Base Camp Coding Academy
Newsletter

There is no easy or gentle way to share this news: Last Sunday Dustin Buice, one of our students, died in a car accident. If you had the opportunity to meet Dustin you would remember a shy smile, a baseball cap worn just off center, and a dedication and excitement for learning new things. This young man spent 8 hours in Base Camp each day, split his evening time between various restaurant jobs, and waited up each night for his sister to come home so he could show her what he had learned that day, and the progress he was making on his class projects. He was an amazing young man, proud of what he was accomplishing at Base Camp, and we were so excited to see his impact on the world.

His passing has been hard on all of us, and particularly hard on the instructors and students who have been spending 40 hours together each week for the past 6 months. This is not a wound that will heal quickly, and we are making sure there is space and proper resources available for those who need it now and in the future.

Classroom Progress:
The students are racing through front-end development, and flexing their newly learned skills on all sorts of projects. (For those of you who are interested, this includes dynamic web pages, accessing remote data with JSON, APIs, DOM manipulation with JQuery, D3.js, etc.)

Peaking over shoulders in the classroom you would see a pair working on a straw poll, others working on an elaborate multi-restaurant web ordering system, (this one is a prime example of enthusiastic young learners taking a new skill to extreme levels,) a war game type of simulator, and a few re-skinning efforts around popular web sites.

Each student has been building a portfolio of their class projects, starting with the early logic and game based programs, and progressing through website builds of growing complexity. They take pride in their work, and some of their websites grow far beyond the base requirements of the given assignment. All of these portfolios are available on the Base Camp website, and each month we will highlight one here. This month's:
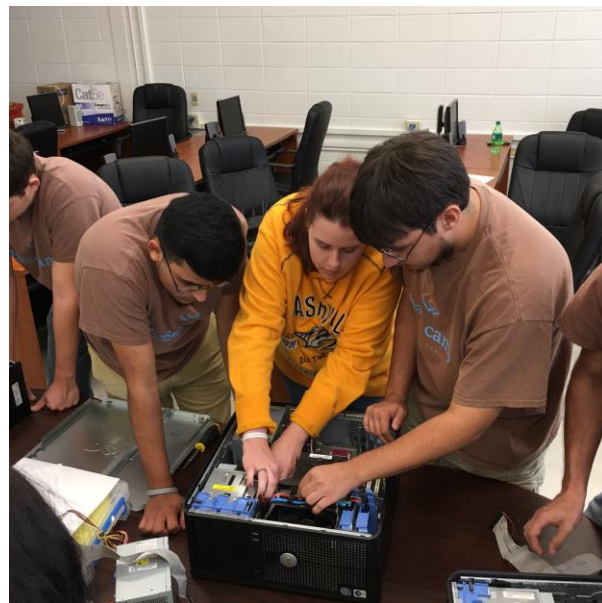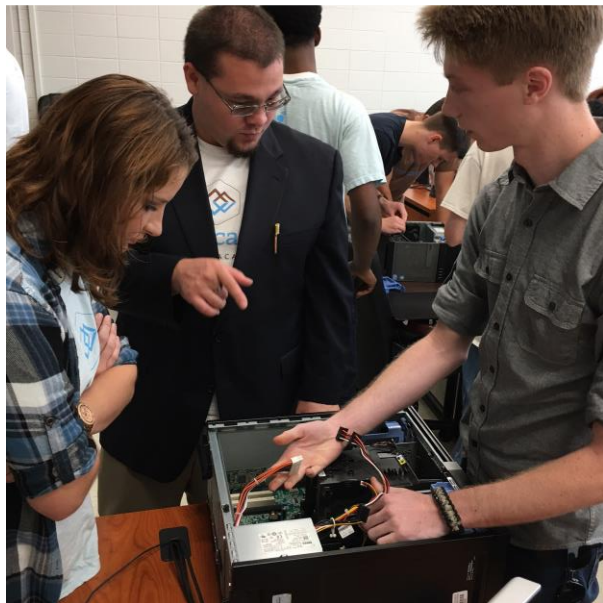https://addeywelch.github.io/new_portfolio/

Classroom Visitors:
Our open door policy continues to work swimmingly. We have seen friendly faces from the C Spire Foundation, Innovate Mississippi, the McLean Institute, and many others throughout the fall. *If you are passing nearby, please pop in to say hello, visit with the class, and be prepared to share what you do and how technology is used in your workplace.*

Field Trips:
In October we enjoyed the hospitality of Northwest Mississippi Community College and the Computer Science department. Our students were treated to a lab where NWCC students gave them a crash course on the physical components of a computer. Up to this point our students have used their computers as tools to write code and

manipulate data; the introduction to the physical and mechanical components that make their computers function was a new dimension for them. This is an important piece of the puzzle as the class continues to learn about the rest of the information technology community, and where they will fit in a complex and interdependent ecosystem.

One of our students was treated to a trip to Birmingham with his mentor from Renasant Bank, where he spent time learning how their development groups operate. It was a wonderful experience for this student, and he did a great job relating his experiences to his classmates. *If you have the bandwidth to become a mentor, with or without road-trip time, please let us know!*

Class of 2018!
Base Camp has started accepting nominations for the class of 2018, (classes starting June 1, 2017.)

This year we decided our students are a much stronger voice for what Base Camp is, and what it means to them. Each student was tasked with developing their own presentation, and they each are getting an opportunity to travel to an area school and help build next year's class. In most cases our students are presenting in the high school they graduated from this past May, to a room full of teachers who have known them for up to four years.

These presentations are wonderful, powerful, and shocking. These young adults stand up tall and proud to share what they have accomplished in such a short time, and their high school teachers are blown away. The technical skills they have achieved are impressive, but the way they carry themselves, and their enthusiasm, is what is leaving behind such a powerful message. One superintendent, after sitting through a 15 minute presentation in front of an auditorium full of teachers and students, said, "If you had told me [Eddrick] was going to stand up and say his name in front of this room, I wouldn't have believed you. When he finished his presentation, looked straight at the auditorium with his head held high, and asked, "Any questions?" I about fell out of my chair."

One of our students, after giving his presentation in front of the faculty meeting at his alma matter, ran into his JROTC crew in the hallway. With a big smile he started right back up, telling them all about what he was up to and how amazing Base Camp is.

If you know of a high school senior with a strong work ethic, a problem-solving mind, and limited education opportunities following high school, please reach out to their teachers and recommend a nomination to Base Camp.

Access:
If you would like to keep up with the goings-on in the Base Camp classroom in between these monthly newsletters, Sean does a great job posting updates to our social media sites:

https://www.facebook.com/basecampcodingacademy/
https://www.instagram.com/basecampcoding/

Fundraising Activities:
We are preparing to almost double the incoming class at Base Camp for next year. This will mean 25 incoming students. Glen and Kagan are meeting with business and philanthropic leaders across the state to make sure we have the financial resources to grow this program. *If you are in a position to provide a warm introduction, we would be very grateful.*

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