Florida Tech’s O’Connor, West Point grad, to lead US Cyber Team into battle

By Ken Datzman

In 2021, cybercriminals wreaked havoc on critical infrastructures like hospitals, pipelines, meat-packing plants, and water-supply centers, causing significant economic and societal impacts.

Houston, Texas–based Colonial Pipeline, for example, suffered a ransomware attack that impacted computerized equipment managing the pipeline. The company carries gasoline and jet fuel mainly in the Southeastern United States.

Hackers tapped into Colonial Pipeline through a virtual private network, according to the FBI, which tracks cyber–attacks and publishes a yearly report. In 2020, the FBI received more than 2,000 internet crime complaints per day.

Cyber–attacks are “more likely to bring down F–35 jets than missiles,” according to “Interesting Engineering,” a more than 10–year–old website that explains engineering and science in easy–to–understand terms.

“This is the next–generation warfare,” said Terrence “TJ” O’Connor, assistant professor, computer sciences and cybersecurity, at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. “Our economy relies on having robust cybersecurity, our intellectual property relies on it, free trade relies on it, the security of our military forces relies on it, and on and on.”

Training the future cybersecurity professionals will help better secure the nation and protect its citizens in cyberspace. Cybersecurity touches every town, business, and home.

And, according to Information Security Solution Review, there is a talent gap of more than 500,000 skilled and knowledgeable employees in the cybersecurity workforce.

Dr. O’Connor, who has a military background, is a cybersecurity researcher and leads Florida Tech’s cybersecurity program. He developed the school's concentration in cybersecurity for the bachelor's degree in computer science.

He also has the distinction of being the first head coach for the US Cyber Team, which will soon compete abroad as part of the US Cyber Games. Dr. O’Connor was chosen for his vision, leadership, compassion, and enthusiasm. These are “cyber–athletes” from around the nation who have competed and trained vigorously to win a spot on the elite team. They learn both offensive and defensive tactical concepts which are reinforced in individual exercises.

“Almost every weekend, we have a Capture–the–Flag competition with the most annoying puzzles in the world,” he said. “The latest one ruined my weekend. These puzzles are really hard, perhaps only a few people in the world can solve them. I didn’t solve this particular one. But after the competition, I found who did solve it. I went back and reviewed the solution and figured it out. I’m learning from them just as they are learning from me.”

Dr. O’Connor is a full–throttle competitor. In high school he was a multiple–sport athlete, competing in soccer, lacrosse, track and field, and cross country. “But the sport in which I was most accomplished was wrestling.” He was a state champion wrestler in Connecticut for four consecutive years, competing in the 125–pound weight class. Today, he competes in Brazilian Jiu–Jitsu. “I am way past my prime.”

Wrestling takes a total commitment to be the best in your weight category. “I can always tell when I have met a wrestler, there is something about their work ethic,” he said.

He compared the work ethic of wrestlers to the work ethic of members of the US Cyber Team.

“These individuals have dedicated large periods of their lives striving to become the best in the world at what they do. And now, it will be great to see them get recognition through this international competition.”

To pare the number of US Cyber Team applicants, some 700 people registered to compete, a “combine” was held and there was even a “draft day” — these are football terms.

The NFL Scouting Combine, for instance, is a weeklong showcase held every February in Indianapolis where college football players perform physical and mental tests in front of NFL coaches, general managers, and scouts.

“I like the sports metaphors that are used to describe how our team was selected and the different challenges they went through. They are cyber–athletes,” said Dr. O’Connor, Florida Tech’s cybersecurity program chairman.

Development of the first US Cyber Team started in mid–2021 with a “Capture–the–Flag Challenge” that...
By Misty Campbell
mistycampbell@crosswindsyouthservices.org
Director of Development
Crosswinds Youth Services, Inc.

COCOA (Feb. 8, 2022) — Get ready to adopt your lucky ducks for the 24th annual Great Brevard Duck Race! We were hoping 2022 was the return of an in-person race as we have all missed the excitement of being right in the action, but due to logistical challenges the race will be virtual.

Viewers can watch some “quacky” fun on SpaceCoastDaily.com on Saturday, April 2, at 3:30 p.m. The rubber ducks will race to the finish line to win great prizes for their adopters. Nine winners will be randomly selected and their names will be announced after the race.

Ducks will be available for adoption until 3 p.m., on race day at www.greatbrevardduckrace.com. Ducks can also be adopted at Community Credit Union, Launch Credit Union, Sunrise Bank, Addition Financial, and Cypress Trust Bank. They can also be adopted at the Spring Fine Art & Craft Fair, March 5–6, and at the Cocoa Village Concours, April 2, in Cocoa Village.

The Great Brevard Duck Race is the major fundraising event for Crosswinds Youth Services and adopting ducks changes lives. All proceeds from the event help support Crosswinds’ effort to provide shelter, food, emergency services, and other support to our community’s most vulnerable children in need, especially during times like these. Crosswinds was able to touch the lives of more than 3,000 children, youth and families for the 2020–2021 fiscal year.

Everyone who adopts ducks will be entered into the race for a chance to win fabulous prizes, including the Grand Prize, a 2022 Honda Civic, free two–year lease, from Space Coast Honda; a large Big Green Egg Grill, nest and accessories, from Wassi’s Meat Market; a month of cleaning service for your home (four cleanings), from Nelson Professional Cleaning Services; a Tahitian Pearl Necklace Set with matching earrings, from Bobbi’s at Parkside; and four two–park one–day tickets to Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure, from Universal Orlando Resort.

Additional prizes include: a $500 gift card from Chevron/Texaco; a two–night stay for two at the Hilton on Cocoa Beach; and a full–day of fishing for two people or an evening of shark fishing from Obsession Charters Deep Sea Fishing at Port Canaveral.


Other sponsors include: Paradise Ford, Wighton Fire System, Addition Financial, Atlantic Network Services, Canopy Insurance, Coca Beach Optimist Club, Cypress Bank & Trust, Dr. Bob and Bunny Lehton—Family Pediatric Clinic, Florida City Gas, Florida MasterTemp, Health First Health Plans, Jack and Yvette Parker, Jim Handlely, Launch Credit Union, Massey Services, M.H. Williams Construction Group, Michael Raymond Knives, Mariacher/Masucci Homeselling Team of Blue Marlin Real Estate, Precision Door Services, Nash & Kromash, Ron Jon Surf Shop, Secure Fence and Rail, Southeast Aerospace, and Sunoco.

For nearly 48 years, Crosswinds has been a safety net for young people and families in Brevard County who have nowhere else to turn for help. For more information about Crosswinds Youth Services, call (321) 452–0800 or visit www.crosswindsyouthservices.org.

CPA Shannon Bloom was Air Force civilian
Certified Public Accountant Shannon Bloom, who owns SMB Accounting and Consulting LLC in Melbourne, was incorrectly referred to as a U.S. Air Force veteran in a story on page 23 in the Feb. 7, 2022, edition of “BBN.” Her career includes having worked as a longtime civilian for the Air Force, including at Air Force accounting offices in the U.S. and abroad. Government accounting is one of SMB’s areas of expertise. Bloom’s resume also includes having worked for the Department of Defense. She has a background in fraud prevention and internal controls.
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Private college first in New York State to add drone pilot course to curriculum

By Alisa Picerno
apicerno@aquilinedrones.com
Aquiline Drones

HARTFORD, Conn. (Jan. 28, 2022) — Houghton College and Aquiline Drones announced a five-year partnership to offer online, instructor-guided drone pilot training to current and future students. Houghton is the first four-year educational institution in New York State to add an Aquiline Drones pilot course to its curriculum. The training will prepare students to take the exam required to become a licensed drone pilot under the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Houghton College, a top Christ-centered, higher learning institution with locations in Houghton and Buffalo, N.Y., will offer these courses as part of Associate and Bachelor’s degree programs, as well as standalone courses for Houghton’s Early College program.

