Brady visits West End House, donates laptops

By Scott Barboza, Special to the TAB | Wed Feb 25, 2009, 12:56 PM EST

- Allston Brighton - *Editor's note: the following was submitted by the West End House:*

It's not typical that anyone gets to hang out for a day with a three-time Super Bowl champion quarterback like Tom Brady, but Alejandra Antonio and her friends at the West End House Boys and Girls Club recently had exactly that opportunity.

Brady visited the Allston Boys and Girls Club branch in support of the One Laptop per Child program through the New England Patriots Charitable Foundation.

And he came bearing gifts.

Brady donated to One Laptop 1,000 "XO Laptops," which will be distributed among the organization's 31 participating countries and Boys and Girls Clubs in each of the six New England states. The Patriots signal-caller was joined at the event by MIT professor and One Laptop founder Nicholas Negroponte and **New England Patriots Charitable Foundation President Josh Kraft**.

After getting some one-on-one instruction from Brady, Alejandra said her favorite thing about the new computers was the games, particularly a Pac-Man-like maze quiz. But more than the fun applications aside, the new laptops will provide a useful and powerful learning tool for Boys and Girls Club members.

"I have a sister who's been in Africa for the past five months," Brady said in front of a captivated young audience assembled at the West End House. "She's in a classroom in Uganda, and the children there have just received their laptops. It's exciting for me to be here to show some support and create some awareness for what Nicholas [Negroponte] has done. It's an incredible vision."

One Laptop has primarily worked in underdeveloped regions across the globe, but the features of its XO Laptop are made to translate to children the world over. The laptop is a rugged, low-cost, low-power portable computing unit bundled with plenty of one-of-its-kind capabilities. The child-sized computer unfurls to reveal a color screen that even allows for viewing outdoors, allowing users to take the unit anywhere without the use of electricity. Two antennas — that give the XO a rabbit-like resemblance — provide Internet connectivity at a range that is wider than its consumer counterparts.

"Our constituency is the over 1.2 billion children in primary school around the world, half of which do not have electricity, either at home or at school," Negroponte said. "That's where we work, primarily. We haven't worked so much in the United States because we've tried to focus on countries where normal market focus would not go and try to develop a product that the rest of the market wouldn't do."

Whether it's the streets of Allston or the deserts of Africa, the laptop goes to serve one purpose: to enhance the educational experience of children through a stimulating platform.

“I’ve been blessed with many opportunities to have traveled around the world, and I’ve been to Africa, been to some impoverished places around the world, and to give children the hope and the opportunity to learn and to expand their vision of the world is extremely important,” Brady said. “So I’m hoping to continue that quest along with Nicholas [Negroponte] and to be a part of One Laptop per Child. The New England Patriots Charitable Foundation has been tremendous in setting this up as well with a lot of other people from the Boys and Girls Club to help coordinate this. It’s wonderful to be here.”

Kraft, who is also president of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston, said the laptops will provide an invaluable educational resource to the club members.

“We’re thrilled whenever our players become involved in philanthropic work as Tom has done with such conviction for One Laptop per Child and with the New England Patriots Charitable Foundation over the years,” Kraft said. “To be able to reach out to children — across the world and in our community — and to enrich their educational advancement like this is truly special.”