

From the Ottawa Citizen December 12, 2002 Page F4

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Photo by Wayne Cuddington



Dylan Kome spent 10 months searching for work after being laid off from Newlix. He has since set up his own home-based computer-help business.

Kome combined forces with former Algonquin College technology instructor Lynne Rowe to set up a computer-help business called Understanding Computers (www.understandingcomputers.ca) He was thrown out of work as a technical writer in

June 2001 when the Linux-based startup Newlix folded. He searched for work for 10 months before making the move on his own.

"I did all the things people are supposed to do — applying for jobs, sending résumés and working on my own Web Page site and getting very little response. I found that people's wish list for technical employees, especially technical communicators, had reached the point where they were asking for five and seven years' experience.

"Between late fall and April of this year, there was nothing, nothing, nothing. I assumed that for every five letters I sent out I would get three interviews. But I didn't even get an acknowledgement. This was knowing people in the places and giving me- tips on positions coming open and applying directly to the managers, and to personnel. People did not even answer and that was a bit of a rude awakening. It was pretty scary for a while."

By April, Rowe and Kome printed business cards and began hanging posters everywhere "Basically we started putting up signs on telephone poles in the neighbourhoods over here; which continues to be our most productive, advertising. That's been successful and for me, it's been fun. I designed the Website and it acts as my résumé. The business works in association with another home-based operation that purchases and sets up computer systems, AddNetwOrks.com. Referrals come by word of mouth and local community advertising. At the same time, Kome began writing a column on understanding computers for the community newspaper, *News West*.

The business began slowly. "It is just now reaching the point where I've had a run of weeks and I know I can make a livable salary. We are especially looking at people who in fact have more money than time. We deal with seniors, doing tutorials where I go in and do basics with them so they can understand what's going on. A lot of people have home-based businesses but don't understand their computers. They may be using Excel and trying to do spreadsheets."

Understanding Computers offers personal support services in software and hardware, repairs, upgrades, tutorials, security systems doing cleanups after virus attacks and virus scanning.

"You can go to most computer shops and they hand you a box and say, have a nice day. Generally we get a computer running the way it was supposed to in the first place."