“Equipping students for personal and professional success demands our embrace of relevant and emerging technologies,” said Houghton College President Dr. Wayne Lewis Jr. “Houghton prioritizes alignment between our degree programs and industry realities. We are committed to the integration of our liberal arts foundation with professional and applied learning experiences. This exciting new partnership with Aquiline Drones allows us to do just that; providing Houghton students with exceptional preparation to enter this in-demand field.”

Aquiline Drones, a commercial drone manufacturer and cloud technology company, created its “Flight to the Future” online drone–pilot training program as a remedy for America’s staggering unemployment rates because of the ongoing pandemic.

“Besides attracting applicants from all parts of the country and from a diversity of industries, Aquiline Drones Founder and CEO Barry Alexander noticed that numerous inquiries resulted from several community colleges in the area, which offer that training as only a certification course.

“We are honored that Houghton College realizes the high-tech journey that our drone pilot training offers and has chosen to adopt it as two, separate, instructor-guided courses,” said Alexander. “Their commitment to engage students in a hands–on, upwardly mobile field of study that is growing exponentially with a potential market share of $127 billion is to be commended.”

Houghton College will offer two courses:

1. Drone Operation and UAV Aeronautical Procedures — an introduction to drones, that prepares students for the FAA Commercial Drone Pilot (Part 107) certification examination.
2. Cloud Connected Drone Operations, Computing and Analytics — focused on digital technologies that are enabling cloud–connected commercial drone operations and unmanned aerial systems provider business formation.

Additionally, the course will provide artificial intelligence–assisted sessions and individual flight training with drones. The two, three credit–hour, eight–week courses will be available and offered year–round starting March 7, 2022. Online registration is now open at www.houghton.edu/Drones.

“Our partnership with Aquiline Drones marks the beginning of a new and exciting chapter for Houghton College. We are confident these courses will propel our students’ learning and skills to new heights,” said Lewis.

About Houghton College

Houghton College is a nationally ranked Christian college of the liberal arts and sciences. With an enrollment of nearly 1,000 students, Houghton has equipped graduates for lifelong success since 1883 through customizable programs offered in Houghton and Buffalo, N.Y., and online. The college offers more than 50 undergraduate in–person and online programs, including equestrian studies, data science and biological sciences, as well as graduate programs in business, education and music.

About Aquiline Drones

Aquiline Drones Corp. (AD) is a progressive American drone manufacturer and cloud–solutions company located in the financial district of Hartford. Through Aquiline Drones Indemnity Corp., the company insures its continuum of products and services, as well as those of its partners and affiliates. AD’s core management comprises highly experienced aviators, systems engineers, military personnel (including veterans), and business strategists. AD delivers a vertically integrated blend of products and services. These include an aviation cloud for commercial drones, U.S.–based drone manufacturing, drone “maintenance–repair–overhaul” services, unmanned aerial systems solutions for large enterprises and governments, a line of Spartacus drone products, a robust UAS training academy, and the country’s first “drone–on–demand” service enabling customers to order drone services through a proprietary mobile app.

Visit www.AquilineDrones.com for more information.

The Zonta Club seeking applicants for Young Women in Public Affairs Scholarship

MELBOURNE (Feb. 9, 2022) — The Zonta Club of Melbourne is seeking applicants for its annual Young Women in Public Affairs Scholarship. The scholarship is for graduating senior young women committed to leadership roles in public policy, government or volunteer organizations.

This scholarship is granted annually by the Zonta Club of Melbourne in memory of Monica Jean Campbell. The winner of the scholarship will be eligible for the same scholarship at the Zonta District level, and that winner is eligible for the scholarship at the Zonta International level.

Applicants may download the application at www.zonta.org; click on “Our Programs” and scroll down to Young Women in Public Affairs. Upon completion, submit the application to: zontachub.melbourne@gmail.com.

The deadline is March 11. For questions on this scholarship, contact Doris Larson at redskinsam@gmail.com.

From the Public Record of Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey

Hey, how’s things? Some recent developments have come together about possibly turning the Heroes Behind The Badge documentaries into a TV series. Without getting into too many details, there is interest in setting up the series with a montage of real and dramatic police body camera, dash cam, helicopter, etc captured video. I’m reaching out to you to see if you happen to have any, or are aware of some highly dramatic, heroic, exemplary types of these videos? The more current the videos the better, but amazing footage is always still amazing.

Hope all’s well. Any help would be great!

Thanks, Bill
Based upon my investigation as a criminal investigator with the Craven County Sheriff’s Department there is probable cause to arrest Timothy Michaud for sexual assault on R(XXXX) Michaud.

John Whitfield
May 7, 2010

I need to report suspected abuse.

Dana Delaney Loyd
aka Theresa Smith
at 11:12 a.m., April 29, 2015

‘Loyalty is everything to me!’

Sheriff Robert Wayne Ivey to Dana Delaney Loyd
at 5:19 p.m., April 29, 2015

IS THE EIGHTEENTH CIRCUIT AN ONGOING HUMAN TRAFFICKER?

BBN NOTE: John M. Stewart — a partner at Rossway Swan — is a past president of the 107,000 member The Florida Bar.

To Be Continued...

FILED
Feb 07, 2019
Secretary of State
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Bill Erfurth | President
MODERN CITY
305-970-4898 | Bill@moderncityentertainment.com

Hi Gents, I got word that the contract is finalized and signed off on! I know Rachael wanted to discuss and continue to tweak the schedule so perhaps we could have another conference call with you two, the Commander, and Lt Stokes? Please let me know your thoughts and what works best on your end.

Thanks, Bill

Bill Erfurth
President
305-970-4898 | Bill@moderncityentertainment.com
Women’s Center to host ‘Bourbon, Cars & Cigars’ April 8 at Porsche Melbourne

MELBOURNE (Feb. 4, 2022) — The Women’s Center of Brevard will present “Bourbon, Cars & Cigars,” sponsored by Porsche Mercedes Audi Melbourne, from 7–10 p.m. on Friday, April 8, at Porsche Melbourne, 509 E. NASA Blvd. This fundraiser will feature premium bourbon and cigars, food and drink, and an outdoor lounge with music and dancing. Limited VIP tables and exclusive sponsorship opportunities, along with $100 general admission tickets, may be purchased at www.womenscenter.net. Contact Lori Sutherland at lsutherland@womenscenter.net for more details on this event.

The Women’s Center has been providing life-changing programs in Brevard County for more than 45 years. “Serving thousands of people annually, our programs provide trauma-informed services that provide victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with hope, tools and resources needed to build healthy and safe futures for themselves and their families,” said Sutherland. “Our comprehensive programs include victim advocacy, emergency and transitional housing, rape crisis services and counseling.”
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SPEECH DIFFICULTY

TIME
TIME TO CALL FOR AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY

WHEN TO CALL 911?

If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get them to the hospital immediately.

DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF to the emergency room if you suspect you are having a stroke.

BEYOND BE FAST—OTHER SYMPTOMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

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- Sudden confusion or trouble understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

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Parrish Medical Center has received a gold seal from the Joint Commission for stroke.

