

Issue #14  
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## Base Camp Coding Academy

### Newsletter

Every day here at Base Camp we get to witness what is possible when people come together, decide to trust each other, and work hard towards a common goal. Those people include our sponsors, partners, instructors, students, and the employers of our graduates.

The results for the class of 2017 continue to reveal themselves. All four graduates working for CSpire as interns this summer have been offered full time positions. The graduate who is working with MTrade has received rave reviews from his managers, and this weekend we will be helping the six graduates starting with FedEx this coming Monday move into their first apartments in Collierville.

In the classroom the Base Camp students are moving quickly through the content, and building their community. Their instructors have worked with the Curriculum Committee to tweak and expand the curriculum based on lessons learned in the first year, as well as feedback from the graduates and their managers. Rather than breaking new ground every day, as they did last year, they are refining.

This can be felt in the confidence the instructors bring to the classroom, and the accelerated student progress. We are seeing excellent organization and collaboration skills starting from the very beginning, and students producing code that is clean and professional even in these early days.

This is all wonderful, and we are so pleased to share the positive progress Base Camp has and continues to make.

However, we are also reminded how tall and steep the mountain these students are climbing can feel to them. Outside of the 40 hours Base Camp requires each week, many of these students have limited or non-existent support networks. Several are self-supporting, and others assist in supporting their families. There are health challenges, transportation challenges, competing responsibilities that sap their energy before they take a run at a new and often frustrating skill set.

The Base Camp student has already demonstrated a drive and desire to change their life situation. That is what gets them nominated, and that is what they have impressed us with in their interviews. They are special, individually and in contrast to their cohort, and Base Camp exists to give them an opportunity they deserve.

The board is looking at strategies that might allow us to reach beyond the classroom when a student is at risk of being derailed. For example, if the only vehicle in the family is in an accident/stolen/disintegrates, (three different students experienced these challenges this past month,) that seems a small thing to allow to change the entire course of a life.

#### **Classroom Progress:**

The class is quickly moving through programming fundamentals, (python, data types, operations, functions, decision making, modules, methods, looping, file input/output, collections, etc.,) and recently completed their first full program application for a “gas pump”. These programs allow a user to select a grade of fuel, pre-pay or pay a

cashier, produce a report of all transactions, and refill all their pumps. This project made use of all the skills that have been covered to date, and the students are constructing their applications cleanly with a separate shell and core.



### **Classroom Visitors:**

For the first time we have had Base Camp graduates at our disposal to encourage and motivate the new class. Thank you to James H., James S., Anna, Addey, Jacob and Eddrick for spending time in the classroom sharing your experiences and acting as teaching assistants.

Bob Bortz, Nyra Washington, Beth Tanner, and Raul Cardena from FedEx came to visit the new class, introduce themselves, and deliver a presentation on the business, culture, and career opportunities at FedEx.

Sage Nichols, Bethany Cooper, and John Marsalis from Corelogic | FNC visited the class to prepare for the first major field trip, (a site visit to the Corelogic | FNC office in Oxford,) and also conducted a workshop on professionalism and proper conduct in a corporate office environment, personal branding, and goal setting.

Douglas Scarboro, the Memphis director of the St. Luis Federal Reserve, visited the class to both learn about Base Camp, and talk with the class about the many ways his organization leverages technology to improve financial transactions.



Joseph Donovan, the director of the Entrepreneurship Center for MDA, stopped by for a visit to see how the new class is settling in, and to share news about the initiatives around the state to start Base Camp-inspired coding programs.

**Field Trips:**

The class spent a full work day at the Corelogic | FNC offices, observing and interacting with different groups across the company. Two hours were dedicated to teaching logic problems and critical thinking skills that will aid them in their development journey. Each student was partnered with a developer in the afternoon to shadow the jobs for which they are training. According to the students, these trips do more to keep them motivated, to define their personal goals, than anything else. Thank you to everyone at Corelogic | FNC for hosting us!

On some of the longer, hotter afternoons we have found time for an ice cream or snow cone break, sometimes with a soccer/badminton game.

**Access:**

If you would like to keep up with the goings-on in the Base Camp classroom in between these newsletters, watch for updates to our social media sites. This fall we are looking forward to a new volunteer, Wade Meena, who will be assisting us with several projects around the office and classroom, one of which will be keeping these sites full of current images of the students in and out of the classroom.

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