

SMALL BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Former teacher recruits teens for web design company

BY DYLAN SKRILOFF

When Bram Moreinis created Gameface, a Kingston-based web-design company, the former high school teacher and technology director wanted to add to the economic mix of the Hudson Valley. His idea was "insourcing," a response to the business trend particularly prevalent in the IT industry known as "outsourcing." Most people know by now that outsourcing is when a U.S. company hires cheaper labor in another country to do work for them.

Instead of hiring people in India to work on his websites, Moreinis has been recruiting Hudson Valley teenagers, a demographic he is well acquainted with as a professional educator. He looks at this project on several levels - it is a great experience for these teens and young adults to apply themselves in a professional environment, this age group tends to be very creative and efficient in their internet work, and by giving them a taste of the business world at a young age, they might be more inclined to stay in the area and add to the local economy as adults.

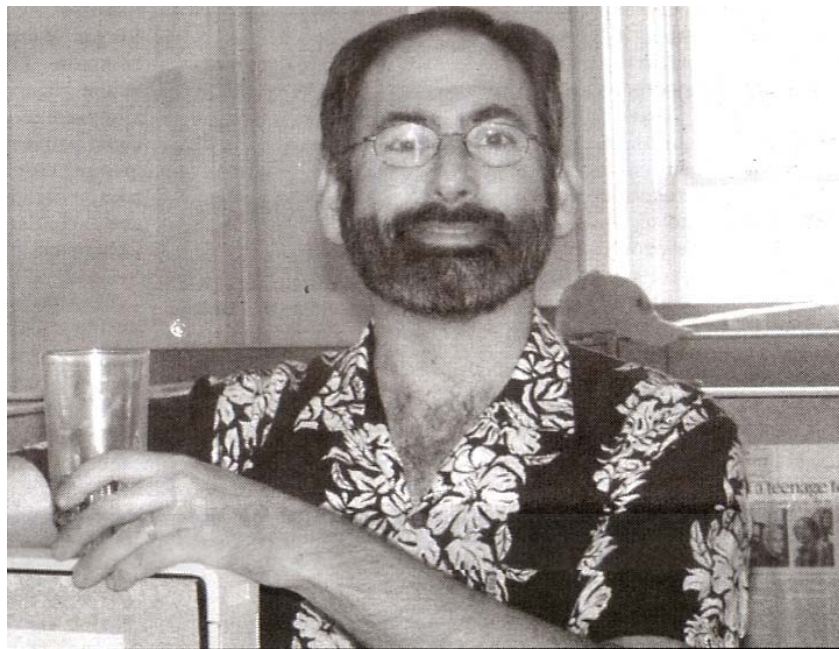
I like his idea of insourcing because there are a lot of talented teenagers here willing to work for about what it costs to outsource," 18-year-old web programmer and Poughkeepsie resident Adam Atlas said. "[Working for Gameface] is a really neat opportunity. It's an interesting job, I work with people I know and get paid well," said Atlas who already has two years of college experience at Simon's Rock in Massachusetts.

Atlas has been working with Moreinis on projects since he was a nine-year-old tech whiz showing off his skills in a New Paltz Bakery. It wasn't too long after meeting the youngster that Moreinis had him teaching his high school computer science class what he knew.

Brandon Paton, a fifteen-year-old Hurley resident, wasn't advertising his web skills to anyone, but his father accidentally landed him the Gameface gig. "My dad was going to a chamber mixer

and Bram's assistant was there. He asked if my dad needed a website and he said 'no, my son can do that.' He said, 'oh, your son would be perfect for our company,'" said Paton, who is Gameface's "search engine optimization" expert and also runs his own wehmaster's form at www.dnlodge.com.

"It's interesting and gives me experi-



ence I wouldn't get at any fast-food restaurant," Paton said of his work for Gameface. Success is already breeding family expectations.

"Everyone seems to think I'm going to become a multimillionaire. I guess they are proud of me," he added.

Moreinis, who began his career in technology education in the mid-1980's, developed a program known as Tech Scouts in 1996 that he eventually applied at several school districts and continues to this day. The program gives students who are excellent with technology the chance to apply those skills in service on the community in a real-world environment. For example students run school websites and offer tech support.

Working with the youth, Moreinis obviously has an idea of how they think. He described the economic "brain drain"

which has led him to recruit teenagers to work for his company. "You're a kid, a high school student excellent with computers. Can you find a teacher better than you? Can you find someone connected to the business world? Nope, they'll probably go to college and then get recruited by a corporate scout to a company in North Carolina that pays

value of creating work-relationships in the Hudson Valley. Many of them are brilliant. Kids know the culture of online collaboration and have time to stay on the cutting edge. When I met them they weren't being productive about it. They just know how to do cool stuff. I teach them work and business skills. When they see I can make them money, it's a whole new world for them," Moreinis said.

Another of Moreinis' talented employees is 19-year-old Benjamin Kudria. A web programmer and sophomore enrolled in SUNY Stony Brook's Computer Science honors program, Kudria met Moreinis as a ninth-grader in Taconic Hills High School, where Moreinis was the technology director. He was part of the Tech Scout program that built the school's website. He credited Tech Scout with helping to build his web development skills. Kudria also helped Moreinis start a company that preceded Gameface, called Beyond the Box.

"It was a very sound learning experience. It's been very helpful in [preparing me] for college," Kudria said of his Beyond the Box and Gameface experience. The skills he learned helped him start his own web programming business at Stony Brook, Blue Box Technical Solutions. He also credits Moreinis as being an inspiring role model.

"Those kinds of people are really difficult to find. Bram is unique, he had a personal mission to transform public schools. He was disillusioned with the system at the end of his last job and wanted to try a different approach. He liked dealing directly with students," Kudria said.

Moreinis noted that he is not entirely accustomed to running a business for profit, he was always more of an idealist than a business man. "I'm still getting used to it," he said.

To learn more about Gameface, visit www.gamefacewebdesign.com. The Hudson Valley Tech Scouts website is at <http://hvscouts.com>.

\$60,000 a year. It's either that or go back home and live with mom and look for a job. It's a no-brainer," Moreinis said.

Moreinis said the combination of kids leaving home for high-paying jobs and local companies and corporations outsourcing work to cheap labor sectors, creates a gap in the middle class that employing talented teenagers can help repair. Just because talented youths will take money for a big corporate just in North Carolina, doesn't mean they would not rather exist in a better reality, closer to home, Moreinis said. "Insourcing" opens their minds to new possibilities and new confidence.

"What's corporate America like? Think Office Space [a popular film that harshly satires corporate life]. Kids don't like corporate culture, but they'll take it for the money. I'm paying kids to see the