Healing Families—Healing Communities®
By John J. Glisch  
glischj@easternflorida.edu  
Associate Vice President, Communications  
Eastern Florida State College

The Eastern Florida State College Board of Trustees has extended the contract of college President Dr. Jim Richey to 2027, citing exceptional leadership during the COVID–19 pandemic.

The five trustees took the unanimous action during Richey’s annual performance review for 2021, the latest since he became president in early 2012.

Trustees touted his achievements in steering the college through the pandemic and success in other areas, including not raising tuition for the 10th straight year.

They also cited his work the past decade in transforming the college with 86 new academic programs that have produced thousands of graduates now working for local companies.

“Because of his dedication and focus, along with faculty and staff, we have made tremendous improvements to the college. It’s critical that we keep him here,” said Alan Landman, the board’s chairman.

Other trustees agreed, with Bruce Deardoff saying “it’s nothing short of amazing how we have raised the level of the college” during Richey’s tenure.

Added Dr. Edgar Figueroa: “I can’t say enough about Dr. Richey. It’s not just the work, but the results.”

Richey thanked the trustees and EFSC’s faculty and staff, saying an unflinching focus on students led to more than 19,000 students enrolled and 3,600 graduating during 2021.

He also said the achievements the past decade were possible “because of the commitment, determination and cooperation by our outstanding faculty, staff and administrators.”

“Going forward, I believe we are the right group of people, and the right organization led by our very able trustees, to meet the challenge of helping our students of today and tomorrow realize their full potential,” said Richey.

“By doing so our local employers and community will thrive and our region of Florida will continue its legacy of greatness. I’m proud to be your college president during this pivotal time.”

The college’s accomplishments in 2021 were detailed in a 24–page report that the trustees cited. The highlights include:

- Not raising tuition for the 10th straight year, keeping EFSC among the most affordable public colleges in Florida.
- Nearly 19,400 students were enrolled throughout the Spring, Summer and Fall Terms with 3,659 graduating.
- The college offered 4,152 in–person classes and 2,202 online classes, giving students digital and on–campus options to learn as the pandemic continued.
- COVID safety policies included on–campus vaccination events, and strong contact tracing led to an infection rate of less than 1 percent during the peak of the Delta variant.
- 11,500 students were awarded $8.2 million in emergency federal COVID grants that played an important role in helping them stay in school.
- Student events such as clubs, plays, concerts and athletic games returned, sparking a revitalization in the collegiate experience.

There were other important accomplishments as well.

- The college awarded its 2,700th bachelor’s degree since the four–year programs were first offered in 2013.
- The Career Planning and Development Center reached a milestone in helping 75,000 students prepare for the job market.
- Minority enrollment remained strong, representing 38 percent of EFSC’s total student population.

For more information on Eastern Florida and its programs, visit easternflorida.edu.

Mardi Gras Gala at Green Gables set

Green Gables at Historic Riverview Village will present its Mardi Gras Gala from 6–10 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 26. The address is 1501 S. Harbor City Blvd. in Melbourne. Tickets are $75. Tables that seat eight people are $550. Art will be auctioned by Brevard County Sheriff Wayne Ivey. To purchase tickets, visit GreenGables.org, or contact Marion at Marion.GreenGables@gmail.com. Green Gables is seeking community support for this event as the July 1 deadline for grant funding approaches, “but the funding may not be available for Historic Preservation in the state budget.”
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easternflorida.edu/go/simpkins

The Simpkins Speaker Series is named in honor of Bernard Simpkins, who was a highly successful entrepreneur and Brevard County business leader. Since the sessions began in 2001, they have brought many of the nation’s top business innovators to Eastern Florida State College.

For more information, contact EFSC Foundation
321-433-7055 or foundation@easternflorida.edu
Florida Tech program in statistical modeling accepting applications; competitive research for undergraduates are encouraged to apply.

Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation, the program will cover all costs for participants, including a travel allowance to Melbourne, housing in a Florida Tech residence hall, a $600 weekly stipend and a $100 weekly meal allowance. Travel allowances may also be provided to students to present their summer research at a future conference.

Participants will work on a research project in one of four areas: the impact of climate change on glaciers; sea level rise projections and modeling; the impact of climate change on ciguatera in Florida and the Caribbean; and the impact of benthic communities on water filtration in coastal estuaries.

“The goal of this program is to provide students who have little or no prior research experience, particularly minority students at early stages of their education, with an opportunity to participate in challenging research projects,” said Nezamoddin N. Kachouie, an associate professor in Florida Tech’s Department of Mathematical Sciences. He is the principal investigator and oversees the REU program, which is hosted by his department and the Department of Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences.

In addition to research opportunities, there will be seminars on improving students’ public speaking and presentation skills, workshops on how to develop, gain and improve students’ analytical thinking, data analysis and coding skills, and opportunities to learn from experience about scientific research and how to apply academic work to real-world problems.

Applications will be accepted until March 15, after which a review process will determine the eight participants. Additional details and the application form are available at https://research.fit.edu/smag–reu.

For more information, contact Nezamoddin N. Kachouie at nezamoddin@fit.edu or Steven Lazarus at slazarus@fit.edu.

Florida Tech online programs fare well in U.S. News rankings for 2022

MELBOURNE (Jan. 27, 2022) — Multiple Florida Tech online programs were recognized in U.S. News & World Report’s 2022 Best Online Programs.

The university’s online bachelor’s degree and online programs in undergraduate business, non-MBA business, MBA and graduate computer information technology were among the ranked programs.

“Highly ranked programs have strong traditional academic foundations based on student–instructor access, graduation rates and instructor credentials,” the magazine said. “They also excel at educating distance learners while offering robust career and financial support.”

Additionally, in the Best Online Bachelor’s Programs — Psychology, Florida Tech was ranked No. 30. It was among the top three Florida schools overall and No. 1 for private schools in Florida.

Two Florida Tech online programs for veterans were ranked in the top 40 or better in their categories. For Best Computer Information Technology Programs for Veterans, Florida Tech’s offering was No. 22. And in Best Non-MBA Business Programs for Veterans, Florida Tech was No. 38.

“U.S. News believes that online learning is integral to all types of education, including higher education, and that consumers are hungry for information related to online degrees,” the magazine said in announcing its findings.

For the 2022 edition, the magazine assessed 1,728 online degree programs and ranked 1,646 — both all-time highs. The rankings measure overall academic quality and are across varying disciplines.
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**We’ll Help you CONNECT THE DOTS**
Florida’s communities are a confluence of nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities.

A quarter-century ago, community volunteer Nina Gadodia tapped into the local growing diverse population base when she founded “Indiafest,” an event designed to enrich the multicultural fabric of Brevard County.

And Indiafest, because of its long-running success, has been able to uplift a wide range of charitable entities in the county through its financial support. Indiafest is a nonprofit cultural-enrichment organization.

“The 25th anniversary of Indiafest is going to be bigger and better than ever in every phase of the event,” said Gadodia, chairwoman of the event committee. “The Silver Jubilee celebration is going to be a unique festival. We will have bonfires, street vendors, street performers, Indian music, and much more. We have been looking forward to the 25th celebration for a number of years. We’re excited to be presenting it to the community.”

The 2022 Indiafest will be hosted Saturday and Sunday, March 5–6, at Wickham Park Pavilion on Parkway Drive in Melbourne. The Saturday hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday’s Indiafest runs from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets will be sold at the gate each day. The entry fee is $7 for adults and $3 for children under age 12. There is no charge for children under age 5.

