

Palos Verdes

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Former intern contributes to success of PVNET

By Brittany-Marie Swanson, Special to the News

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In 1995, Ted Vegvari foresaw the importance of the Internet to the communities on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. He began teaching workshops at the then newly remodeled Peninsula Center Library to locals who wanted to learn about the World Wide Web, and the response was astounding.

“I organized some people that were interested in computers to instruct at the library, and we lugged huge screens and monitors up there,” says Vegvari. “The workshops were packed.”

These makeshift workshops were the start of what is now Palos Verdes on the Net — a nonprofit technology service and education organization that operates out of the annex next to the Rancho Palos Verdes City Hall. The tech-savvy Vegvari became involved with the city of RPV when he registered the domain names of local communities in the South Bay and offered to assist city governments in the maintenance of their Web sites. RPV agreed, and in 1996 provided Vegvari with a space in which to hold his classes — while Vegvari provided all the equipment and other resources himself.

According to Vegvari, what sets PVNET apart from other technology education centers is the quality of its interns. In the year 2000, he and 16 interns built computers in the RPV City Hall, set up servers and created the city’s network.

“The interns do it themselves,” says Vegvari. “That’s how we’ve done everything. [RPV] was one of the first cities in California to stream a city meeting [on the Web]. And RPV’s GIS (geographic information system) is run by interns.”

Not surprisingly, many PVNET interns have gone on to be successful in technology based careers. David Wadsworth, a former PVNET intern, is now a video editor and producer for various television programs — including “Charm School” and “Rob & Big,” which can be seen on VH1 and MTV, respectively.

“If it wasn’t for Ted [Vegvari], I wouldn’t have the career I have now,” says Wadsworth. “He’s got a great facility over there. You have to be self-motivated, but it really is a great way to open up an avenue to a career.”

A decade ago, Wadsworth was working for Cox Cable when local producer Jim Thebaut approached Vegvari about creating a video-editing studio in RPV.

“He said to me, there’s no place to do this locally and I need a non-linear editing facility,” recalls Vegvari. “I said I’d put it together and provide interns — David Wadsworth and Bryce Stockwell.” Stockwell is another intern who also went on to have a professional career in video editing.

Stockwell learned digital animation at PVNET, and provided the animation for the pilot episode of Thebaut’s Cold War documentary. Wadsworth edited the piece after becoming familiar with the non-linear video editing systems and digital graphics that were not available to him at Cox Cable at the time. The work of both interns on the pilot resulted in the syndication of “The Cold War and Beyond” series.

In 2001, Wadsworth also assisted in the creation of “Kitchen Katastrophe,” an animated short film by PVNET interns Derrick Auyoung and Andy Huang, which won first place at the Asian American Internet Film Festival and went on to be screened at the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art. Wadsworth instructed the two students in the use of Maya, an animation software used by major studios such as DreamWorks Pictures.

Currently, as an editor, Wadsworth is working on two MTV shows that will premiere in February, including extreme motor sports competitor Travis Pastrana’s “Nitro Circus.” He repeatedly states that his success is a testament to his training at PVNET.

“I was kind of floundering [in my career],” says Wadsworth, who initially was a musician. “I really thank Ted. He funds the whole thing [PVNET], and a lot of kids that come out of there end up with great careers.”

For more information about PVNET, visit www.palosverdes.com/annex.