I was a Teenage Techie:

Don't look now, but that's a kid setting up your Web site

BY ROBERT FORD

Ulster County Press

Who do you normally call to program your DVD, VCR or high-tech sound system? A kid. And who do you call when you want to know what's going on with your computer? A kid.

That's the theory and practice behind an Uptown Kingston business, Game Face Web Design.

Begun by former educator and now entrepreneur Brain Moreinis, the business employs a number of Hudson Valley-baser. Web savvy teens that help create "cutting-edge, personalized Web sites at affordable prices," according to Moreinis.

And this isn't your typical, working at the fast food joint, minimum wage job either. Moreinis said his employees make anywhere from $15 per hour to about $30 an hour.

When he was working as an educator, Moreinis created a program called Tech Scouts, sort of a scouting program for geeks, where students are a team that develops computer related and workforce preparation skills in service with their schools.

According to the Tech Scout Web site (hvscouts.com); teens "work with teachers, peers, and mentors to identify the IT skills they will develop and master as individuals, supported by on-line learning, mini-lessons and progressively complex tasks."

As they learn more and master their computer and software skills, Moreinis gives the students the opportunity to come work for him.

Moreinis said he created Tech Scouts because too many schools were failing a segment of the student population.

"I love to find kids who are ahead of the curve, and empower them to take charge of their learning," he said. "They're bright and ambitious, but lack vehicles to find work to match their skill."

By giving the teens the skills they need to work in an ever increasing information technology world, they learn a trade that will enable them to continue to live in the Hudson Valley. Because there are so few technology literate young people in the area, many companies out-source their IT needs, mostly to India. Those that do possess the knowledge find few jobs in the Hudson Valley and are forced to move elsewhere, creating a "brain-drain," Moreinis said.

He said he's giving teens the skills they need and their fast job to develop their ability to work with adults and companies, so that when they graduate high school or college they can go to work for the companies in the Hudson Valley that need such workers but have a difficult time finding.

"So, instead of out-sourcing my overflow to India, I keep the work hem In-sourcing, I call it" Moreinis said.

"How smart are these kids? A sophomore at Kingston High runs a search engine marketing consultancy, and also hires his own coders to maintain a Web site that generates significant income through pay-per-click advertising," Moreinis said.

Moreinis' clients like working with the teens, he said. "They love it."

Supervised by Moreinis, the students work with the clients on marketing plans, creating and then maintaining Web sites and eventually working with the companies without Moreinis' supervision

"Today's `digital natives,"' which is how Moreinis refers to his employees, "have innate talent and the free time to develop it. We all teach each other and that's ho* we stay ahead of the curve. Teens haves natural affinity for the Internet It's practically hard wired into the DNA. When parents are mystified by their machines, kids get the first support call."

And now, area businesses can call upon this "teen whiz kids" to help them have their won Web sites.

"Your Web site represents you 24/7," Moreinis said. "It makes promises you will need to keep. If you're serious about what you do, your Web site has to reflect that - it's your Game Face, not someone else's."

To find out more about Game Face Web Design, go to their Web site at gamefacewebdesign.com.

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