“We have extended the Indiafest hours on Saturday to 9 p.m. In the past, Indiafest ran until 6 p.m. on Saturday,” said Yasmin Majeed, who is co-chairing the event with Yasmin Majeed, co-chair. The event showcases a wide range of food from various regions of India.

“We thank the sponsors for their support through the years, visit IndiafestBrevard.org,” said Gadodia. The money will help deserving students with college tuition.

Indiafest will also be hosting a Sponsor Appreciation Reception on Friday, Feb. 25, at the Maxwell C. King Center for the Performing Arts in Melbourne. The event will be in the King Center rotunda. There will be entertainment in the nearby Studio Theatre.

“At the Sponsor Appreciation Reception we will be presenting a $100,000 endowment to Eastern Florida State College,” said Gadodia. The money will help deserving students with college tuition.

To inquire about being a sponsor for Indiafest, visit IndiafestBrevard.org.

“The 25th Indiafest will be hosted March 5–6 at Wickham Park in Melbourne. Indiafest is a fun family festival showcasing Indian culture, history, and tradition. Funds raised from the event support local charities. Indiafest has raised and donated $1.14 million to date to a wide range of organizations. From left: Rashmi Shah, co-chair; Nina Gadodia, founder, and executive committee chairwoman; and Yasmin Majeed, co-chair. The event showcases a wide range of food from various regions of India.
3D-printing technology is reshaping industries; Rapid Prototyping Services works with engineers in aerospace and defense sectors, area entrepreneurs

By Ken Datzman

SATELLITE BEACH — Competitive pressures and evolving business models increasingly mean companies must find ways to shorten their development cycles in order to innovate with new ideas and stay ahead of their peers.

And from its conception, three-dimensional printing technology has had the potential to change the way products are manufactured across sectors.

From electronics to health care and aerospace and defense — as well as an expanding number of other industries — 3D printing has been highly transformative.

Speed and agility are some of 3D printing’s advantages. Industry experts say 3D printing has the most impact early in the product cycle, such as in design and prototyping.

Aggressive research and development in 3D printing and the growing demand for prototyping applications from various industries are expected to propel the 3D market years into the future.

Mechanical engineer Ken Brace, with a background in manufacturing, saw the potential of 3D-printing technology long ago, and has built a successful business around it.

He invested in leading-edge machines and has kept up with 3D printing advances through the years.

“The 3D-printing industry continues to evolve, and I believe there is good growth ahead for our company,” said Brace, founder and owner of Rapid Prototyping Services, an 18-year-old venture that caters to the aerospace and defense industries, startup entrepreneurs, and small-business owners.

“I really enjoy what I do. It’s a pleasure coming to work every day. I have the opportunity to meet a lot of different engineers I work with on projects. It’s exciting. There is always something new.”

The type of printing his company does is known as “additive manufacturing” because it involves a layer-by-layer addition of material — with the help of software and a 3D printer — to form an object referred to as a three-dimensional file.

Largely, 3D printing eliminates waste and expands the available design options, allowing manufacturers to adapt products to use less material, incorporate improved mechanical properties, and avoid assembly steps, he said.

Rapid Prototyping Services, which does industrial 3D printing with a fast turnaround on product orders, has a total of six machines at its business. Brace has invested more than $1 million in the machines.

A typical 3D printer is much like an inkjet printer operated from a computer. It builds up a 3D model one layer at a time, from the bottom upward, by repeatedly printing over the same area in a method known as “fused depositional modeling,” said Brace.

Instead of using ink, which would never build up much volume, the printer deposits layers of molten plastic or powder and fuses them together — and to the existing structure — with adhesive or ultraviolet light.

“I started Rapid Prototyping Services using fused depositional modeling because I felt the plastic models that this process creates were far superior in strength and flexibility to the other processes on the market,” he said.

Brace said one area he is closely watching is 3D metal printing, which is evolving.

“There are quite a few different 3D metal printing technologies on the market right now. I’m waiting to see which ones come to the forefront before making an investment in a new machine.”

In addition to catering to corporate clients, Rapid Prototyping Services works with startup businesses.

“A lot of engineers who worked for corporations are now launching their own firms. When they start out, they generally can’t afford the type of machinery that I’m using, so they use our services until they can ramp up and afford the machinery. It’s always fun and interesting to work with startup businesses that need 3D printing services. My firm was a startup many years ago, a very fortunate one in that regard.”

As any startup entrepreneur that’s building a new product knows, you have to have a working prototype. Many businesses spend time and money working up models and testing prototypes before they get it right. A 3D printer can make prototyping faster and more cost-effective.

Brace’s company does a lot of “fixturing and tooling” for the space industry. An example is its work for Lockheed Martin. Rapid Prototyping Services produced 2,000 tools for the Orion spacecraft. His company’s clients also include Northrop Grumman and L3Harris. He has watched the 3D printing market evolve in various industry sectors. “It’s a pleasure coming to work every day.”

Businessman Ken Brace is founder and owner of Rapid Prototyping Services in Satellite Beach. His 18-year-old company specializes in 3D-printed parts for a range of clients, including the aerospace and defense markets. Brace is a UCF mechanical engineering graduate. His company’s clients include Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and L3Harris. He has watched the 3D printing market evolve in various industry sectors. ‘It’s a pleasure coming to work every day.’

Please see Rapid Prototyping Services, page 21
Dirty Dog’s Car Wash receives a $35 million growth equity investment from Cynosure to fund market expansion

By Jacqueline Lee
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Assistant Publicist
Liz Lapidus PR

ATLANTA (Feb. 3, 2022) — Dirty Dog’s Car Wash (Dirty Dog’s) announced a strategic growth equity investment from Salt Lake City–based The Cynosure Group (Cynosure) to fund the company’s growth and expansion into key markets with an aim to open an additional 25 locations nationwide over the next 36 months.

In addition to Cynosure’s investment, Dirty Dog’s also arranged a new credit facility with Synovus Bank to further facilitate this rapid expansion.

Brevard County is one of the markets where Dirty Dog’s is expanding.

“This strategic partnership not only provides Dirty Dog’s with the necessary capital to rapidly expand, but it also provides us with additional resources, mentorship and leadership from a group that has a demonstrated track record of partnering with, and collaboratively growing, founder and management–owned businesses,” said Martin Emmett, owner and founder of Dirty Dog’s.

“At this time, we are also excited to be partnering with Synovus Bank who has supported our growth since inception,” added Emmett.

Started in 2018, Dirty Dog’s currently has locations in Georgia and Alabama. While COVID–19 shuttered countless industries, contact–free car washes experienced growth for several reasons, including being socially distanced and attainably priced. In addition, the contact–free model requires less staff and creates greater time efficiency. To that end, Dirty Dog’s experienced strong growth during COVID, and with that comes plans to expand. Plans include expanding into the Florida market, with locations in Melbourne, Tampa, North Fort Lauderdale, Port Richey, Daytona Beach, Ocala, Royal Palm Beach, Brooksville, Miami, Fort Myers, Cape Coral and West Palm Beach, all planning to open in the near–future.

“Dirty Dog’s has established itself as a leader in a competitive yet growing market,” said Andrew Braithwaite, managing director at Cynosure. “We are proud to recognize the company’s unbridled growth and relentless focus on its customer and community. We are excited to form this new partnership and look forward to being a part of their rapid scaling and expansion.”

When Emmett stepped away from a career in law to invest in a contact–free car wash model, he applied innovations such as an enhanced customer experience, elevated branding and quality design. It was this front–end investment that paid off.

