Fathers and sons learn Java together

By Vic Wintriss

Learning can be fun when fathers and sons are students together. At least that is what Rod and Jared Schrock and Rick and Alex Roesler have been finding out.

When fathers, Rod and Rick, found out that their sons, Jared and Alex, were learning to write computer programs in the popular Java programming

Rod and Jared Schrock

language at Wintriss Technical Schools in Carmel Valley, they became interested in what kinds of programs their sons were writing. When they found out that the kids were writing a modern version of the classic Asteroids game, popular in their time, they could not resist the urge to join their sons in the classroom. Pretty soon, however, Rick, a former physicist now at Qualcomm, had moved on to writing an ideal gas equation program, and Rod, former senior VP at Compaq, was porting a 3-D version of Jared's Asteroid game to the new Google Android cellular telephone.

Ninth-grader Jared and seventh grader Alex both started off writing simple computer games like Pong and Tic-Tac-Toe before attempting the more sophisticated programming challenges associated with a complex game such as Asteroids under careful guidance of volunteer instructors Stanley Kurdzeil, Steve Gargan and Aaron VonderHaar. Stanley writes Java programs for the Cricket division of Leap Wireless, Steve works as a programmer for Qualcomm and Aaron is an independent computer consultant.

Wintriss Technical Schools, a nonprofit afterschool program, teaches Java to kids starting in the fifth grade with the idea that kids' lives can be changed by providing them with computer programming skills at an early age. "Our nation faces a severe shortage of qualified programmers in the next decade, providing an exciting opportunity for highly satisfying and profitable careers in the computer programming field," said Vic Wintriss, executive director and founder of Wintriss Technical Schools.

Jared Schrock, a freshman at Canyon Crest High School, has high hopes that his Asteroids program will be one of the first Google Android phone applications offered for sale on the new Google cell phone application store when it opens in February. His Asteroids programming activities, however, must be squeezed into a busy schedule that includes Tae Kwan Do (black belt), North County Symphonic Orchestra (trumpet), Canyon Crest computer class video gaming and college preparation for Stanford or Berkeley.

Alex Roesler, a student at La Jolla Country Day School, has fine-tuned his Asteroids program to include realistic, twinkling stars and wonderful bullet and asteroid explosion sounds. Alex enjoys tennis, art, forensic science and, of course, Java programming.

"Alex and Jared are both having fun learning important skills", said Wintriss. "We hope that their lives are being changed in a positive way as a result of their experiences at WTS, and that the father/son adventure will be long remembered as a fun time together."

Check out ww.wintrisstech.org for more information on Wintriss Technical School programs.