



For Immediate Release

**Van Sickle Middle School Students
Get a Big Technology Upgrade**
Baystate grant delivers brand new computers

May 28, 2010 -- Students at Van Sickle Middle School will celebrate the opening of their newly refurbished computer laboratory, explore and test the capabilities of 30 brand-new Dell computers at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, June 1, at 1:30 p.m. at the school, 1170 Carew St.

The new PCs, which replaced 10-year old devices the students had been using, were purchased with the help of a \$25,000 donation from Baystate Health.

Van Sickle Principal Cheryl DeSpirt said the new computers will help students develop the 21st-century skills they will need to compete in the increasingly technology-intensive job market.

“Technology is ever-changing, and it is important that we stay current so that our students gain the skills they need to stay competitive as they prepare for their future in this global economy,” said DeSpirt. “We are so very grateful to Baystate Health for its generous contribution.”

DeSpirt added that the new computers are especially helpful for Van Sickle students because they are engaged in the school’s International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program. The IB Diploma Program is an academically challenging and balanced program of education, with final examinations that prepare students for success at the university level and beyond.

Students take written exams at the end of the program and present a portfolio of work that includes special projects, performances, papers and oral exams by external IB examiners. Springfield is the only school district in the Northeast to have an IB program at the elementary, middle and high-school levels.

Steven F. Bradley, vice president of Government and Community Relations and Public Affairs for Baystate Health, said he became aware of the school’s need when he visited Van Sickle in November as part of the district’s Principal for a Day program. Principal for a Day invites business and community leaders to spend half a day shadowing principals throughout the school district to get a first-hand view of the strengths and challenges of Springfield’s public schools.

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“The mission of Baystate Health is improving the health of the people in our communities,” said Bradley. “Improving health isn’t limited to physical health and wellness—to us, it also means improving opportunities for meaningful careers and lives, and strengthening our community as a whole. The students of Van Sickle are too bright and hard-working to settle for outdated technology, and we’re very happy to make this contribution to their educations. My hope is that some of these young people will become a part of our healthcare workforce in the future.”