“We wanted to launch a business model that focused on quality user experience at every step,” said Emmett.

“So, we created a car wash that is modern, clean, affordable and functional for everyone, with all the bells and whistles.”

As part of this strategy, they enlisted a branding firm known for building brands for professional sports teams, to create a playful, intentional, community–minded brand.

Among its brand attributes, Dirty Dog’s has always supported teachers, law enforcement and first responders through monthly events, discounts and their “Helping Heroes” program.

In 2021 alone, Dirty Dog’s donated more than 10,000 car washes to clean squad cars in the local communities it serves.

“Community investment is a major pillar of our business model, First in Service, First in Community,” said Keisha Escoffery, chief operating officer, Dirty Dog’s. “From the start of our business, we made sure that our local frontline workers knew we were here to support them, which intensified during the pandemic.”

By prioritizing a clean, modern, self–serve design, Dirty Dog’s built customer loyalty, and their dedication to community has further instilled trust and loyalty.

“We were offering cleanliness at a time when people needed it,” said Emmett. “Even in a down economy, we were determined to keep our prices affordable and to continue supporting our communities and, in turn, they have continued to support us.”

● About Dirty Dog’s Car Wash

Founded in 2018, Dirty Dog’s Car Wash wanted to create a different kind of car wash experience, one fueled by its commitment to its customers, employees and the communities where the facilities are located. Dirty Dog’s Car Wash provides fast, efficient and affordable car washes.

For more information on their services and locations, visit dirtydogscarwash.com.

● About The Cynosure Group

The Cynosure Group is an independent alternatives asset manager and advisor that makes long–term investments on behalf of families, foundations, and other like–minded institutions. Cynosure’s direct investments target partnerships with founders and management–owners of profitable small to mid–sized companies who will remain meaningful owners of their business.

For more information, visit www.cynosuregroup.com.
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By Rajeev Ronanki

(Febr. 7, 2022) — Artificial intelligence is significantly impacting the world, yet there’s still a great amount of mystery—and misconceptions—about it. The public’s imagination has been heavily shaped by science fiction, with the term AI evoking images of robots like WALL-E, C3PO from Star Wars, and David from Stephen Spielberg’s movie A.I. Scientists and technologists refer to this kind of humanlike AI as “general artificial intelligence.” General AI attempts to mimic the kind of abstract thought and typical problem-solving skills seen in humans.

I say attempts because there is currently no existing general AI system even approaching the sophistication of the human brain. The technology is nowhere close to creating a system capable of abstract thought or general intelligence. But “applied AI” is rapidly becoming a mainstream technology, improving the efficiency and profitability of businesses in many industries.

Why applied AI is faster but not yet smarter than us

Current AI systems, for all their computational ability, do not have the ability to understand and analyze context the way human brains do. For example, we can see a barking dog and instantly determine the threat level. Sufficiently advanced AI can recognize the dog but may be unable to determine the breed, its physical agility, and whether it has been encountered before. Unlike humans, AI cannot connect dots and judge context to solve problems creatively.

But AI systems can make decisions far more rapidly and accurately than humans. The strengths and limitations of the current generation of artificial intelligence make it most applicable for solving fit-for-purpose business problems. (Fit-for-purpose is the concept in which a product or service is adequate for the purpose for which the consumer selected it.) AI systems are designed to handle a specific task while operating within imposed contextual constraints. These fit-for-purpose systems and tools are known as applied AI.

There are four primary business applications of applied AI in industry. Here’s a look at each and how they create efficiencies and value:

• Automation

Automation saves countless man hours and resources, as computers can process data in a fraction of the time it takes humans. Some of these processes require decision-making. This is where AI comes into play. Most business processes involve a structured set of inputs, and decisions are made based on defined policies and guidelines. The variables in the equations are well known and operate within a narrow context. Algorithms can make these decisions rapidly and accurately.

• These algorithms allow much of the workload that companies do to be offloaded onto automated systems. That advancement provides conveniences for consumers in the age of online shopping. Capital One Shopping, for example, offers customers a browser add-on claiming to save money by automatically comparing prices, applying promo codes and providing deal alerts.

• Banks use AI to automate the loan process. Relevant financial records are collected automatically, validated, and analyzed. The system can give a recommendation on the loan before a lender ever sees the application. This may sound frightening and impersonal, but these systems actually assess loans more accurately and fairly than humans. They look at a borrower’s credit history, credibility, liabilities, and other factors and make an impartial decision. Quite often, these individual metrics are also calculated by AI. Credit scores, for example, are calculated automatically.

• Insights

The data produced by automated business processes holds valuable insights. These insights can be about almost anything; they may reveal something about a business process, unlock untapped opportunities, or even allow companies to make predictions about the future.

The data analysis that leads to insights is mostly automated. Given the volume of data that companies now work with, we need these automated AI systems to find the signal in the noise. AI looks for patterns and makes decisions based on training and defined guidelines. The exponential power of these systems can be seen in machine learning. IBM Watson, for example, can predict when an elevator is going to fail. AI systems are able to return insights about insights into their own operation, and this allows them to improve their data sets and algorithms. As a result, AI systems draw insights that the designers may not have ever envisioned or been looking for.

• Personalization

Insights have many applications, but one that is rapidly transforming industries is personalization of user engagement. The insights drawn from consumers, users, and other stakeholders can be used to improve their experiences by engaging with them in a personalized manner.

There are many ways companies can use data to personalize the experience for the stakeholders they serve. Google maps knows through habits a driver’s route and daily schedule and will give them an outlook for the day based on the current data. Retail companies have their websites feature inventory designed to appeal to the specific viewer. Online ads are micro-targeted at individuals based on insights into their specific consumer behavior. Social media platforms also customize news feeds to increase user engagement. Search engines provide results that are tailored to the user’s location, demographics, search habits, online shopping history, and other data.

• Sensing

Sensing produces a kind of insight that deserves special mention due to its revolutionary potential. The exponential explosion in data and computing power now allows us to better recognize patterns as they are forming and predict how they will develop, which in turn allows us to actually sense trends as they form and develop.

This ability has huge business applications. Consider the sudden rise and success of TikTok. ByteDance, the Beijing-based parent company that developed the app, hit it big by filling an emerging niche for teens who could use a platform for recording and sharing short videos. TikTok noticed the trend among teens, built a dedicated app, and marketed it to the emerging user base as the trend developed. TikTok is now worth billions of dollars and is changing the social media landscape.

Many companies using applied AI have built fortunes and improved the world for billions of people. They did so by leveraging exponential technology and riding the development curve. We can likely achieve higher levels of AI-powered efficiency and improvement in all industries.

About the Author

Rajeev Ronanki (https://rajeevronanki.com/) is the president of digital platforms at Anthem Inc., and the ForbesBooks author of “You and AI: A Citizen’s Guide to AI, Blockchain, and Puzzling Together the Future of Healthcare.” Before joining Anthem, Ronanki was a partner at Deloitte Consulting, where he spearheaded a myriad of technological healthcare innovations. Ronanki is a frequent contributor to Forbes and other publications. He earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Osmania University and a master’s degree in computer science from the University of Pennsylvania.

Space Coast Diodes
Seeking folks to brainstorm the creation of a microwave components fabrication firm here on the Space Coast that would design and fabricate 6G to Terahertz oscillators (et alia) using the GUNN DIODE. Moreover, the firm would have its own niche semiconductor fab to grow its own-(gunn diodes). Would like input from CEO & CMO types, Semiconductor & Microwave Engineers & Techs, and Students, in business, engineering and marketing disciplines.

