

TCS summer camp builds interest in ICT

A PILOT HOLIDAY PROGRAM to improve the ICT skills and awareness of disadvantaged Year 12 students has resulted in 70 percent of those who attended making a decision to pursue an ICT career.

At the first InsignT-basic summer camp to be held outside India, the two-week program ran during January this year as part of a corporate sustainability initiative by TCS Australia, in partnership with The Smith Family.

A dozen students going into Year 12 attended the program, which was designed to build interest in ICT careers. It focused on strengthening the core coding skills in Visual Basic, HTML and XML, providing practical training in technical support and developing the soft skills needed for effective communication and presentation.

TCS Australia provided course materials and instructors while TCS FNS provided the facilities

and computers. The program was also supported by The Smith Family, a not-for-profit organisation focused on improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children.

ACS Foundation Executive Director John Ridge was a guest speaker at the event, outlining the many career opportunities in ICT and explaining the various scholarship programs available through the Foundation and how to apply.

"It was very encouraging to see the students come alive to the diverse possibilities available to them in ICT and to start to connect these to their personal dreams," said John. "We had one student who was planning a career in construction, but who recognised the potential for ICT to open up both fields of endeavour for him. He made a decision at the event to become an ICT professional."

Not only did 70 per cent of the students who participated in the InsignT program set their sights

on a career in ICT, but TCS plans to build on its success by expanding the program in coming years.

General Manager of TCS A/NZ, Varun Kapur, encouraged the students to reinforce what they had learned at the event with follow-up sessions and mentoring.

"We urge you to continue learning and working hard, and apply and integrate what you have learned into an area that excites you," he told the students on the final day.

ICT industry icon and Chairman of TCS FNS, Neville Roach was delighted with the success of the program. "This is the first time we have run this program outside India so we're very happy to have achieved our outcomes of generating more interest in ICT careers and contributing to Australian society as a good corporate citizen." He also encouraged the students to take advantage of the offer of ongoing learning and mentoring provided through FNS.

An IBM intern makes a difference

By Claudia Santangelo

I NEVER IMAGINED I would work for IBM.

I have colourful dreadlocks down to my tailbone, a history of activism and volunteering for not-for-profits, and am known in the local Sydney arts scene for organising festivals and managing bands. However, from Monday to Friday, I am, as my friends dub me, "Corporate Claudie".

Yet the corporation they know, and what I imagined, is far from what I have experienced in the past 20 months.

I joined IBM in mid-2006, fresh from my final university year as an international exchange student in San Francisco and embarking on my honours year at Sydney University. I was naturally keen to stop waiting tables and begin using the skills I had spent many years developing at uni.

To be frank, a graduate internship at IBM did not appeal to me at first. I went for the job because I figured the interview process would be good experience. But I found myself impressed!

My interview panel asked what I knew about IBM. Well, I had done some research and was surprised to discover IBM's focus on diversity and community, women in leadership roles, environmental sustainability principles, the On Demand volunteer community and so forth. I used this knowledge to answer the panel's questions, stressing that this was what appealed and impressed me.

To my delight, the panel relished my answers and showed obvious pride for their company's more humanistic endeavours. In turn, my hard view of ruthless corporate monsters was softening and I took the job.

My role with IBM is communications for the A/NZ Westpac Account. I was lucky because there was no one in this role when I began so I had the

opportunity to manage and grow the communications in my time here. This in itself has given me immeasurable experience in both communications and project management. As they say, if you're thrown in the deep end, you have to swim. For the trust the team had in me that I could swim, and for the floaties that were passed to me when needed, I am eternally grateful.

My work is both diverse and interesting: e-news, culture change programs, teaming initiatives and more. However the two stand-outs are the Westpac Grad Program and my best achievement, The Cape York Program.

The Westpac Grad program takes me to New Zealand to build positive partnerships with the future faces of Westpac. Westpac Grads come to IBM for a week long rotation to learn about IBM processes, culture and what we do for Westpac. This program was deemed such a success in Sydney that it was requested in New Zealand and I seized the opportunity to work (and holiday!) in NZ.

The Cape York Program, which I manage in conjunction with Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships, works with other indigenous organisations to develop solutions and support programs that foster self-sufficiency in the community.

This program gives IBMers the chance to go on a one month secondment and make a meaningful contribution to one of Australia's most disadvantaged communities. We were inspired to sponsor this program by Westpac, which originally initiated the program with Noel Pearson and other aboriginal activists back in 2000.

After a successful trial, IBM sponsored eight employees last year and another 10 will participate



Claudia in Mossman Gorge in Cape York, painted by one of the local community.

in 2008. I am now working with Robert Orth, the Director of Human Resources for IBM in Australia and New Zealand, and Diversity to develop this worthwhile initiative into a long-term strategy.

The program not only reiterates our close partnership with Westpac through aligned values, but also provides the opportunity for employees to grow both personally and professionally in a cross cultural environment. I have had the opportunity to spend time in the Cape York, travelling around to a number of different communities and building relationships with members from these communities and the indigenous organisations we partner with.

I have always felt strongly about Aboriginal affairs and have always wanted to use my position of fortune to make a positive change in Indigenous Australia. However, I never thought this desire would be achieved through my role at IBM, or indeed, through working for any large corporation.

Thanks to our involvement with the Cape York Program, when I talk to my hippy and activist friends, I'm now proud to say I work for IBM.