

Computer career can be fun and games

BY CATHERINE BAUM STAFF WRITER

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EASTHAMPTON - High school multimedia publication and graphic arts students worked on various projects using programs such as Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop before Colin Matthias, a computer programmer for Dragonfly Game Design, began telling them that they already have some knowledge for a career in design.

Matthias visited the high school last week in Eileen Claveloux's publication and graphics classes, in response to a request from students.

"It's really a growing industry and I think there are a lot of new opportunities that will open up," Claveloux said.

To start, Matthias said experience working for a design company before or during college is an important step to a successful career.

"Internships are a good way to get your foot in the door," Matthias said. "I really can't stress enough how important this is."

Even a hobby, like drawing pictures, can be credited when looking for internships or jobs. Students may collect their work now in a portfolio, he suggested.

Computer games have become so popular that many higher education schools offer majors in computer science and math with some classes focusing on teaching how to make games. DigiPen Institute of Technology is a college located in Redmond, Wash., which has a focus on art, computer science and computer engineering with emphasis in creating video games. It is a high-profile college within the game industry, Matthias said. Another school he mentioned, Full Sail, of Orlando, Fla., offers programs in film, art, design, music and media production.

Besides career options, Matthias described how and why to make computer games, a popular topic among the students.

"Is there a good reason why there isn't a flight simulator for combat games?" a student asked.

Matthias answered that while many computer games are fun, they're not all profitable.

"This is also a business," Matthias said. "A company isn't going to make a game if it's not going to sell a game."

He then went on to explain the phases of game development: design, pre-production, production and testing and certification.

"I thought he gave useful insight into the career he pursued," said Tim Riley, a senior who works for the school newspaper and yearbook. "A lot of the codes and programs we've already used can be used in video game designing and you can go to a variety of schools when I thought it might be isolated to one environment."

The bell rang, and Matthias pulled out some video game discs.

"I've got some demos if you would like to stick around," he said, stirring smiles in the classroom.

He showed how Dragonfly transferred board games, like Trouble, Yahtzee and Hangman, into virtual games. Emily Nalewanski, a senior, said they would be fun to play on the computer when you don't have a group of people to play with.

Matthias left the class with his email address, asking students to contact him with any questions.

"I play games all the time and I always wondered how to make them," said Chris Korup, a junior. "He gave me great ideas and he's helping me start off. He's a good role model."

Matthias said he enjoyed answering student questions and learning about their curiosity.

John and Abigail Scholarship

Nearly 17,000 seniors, recipients of the John and Abigail Scholarship awards, in Massachusetts high schools now have free tuition to state colleges or universities. Recipients have all scored "advanced" on at least one of the MCAS exams given in math and English. They must score at least "proficient" on the second exam. They also must score within the top quarter of all students in their district. The free annual tuition averages between \$734 at community colleges and \$1,618 at the University of Massachusetts, but they must pay all other expenses themselves.

The following are Easthampton High School recipients: Andrew Ball, Christian Bourdeau, Zachary Cabana, Leslie Carriveau Peng Gao, Samantha Hannifan, Jessica Harriman, Karly Henry, Patrick Hopewell, Sae Hwang, Shaun Kelly, Courtney Krzanowski, Tyler Krzanowski, Laura Kuzmeski, Allison Kwiecinski, Jessica Laflam, Justin Laliberte, Ashley Leblanc, Heidi Levin, Jacob Lohr, Alexandra Lyman, Samantha Lyman, Brittany McLellan, Kimberly Morales, Chelsea Olson, Jennifer Orne, Alexandria Parizo, Erik Rannikko, Anne-Marie Reynolds, Benjamin Scott, Ryan Thoma, Bridget Weir, Samantha Whitman and Alicia Zimmerman.

Money for White Brook library

Shelley Wilton of Wellness Within Chiropractic held a fundraiser for the White Brook Middle School Library Fund a couple of weeks ago. She and a masseuse dedicated a day of services, in exchange for donations to buy books for the library. The day netted \$2,000.

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