Contact: jsessa@brevardresearch.com
Pythian renews machine learning partner specialization in Google Cloud Partner Advantage Program

By Elizabeth Walsh (ewalsh@pythian.com) Pythian Services Inc. and Elisabeth Grant (egrant@branchoutpr.com) Branch Out Public Relations

NEW YORK (Feb. 09, 2022) — Pythian Services Inc. (Pythian), a leading cloud, data, and analytics services company, announced it has renewed its Machine Learning Partner Specialization in the Google Cloud Partner Advantage Program.

By validating this Partner Specialization, Pythian has demonstrated success with data exploration, processing, model training, model evaluation, model deployment, online prediction, and Google Cloud’s Machine Learning APIs. Specialization is the highest technical designation a Google Cloud partner can earn.

“Developing the deepest proficiency in cloud services and technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence enable partners like Pythian to deliver significant, long-term value for customers,” said Derrick Thompson, global head of Partner Differentiation, Google Cloud. “This renewal validates Pythian’s expertise with Google Cloud machine learning, and proven experience helping customers build and deploy ML models, and ultimately better understand and use their data.”

A third-party auditor evaluated Pythian for the specialization. The audit involved a thorough review of three client case studies. In one, Pythian’s data scientists helped supermarket retailer Schnucks develop a machine learning model to predict shopper likelihood to buy certain products and recommend complementary products.

Pythian provides end-to-end services and solutions for Google Cloud that span infrastructure and operations management, automation and DevOps, and data and analytics. The company’s unique expertise in data, analytics and cloud technologies — as well as its proven “Plan/Deploy/Manage” methodology — helps mid and large size businesses transform their data and stay competitive.

“We take our customers’ dreams of innovation very seriously,” said Paul Lewis, chief technology officer at Pythian. “Their visions inspire us to stay on the forefront of technologies that can bring those dreams to life.”

Pythian has earned multiple Google Cloud specializations, demonstrating a deep commitment to its customers’ success. Pythian experts build and implement machine learning models at scale that continuously learn and deliver insights that drive growth, strengthen customer loyalty, reduce costs, and accomplish the myriad goals of its customers. Specializations in the Google Cloud Partner Advantage Program are designed to provide Google Cloud customers with qualified partners that have demonstrated technical proficiency and proven success in specialized solution and service areas.

About Pythian Services Inc.

Founded in 1997, Pythian is a global information technology services company that helps organizations transform by leveraging data, analytics, and cloud. From cloud automation to machine learning, Pythian designs, implements and supports customized solutions for the toughest data challenges. A Google Cloud Premier Partner with multiple Specializations in Data Analytics, Machine Learning, Infrastructure, and Data Management, and a Google Cloud MSP, Pythian has delivered thousands of professional and managed services projects to the cloud. For more information on the company, visit www.pythian.com or follow on Twitter and LinkedIn.
By Alyssa Cannistra
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Communications Specialist
Parrish Medical Center

TITUSVILLE, FL (Feb. 8, 2022) — Parrish Medical Center’s Board of Directors, in accordance with its bylaws, held an election of officers during its February board meeting. The election resulted in the following office appointment:

Member–at–large: Maureen Rupe. She has served on the Parrish Medical Center board since 2002. Rupe has an extensive background in public service, including president of Partnership for a Sustainable Future; chair and board member of League of Women Voters; charter review commission member for Brevard County 2003–2004; Brevard County Land Procedures and Policies Committee; chairman of Port St. John Library board; and president of the Brevard British Club.

The entire slate of officers includes:

Chairman of the Board: Robert Jordan Jr. He has served on the Parrish Medical Center board, in numerous capacities, since 1998. Jordan is chairman, president and CEO of Genesis VII, and has more than 32 years’ experience in the aerospace field.

Vice Chairman: Stanley Retz. He has been a certified public accountant for more than 40 years, providing tax, accounting and financial advice to businesses and individuals.

Treasurer: Herman Cole Jr., a retired U.S. Air Force colonel. Cole has served on the board since 2000 in a number of capacities, including as former chairman. Cole has an extensive background in directing, managing and administering large, worldwide construction projects.

Secretary: Elizabeth Galfo, M.D. She has served on the board since 2015. Dr. Galfo is a hospice and palliative medicine physician with St. Francis Reflections Lifestage Care. She served as the organization’s chief medical officer and medical director from 1997 to 2020.

In addition to the board officers, the nine-member board includes members Billy Specht, Billie Fitzgerald, Jerry Noffel and Ashok Shah, M.D.

About Parrish Medical Center

Parrish Medical Center (PMC), a Parrish Healthcare integrated care partner, is located at 951 N. Washington Ave. The 210-bed, not-for-profit, public medical center has served Brevard County for more than 60 years. PMC was the first in the nation to be Integrated Care–certified by The Joint Commission and is nationally recognized as “One of America’s Finest Healing Environments.” For more information about PMC, visit parrishhealthcare.com.

About Parrish Healthcare

Parrish Healthcare, America’s first Joint Commission Integrated Care Certified network, includes: Parrish Medical Center, a Mayo Clinic Care Network member and one of the nation’s most recognized hospitals for clinical quality, patient safety and healing environments; Parrish Medical Group, NCQA certified patient–centered medical homes; and Florida Health Network, a coalition of health–care providers, insurers and others working together to improve quality and safety and lower health–care costs on behalf of individuals, families and businesses.
Indian traditions and culture. This event is a cultural aspect of India through various demonstrations, activities, and entertainment. "When we expanded Indiafest from a one-day event to a two-day program, it was even more successful. We have received gracious support from the community--at--large."

"We were impressed with the turnout, and we did learn one lesson about scheduling. The day we had our first Indiafest we went up against the Melbourne Art Festival, which is always one of the largest public events in Brevard."

This year, the event organizers are expecting 10,000 or more people to attend the 25th Indiafest over the two days. "When we expanded Indiafest from a one--day event to a two--day program, it was even more successful. We have received gracious support from the community--at--large."

Indiafest has not only attracted people from throughout Brevard County, but also from Orange County and Indian River County, said Gadodia. "And Indiafest vendors have come from as far away as New York, New Jersey, and Atlanta."

The Indiafest program touches on just about every aspect of India through various demonstrations, activities, and vendor participations. "We will have so many different things going on over the two days," said Gadodia. "People can learn about Indian traditions and culture. This event is a cultural education in itself. I think that is one of the reasons it has been embraced by the community. It’s a very interesting and entertaining fundraising event."

Majeed said her organization has been able to build relationships with area media. "I’ve long said that for an event to be successful, it has to have good publicity. If no one knows about it, no one will come to the event. We have had loyal support from the media for Indiafest. We thank the various media outlets for their continuing support of this event because it goes a long way."

Gadodia singled out the Indiafest volunteer force for their dedication over 25 years. "It takes a tremendous effort from our volunteer committee members to put on Indiafest. It also takes the dedication of many volunteers who work at Indiafest over the two days. We could not do it without their support."

She added, "We are looking forward to putting on the best Indiafest in its 25--year history. Everyone who is involved in Indiafest this year is especially excited to mark this milestone in the organization’s history."
By Jade A. Logan (jade.logan@porsche.us)
Corporate Spokesperson
And Marcus Kabel (marcus.kabel@porsche.us)
Manager, Corporate Communications
Porsche Cars North America, Inc.

ATLANTA (Feb. 09, 2022) — Porsche has its finger on the pulse — creative and innovative. This applies to the brand’s sports cars and services, but also to trends and new business models.

