

# Technology keeps homebound Monti student connected

**MONTECELLO** — In the spring of 2007, Monticello High School science teacher Jeanine Nielsen approached the Director of Technology Shelley Rossitto, to ask if there would be a creative way to serve one of her students, Britany Beckmann, who had recently been diagnosed with leukemia and was unable to attend classes.

Nielsen wanted to ensure that Britany would have access to the necessary classroom learning to enable her to pass the upcoming Regents exams. Nielsen was also concerned that the high school junior might not fulfill all of the requirements necessary to move into her senior year.

According to Rossitto, the school had used video conferencing and online programs in the past, but in this case, those options were not going to be enough.

After much discussion and analysis, Rossitto and her staff decided to try Adobe Connect migrated to a Moodle environment they call the Global Village. Britany just needed a computer, an internet connection and audio capability at her location. The class would need an interactive SMART Board, which most of the high school classrooms have. The tech staff ran a trial run from a remote location and to their delight, it worked like a charm!

Britany was then contacted by Nielsen who told her about the

new arrangement.

"I was shocked," said Britany. "I was afraid I would be shut out from everything that was going on and that I wouldn't hear from anybody at school. This really made me feel as if I was still a part of things and it helped me stay in the loop. It was so cool!"

Britany's first remote class was AP Chemistry with Nielsen, which met at 7:30 a.m. From her home computer, she logged into the web site where all of her handouts were made available. The tech department had supplied Britany with a microphone which added a two-way audio connection with her class. The option of having video conferencing was available, but during her intense medical treatments, Britany preferred not to use it.

Her setup allowed her to fully participate in the class. She could talk or listen and when the teacher wrote on the SMART Board it would show up on her computer screen at home. When she typed into her computer, it would show up on the SMART Board in the class. This made the classroom accessible in real-time from any remote location. In addition, all the lessons were archived so she could view them if needed.

Britany did pass all her classes and her Regents exams. Now a senior, she still does most of her work from home, but comes to



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Monticello High School senior Britany Beckmann, right, at home with her mom Kelly Carpinone. Through technology, she's been able to participate in her classes remotely.

school some afternoons to participate in the Art Club and Quiz Bowl. And like most other high school girls, she's looking forward to the senior prom. As far as plans for the future, she's still deciding if she's going to go to college to study premed or physical therapy.

According to Rossitto, Britany expressed that this experience, which allowed her to stay connected to her friends and to school, helped her immensely during her recovery.

Since this successful endeavor, district officials have made big plans for other uses of the technology. Presently, it's being used for Saturday School as part of the Regents preparation program. Future plans include adding live tutoring at night to help needy students reinforce their skills. This could strengthen the connection with out-of-school placement students, which in turn could significantly raise achievement levels. This new capability could also allow our schools to offer courses with expert facilitators, who could virtually live anywhere in the world.

Plans are already being made to connect Monticello High School's foreign language department to the district elementary schools to enable students to study Spanish, German and/or French in the lower grades, which is part of the International Baccalaureate program set to be unveiled in September 2008.