

Palos Verdes

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## **‘Summer School’ helps students stay on top of their game**

By Michelle Fisher, Special to the News

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It's never too early for young people to start thinking about their future career. What better time than summer for busy students to take classes combining their personal interests with the latest technology? Enter Palos Verdes on the NET, or PVNET, as it's been known for 14 years.

Former intern Derrick Auyoung, who is working on the 2009 release of "Avatar" at Weta Digital, credits PVNET with nurturing his early aspirations to become an animation pro. Auyoung started out at the Los Angeles studio Rhythm & Hues, where he worked on the first film in "The Chronicles of Narnia" series, before heading to Wellington, New Zealand — home of Weta's founder, Peter Jackson ("Lord of the Rings").

"PVNET essentially provided a sandbox for learning about the process of animation, filmmaking, visual effects and the experience of working with like-minded individuals," Auyoung said. "The great thing about this industry is that the more you work in it, the more you learn, and it's really similar to what we did at PVNET."

Game on!

The 2009 computer animation camp is offering a new component in video game design aimed at the young gamers who frequent the Rancho Palos Verdes center. Budding animators aged 10 to 18 will learn how to use Maya, the animation software used by industry professionals, alongside storyboard development, compositing, tracking, and editing audio and video.

"We've been receiving requests for the past two years from kids who are very interested in video games and want to create games of their own," said Ted Vegvari, director of PVNET. "Learning how Maya works is the first step."

Stephen Peterson, another former intern, recently was promoted to associate designer at Sony Computer Entertainment, a major force in gaming. He acted as lead game tester on "God of War II" and "Return to Castle Wolfenstein," and before Sony, worked at Activision.

Peterson said his PVNET experience provided a strong foundation in computer hardware and software. "It introduced me to really interesting aspects like sound editing and video editing that I applied to games for in-game cinematics and dialogue between

characters and for splicing scenes together. It's all very useful.”

“We’re adding the game design component because the video game market is even bigger than the movie market,” Vegvari said. “All the action movies are releasing games along with the theatrical release — take ‘Iron Man,’ ‘The Hulk,’ ‘Spiderman.’”

Peterson predicts that the line between making animated films and video games will become even fuzzier, noting, “As video games become more complex, the skills you would utilize while making a movie will become just as applicable to video games. It should be very exciting.”

### Mapping out the future

Another burgeoning profession is the focal point of a second opportunity at PVNET this summer: geographical information systems. This professional development course is designed for college students seeking careers in public planning and policy, geology, history, surveying and/or geography. The 16-week GIS course costs the same as an average college class, but four randomly selected students will receive free tuition if they apply by June 17.

“We will combine the Safe Routes for Cycling program with training on the most commonly used GIS software, ArcGIS,” Vegvari said. “College students can make a difference by improving lives on the Peninsula while adding valuable experience to their r/sum/.”

These students will develop Safe Routes GIS data encompassing RPV, Palos Verdes Estates, Rolling Hills Estates and Rolling Hills, explained Vegvari. On the way, they will gain hands-on experience converting hard copy to GIS layers, organizing geographic data, creating and editing data, analyzing GIS information and designing maps.

He credits John and Florence McTaggart for supporting the animation camp and Jack Dangermond, president of ESRI, for donating ArcGIS software to the nonprofit computer center.

Added Vegvari, “This is a perfect example of PVNET’s workforce development efforts at our new facility.”

This Saturday, PVNET is hosting an open house for its computer animation summer camp from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Annex, located below RPV City Hall. The camp will run from June 22 to July 31, with morning and afternoon sessions daily. For details, visit [www.palosverdes.com/annex](http://www.palosverdes.com/annex) or send an e-mail to [education@palosverdes.com](mailto:education@palosverdes.com).