For this reason, the company has signed a three-year cooperation agreement with South by Southwest (SXSW), the annual festival of tech and culture that brings tens of thousands of professionals to Austin, Texas.

This is also the first year that Porsche will be represented at SXSW, which takes place from March 11–20. The centerpiece of the premiere is an installation in downtown Austin that provides a glimpse into the design process behind the legendary sports cars.


This curated portfolio includes design sketches and completed studies, and will be presented in a custom-built Porsche space close to the SXSW conference center (4th Street). The Porsche space, whose interior will look like the surface of a giant design desk, will also offer creators from music, film, tech and gaming a stage to present their visions and projects. The space encourages conference goers to exchange ideas with designers and engineers from the brand and with team members from Porsche Digital.

“South by Southwest aims to help creative people achieve their goals. And Porsche is the brand for all those who bravely follow their dreams,” says Detlev von Platen, member of the board for sales and marketing at Porsche AG.

“The philosophies of both brands fit together perfectly and we look forward to exchanging ideas with creative minds from all over the world. SXSW holds a special place for emerging talent and we invite them to delve deeper into the world of our brand.”

“SXSW brings the world’s creative professionals together and we’re honored to welcome Porsche to our event over the next three years,” said Jann Basket, SXSW chief brand officer. “Their dedication to innovation and ‘A Creator’s Mind’ align seamlessly with our purpose, and we’re excited to see how our community connects with ‘Porsche Unseen’ next month in Austin.”

About South by Southwest

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of tech, film, music, education, and culture.

An essential destination for global professionals, the annual March event features sessions, music and comedy showcases, film screenings, exhibitions, professional development and a variety of networking opportunities. SXSW proves that the most unexpected discoveries happen when diverse topics and people come together.
Rapid Prototyping Services

Continued from page 13

“And now with the commercial space market starting to grow, it presents a new opportunity for our company,” said Brace. “Commercial space is a whole new avenue to pursue customers. I’m hopeful that the commercial space market will provide us with a lot of business going forward.”

As the commercial space market emerges, with major industry players like SpaceX and Blue Origin, analysts anticipate that 3D printing will eventually be used to build satellites, rockets, and space vehicles in the short term, and space stations and off-earth structures in the long run.

In addition, analysts believe that 3D printing will find roles in creating spaces-on-demand and other 3D printing initiatives are being developed for microgravity by private companies.

“We live in a unique time period in history where we are seeing some really awesome technology come to the market,” said Brace, a University of Central Florida graduate. “On the biomedical side, for example, 3D printing is now being used to treat burn victims. Researchers are making all types of breakthroughs with 3D printing. It’s exciting to see these advances.”

A new handheld 3D printer can deposit sheets of “skin” to cover large burn wounds, and its “bio-ink” can accelerate the healing process. The device covers wounds with a uniform sheet of biomaterial, stripe-by-stripe, according to researchers at the University of Toronto and Sunnybrook Hospital. The bio-ink dispensed by the roller is composed of stem cells. The traditional treatment for deep burns is to cover them with healthy skin harvested from another part of the body. In cases of extensive burns, there often isn’t enough healthy skin to harvest.

Brace also mentioned the growing interest in 3D-printed homes. “Europe has been using 3D printing technology for home construction for quite a few years. I think the companies over there that are involved in it have worked out a lot of the early bugs. It’s an incredible concept and will eliminate errors that are made by labor because it is all computer-controlled. If you want an archway, it’s going to give you an archway. It’s not going to read the plans wrong.”

Of more than 3,000 consumers in a survey, 66 percent would consider living in a 3D-printed home, according to Realtor.com. Millennials are even keener on the idea, at 75 percent. Still, the survey found that 33 percent want to wait and see how 3D-printed homes change over time.

3D-printed homes appear to have a number of advantages, including greater affordability and better energy efficiency. 3D-printed homes also don’t take as much time to build compared to traditional new homes.

According to the Realtor.com survey, 30 percent of respondents believe that 3D-printed homes will eventually replace traditional methods of homebuilding. Twenty-two percent of respondents prefer the “aesthetics” of a traditional home.

“The technology used for 3D-printed homes is identical to the technology I use at my business, but instead of shooting plastic, it shoots concrete, and on a bigger scale,” said Brace.

“The technology is 30-years-old, so it’s proven. Applying it to the construction industry will create new possibilities for companies. They will be able to do some things that can’t be done with block.”

Habitat for Humanity just finished its first 3D-printed home in Williamsburg, Va. The three-bedroom, two-bath concrete structure, which can resist hurricane and tornado damage, was constructed in just 28 hours by Alquist 3D.

The home is featured in the Jan. 3, 2021, online edition of “Architectural Digest.”

Locally, a company called Apis Cor has opened a 3D home showroom at The Avenue Viera. Apis Cor says it is the “world’s first showroom for 3D-printed homes.”

Apis Cor’s warehouse showcases a robot named “Frank,” a revolutionary robotic 3D printer “that will transform the way people think about the construction industry.” Frank is described as “mobile, small, and easy to operate.”

Rapid Prototyping Services is seeing its business bounce back. Brace said he is hopeful this year his company will return to “pre-COVID numbers.”

“Activity started to really pick up in the fourth quarter of last year and January was pretty good. So that’s encouraging. Also, toward the end of last year, three of the conventions which I typically attend, and set up displays, reopened. The three conventions were well attended. COVID-19 safety protocols were in place at the gatherings.”

The three trade shows were hosted at the Orange County Convention Center. “They did a really good job making people feel comfortable about attending the shows. It was great to get back there, because for the last year and half there were no shows at that facility because of the pandemic.”

The Orange County Convention Center provides roughly $3 billion in economic impact to Central Florida annually. In recent years, the facility has averaged 200 events, including 115 conventions and trade shows that attract more than 1.5 million people to the region each year, according to the Orange County government.

Trade shows have been instrumental to building brands, forging business relationships, and much more. Trade shows present professional networking opportunities, enable attendees to keep up-to-date on industry trends, experience new technologies and products, and see innovation up close.

Brace said he has a number of trade shows on his 2022 schedule. “We’re looking to showcase the company’s abilities in the 3D printing sector at the trade shows. Expectations for growth for 3D printing for production remain high. We’re optimistic this is going to be a good year for our firm.”
Research for the benefit of all humankind.

A bold idea, perhaps, but it happens every day at Florida Tech. From disease treatment to prosthetic design, faculty experts and ambitious students are honing health initiatives and prescribing progress.

Consider the research of biomedical engineers like Linxia Gu, Ph.D. Her studies in biomechanics and biomaterials are helping to better understand the human brain and to engineer more effective medical technologies.

Learn about Dr. Gu’s research and meet more outstanding faculty at FLORIDATECH.EDU/BIOMED
US Cyber Team

Continued from page 1

Included cryptography, networking, web applications, and reconnaissance.

Capture-the-Flag events are computer-security competitions where participants try to obtain the highest score. Flags are usually random strings of information embedded in the challenges.

Then 60 of the participants received invitations to the US Cyber Combine, which ran from July to September 2021. Akin to a football combine, the athletes underwent an aptitude evaluation, interviewed with coaches, trained in cybersecurity skills, and competed in an advanced Capture-the-Flag event. Coaches then selected the top 20 athletes to join the first US Cyber Team, which culminated in the US Cyber Team Draft Day.

The team is preparing for the International Cybersecurity Challenge June 14–17 in Athens, Greece, generally considered the birthplace of Western Civilization. The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, along with other regional and international organizations, is hosting the event.

