed by volunteers. From the beginning a core principal was that WCE works with and through vetted local Partner organizations that contribute financial matches. We recruited 250 volunteer Development Officers to help with online capacity building in tech planning and fund raising for our partner organizations.

Within three years, WCE began sending out teams of eCorps volunteers to help with trouble-shooting and training, From this we learned to improve our refurbishing and packing. We also learned that we needed to provide educational materials on the computers to be more useful when our partner organizations could not access or afford internet connections.

WCE developed an initiative funded by a grant of $200,000 from CIDA in Canada about eWaste in Latin America - based with a WCE partner in Bolivia.

In 2012, WCE began piloting special projects for girls in technology. This gradually expanded the educational content that we load in our computers.

In another few years we began recruiting and working with Field Associates in 11 countries in Africa and in Puerto Rico. They represent us locally and provide training and computer repair. This also helped us to strengthen the local foundations for our pilot girls projects. In Puerto Rico this work began supporting teacher training in computer science funded by a $25,000 grant from the Google Foundation.

At the beginning of the pandemic, our Field Associates began seeking training materials and online support for local school refurbishing clubs like we have across the USA. They also found demand for our online coding bootcamps in their countries. This required training in basic online distance learning. We established teams to develop our coding and refurbishing projects. We also worked to develop pilots of each for girls. Gradually, several of our Field Associates recruited women to coordinate the girls project in their country.

Through the years, we found it useful to work in collaboration with 25 global education and environment Strategic Allies including our working with Peace Corps Volunteers in 17 developing countries, with the United Nations in 6 developing countries, with Rotary Clubs in 18 countries, and iEARN country affiliates in 13 countries.

Throughout, WCE has increased the sophistication of our refurbishing that lead to a more reliable and robust product. We went from sending computers with no OS, to installing with Ubuntu CD (just a basic package of software) to building and cloning computers with specialized educational software to adding specialized educational software and finally to adding language based educational content.

Over the years, WCE piloted Chapters in the US, Puerto Rico, Canada, Germany, Sweden, and are now exploring one in India and several in Africa. Our work in Puerto Rico has been funded by a $100,000 grant from the 20/22 Act Foundation. WCE gradually expanded our network of interested organizations to 5,000 in 79 developing countries - almost 1,000 are formal partners.

Since 2000, 5.2 million youth in 3,650 schools, universities, youth centers and libraries have used computers refurbished by our volunteers to access the internet.

WCE computers are traditionally refurbished by volunteers in WCE Chapters in a dozen cities in the USA, Puerto Rico, and Canada. After the first few years, WCE has played a stronger role with our younger volunteers. Many have used WCE experience as a gateway to new careers. Many high school students have used WCE experience as a basis for getting summer jobs, choosing a college major, and writing college essays for scholarships.

WCE began to formalize this a couple of years ago, when we began developing school refurbishing clubs in fifteen locations in the USA. This work was funded by a $25,000 grant from the Bregman Foundation. A volunteer team began to develop training materials so that WCE can begin to expand our Refurbishing Clubs into Africa countries. Part of our future plans is to shift more of our computer refurbishing into developing countries.

WCE operates through 600 volunteers per year and operates as much as possible as a virtual organization to keep our costs low so that WCE has consistently kept fundraising expenses below 4%.

WCE has learned to build our local capacity in developing countries to develop our five services so that we can further expand each to make us stronger and more effective.

In the future WCE would like to build on our prior work to substantially grow and deepen our Inspire Girls project in countries where we have our Field Associates piloting the project.

Over the 21 years, WCE has has had the following officers:

- Board Chairs: Tom Graham, Mark Miller, Peter Hellmonds, and Suzanne Grant Lewis
- Vice Chair: Robb Rill
- Treasurers: Kevin Hull, Wayne Fritze, and Jeremy Griffiths
- President: Timothy Anderson
- Clerk: Pamela Cooney