

Cashing in on computer savvy

\$1,500 provincial grant will help Russelldale teen start his own business

Fifteen-year-old Brent Schneider may give computer software giant Bill Gates a run for his money.

The Russelldale teen, a student at Mitchell District High School, is launching his computer business with the help of a \$1,500 Summer Company grant from the province, which is available through the Community Futures Development Corporation of Perth County.

“He’s got passion, commitment, vision, a good business plan and a lot of energy to carry it through,” said Jaret Henhoeffler, general manager of Perth Community Futures.

Brent’s company, Schneider’s Computing & Websites, will offer a full range of services including website designing, anti-virus software and solutions, data recovery, training and repairs, just to name a few. Part of his business plan is to make his services affordable in order to compete with larger companies. He charges \$60 to fix computers while big electronics stores charge \$65 just to look at them, he said. “I like helping people out,” he said.

Mr. Schneider was the only student in Perth County to be given the grant and it didn’t come easy. He had to come up with a business plan and go through a rigorous interview with a panel of five judges. Then there was the waiting period before he got a second meeting. But once he got the good news, it confirmed hard work can product good results.

“I was kind of relieved, because I had to work so hard to write a business plan and go through the interview process. So I was relieved my hard work paid off,” he said.

Brent got his first computer when he was about 10. That’s when he first started experimenting. “I would fiddle around with stuff and see what I could do.”

His mother, Susan, said if something goes wrong with the family computer he’s the one who fixes it. So far he’s doing the work for free, she said with a laugh.

Not only is Brent good with computers, he’s got a head for business too. He did so well in Grade 9 business his teacher recommended he skip ahead to Grade 11 business next year. Brent plans to keep his business running through the school year and says if he’s too busy to help customers he’ll refer them elsewhere. Regardless of whether the business takes off, he still plans to attend college or university, with a focus on computers.

If he completes the program successfully he’ll receive another \$1,500. Brent will also have the opportunity to work with a local mentor, Jim Lynn, the CEO of the Heartland Community Credit Union.

As Brent figures out taxes and licensing, he looks on the experience as a great opportunity. "It's an experience for entrepreneurship, dealing with customers and learning how it goes. I'm only 15 and I'm learning how to run my own business," he said. The grand opening runs from July 1-14.