The “fans unite site” for the event is https://www.USCybergames.com/fans. #GotUSCyberTeam. There is also an “official” US Cyber Games store to purchase merchandise and support the team. The site is https://shop.USCybergames.com.

US Cyber Team members, ages 18 to 26, will compete against athletes from other nations. The International Cybersecurity Challenge will mirror competitive video gaming, also known as eSports. The competition was designed to inspire the next generation of cybersecurity talent.

“I believe that everyone who is competing on this team will go on to make a huge difference in the nation in defending our security,” said Dr. O’Connor, adding that the team members represent a range of academic institutions, “but they did not have to be academically associated.”

The team captains are: Sam Hayden, Capital Technology University; Sears Schulz, U.S. Air Force Academy and Carnegie Mellon University; and Sam Meyers, University of Virginia.

US Cyber Games was founded by Katzcy LLC — a northern Virginia–based digital–marketing firm — in partnership with the National Institute for Cybersecurity Education program at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The US Cyber Games Commissioner is Jessica Gulick, a cybersecurity practitioner and the founder and CEO of Katzcy.

Dr. O’Connor’s deputy coach for the US Cyber Team is Jasmine Jackson, a senior applications security engineer in private industry.

According to the US Cyber Games website, the coach roster also includes Dr. Dane Brown, assistant professor, U.S. Naval Academy, curriculum committee chairman, Cyber Science Department; Dr. Byrson Payne, professor and director, Center for Cyber Ops, University of North Georgia; and Dr. Suzanna Schneekll, assistant professor of cyber–security and program director, St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y.

Dr. O’Connor is a 1999 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., where he earned his bachelor’s degree in computer science. He served 20 years as a U.S. Army officer, retiring in 2019 at the rank of lieutenant colonel. His service included four assignments in support of the Special Forces, from the tactical level in Afghanistan and culminated as the chief information officer for the 1st Special Forces’ Command Headquarters.

He has a master’s degree in information security engineering from SANS Technology Institute.

Dr. O’Connor’s career with the U.S. Army included an academic appointment to the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department at the U.S. Military Academy. He taught computer science and ran the cybersecurity program there.

That was a great experience. And that’s why I am at Florida Tech today. Getting to teach at West Point and being part of the growth of the students was a very positive experience. When I left that assignment, I knew I was going back to the Special Forces and I knew it was going to be hard work ahead. But I knew that at the end of my military career, that if everything worked out, I was going to my Ph.D. and I was going back to academia."

He is a shining example of the highly credentialed faculty members Florida Tech has been able to recruit. Five years ago, Florida Tech for the first time began an academic tenure system for faculty. That helped put the school on an upward trajectory in attracting standout applicants.

Dr. T. Dwayne McCay, Florida Tech’s president and CEO, said in a “BBN” story published Sept. 6, 2021, “The key to our success is our faculty.” He added that “quality faculty produce quality graduates.”

Recently, the US Cyber Games Accelerated Training Program was established to identify high-potential cyber–athletes who would benefit from special access to cyber–security education, training, and mentoring, said Dr. O’Connor.

“We are selecting a number of students who come from historically marginalized backgrounds, and are teaching them top– tier cybersecurity skills. We are putting them in the program. Next year, hopefully, they will develop the skills to compete in the combine and potentially make the team. This is one way we can onboard more historically marginalized groups into the field.”

Inductees to this exclusive program take part in a six-month training schedule that includes small–group mentorship with the coaches. Athletes who perform well in the program are automatically invited to the next season’s US Cyber Combine.

This is not Dr. O’Connor’s first experience with teams and competition. He serves as coach for FITSec, Florida Tech’s award–winning cybersecurity competition team.

Since its 2019 founding by then–student Josh Connolly, FITSec has earned several top 10 placements, as well as first place at the 2020 US Cyber Challenge regional championship and eighth place at the Fall 2020 National Cyber League Competition, where more than 5,000 students competed.

The team won the US Cyber Quest Eastern Regions in 2020 and placed third in the Eastern Regions in 2021.

Dr. O’Connor says he stays in touch with his students. Recently, he received an email from a student who had graduated from Florida Tech.

The student was interviewing for a job in his field.

The recruiter’s first question: “Tell me about an exciting project you did in the classroom at Florida Tech.” The student talked for half–an–hour. The company made him an offer the same day.

“I have a folder on my desktop that says ‘feel good.’ Every time a student sends me one of those types of stories, I drag it over and put it in the feel–good folder. When I get an email like that or a comment from a student that their life has been bettered with a huge job opportunity, it makes my day,” said Dr. O’Connor.

The job opportunities are coming their way. The Florida Tech students are prepared and ready to take on the next challenge.

“I have a responsibility when young men and young women come to Florida Tech to get an education in computer science that they are able to translate their education into something that allows them to enter the workforce,” he said.

“It would bother me if I were giving them thoughts and they couldn’t put them into processes. As a computer scientist, and a computer scientist focused on cybersecurity, it’s great to see the job opportunities these students are receiving. They are in demand. One company that does intelligence work for the U.S. Department of Defense has hired our last five students who graduated. We have created a Florida Tech talent pipeline.”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that “information security analyst” will be the 10th fastest–growing occupation over the next decade, with an employment growth rate of 31% compared to the 4% average growth rate for all occupations.

In U.S. News’ “100 Best Jobs Rankings,” information security analyst jumped 14 spots from last year to the top of this year’s ranking. On the second floor of the L3Harris Center for Science and Engineering is a laboratory that is making a difference in the world of cybersecurity. Among the computers, servers, multicolored background lights, and rows of doorbell cameras, research is underway that is changing how companies secure their hardware.

The Florida Tech Internet of Things Security and Privacy Lab is a state–of–the–art facility that is on the cutting edge of analyzing IoT security. The lab is part of the L3Harris Institute for Assurance Information. A fairly new venture, researchers at the lab have already made some key security findings.

In May 2020, the lab announced a major discovery, as computer science student Blake Janes found “systemic design flaws” in internet–connected doorbell and security cameras from Ring, Nest, SimpliSafe and eight other manufacturers.

The flaw allowed a shared account that appeared to have been removed to remain in place with continued access to the video feed.

Janes discovered that the mechanism for removing user accounts from these smart devices is not intended by the manufacturers to remove active user accounts. This allowed potential “malicious actors” to exploit the flaw to retain access to the camera system indefinitely, covertly recording audio and video in a substantial invasion of privacy or instances of electronic stalking.

The findings were presented in the paper “Never–Ending Story: Authentication and Access Control Design Flaws in Shared IoT Devices,” by Janes, Dr. O’Connor and then–computer engineering and sciences assistant professor Dr. Heather Crawford.

Janes’ work informed vendors about the vulnerabilities and offered several strategies to remediate the underlying problems, which led to contact from Google, Samsung, and other vendors regarding solutions.

Dr. O’Connor said his students not only find problems, but they also offer solutions to fix them. “I had the students contact the vendors and let them know that there were issues that made their cameras vulnerable.”

He added, “Some of the vendors have been phenomenal. Google, for example, awarded one of our students $3,300 to help with his education and brought him in on the process of actually fixing the vulnerability. They called him up and told him he did great work. Itnice to be recognized by a company like Google.”

Dr. O’Connor said as part of their work, “the students have briefed some agencies and government organizations to make them aware of issues that might affect the national intelligence community.”

He added, “These experiences have been incredibly positive for the students.”
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