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FREE

PRESSING Business



JOHN KOULBANIS / Charlestown Press

If you have a virus, call a doctor – but if your computer catches one, maybe Bernard Martin has the cure. Martin has been tinkering with things since he was a kid – a hobby his mother didn't always appreciate!

Bernard Martin's Cuckoo Plan Became a 5 Star Idea

By John Christian Hopkins
 Charlestown Press

As a kid, Bernard Martin wanted to be a pilot – today his self-owned computer business is really starting to soar.

Martin, of Carolina, has just celebrated the one-year anniversary of 5 Star Personal Computer Services. His business opened its doors on Aug. 27, 2003.

"It's been one year," Martin said. "Wow, one year already."

Martin teaches people how to use the Internet and even does computer repairs.

"When I was a kid, I always loved taking things apart. I took them apart, I had to see how they worked," Martin said. "The problem was that I couldn't put them back together."

His curiosity got the better of him once when he just had to know how his mother's cuckoo clock worked.

"She wasn't happy about that. She's never let me forget it," he said.

But these days, Martin has mastered putting things back together.

"People have problems with their computers and they get frustrated," Martin said. That's where he comes in. "I've always loved to tinker."

Martin began working with computers back in 1965 – before there were personal computers and lap-tops. He began before the Internet was the apple of Bill Gate's

"When I was a kid, I always loved taking things apart."

– Bernard Martin

eyes.

The first computer he worked on was an old IBM 1401.

"I started at ground zero," he said.

When people have computer problems they usually ignore them until they get worse; or go to some large, expensive computer chain.

"I try to offer an alternative," Martin said.

He also has found a niche in teaching older people how to surf the Web.

Once computers were rare – mysterious metal boxes found on a Star Trek episode – and now they're almost an essential part of life, Martin said.

"People use them for fun, for business and to stay in contact with family."

He and his wife, Andrea, stay in touch with family through emails and online photos.

For many older people, who grew up in a time before Web surfing, chat rooms and buddy lists the new importance of the Internet can seem daunting, Martin said. But he specializes in showing people how to use the computer.

He remembered one older client, in his early 70s, who was operating a part-time business selling shoes. He had no concept of Web marketing, Martin said.

"He didn't even know how to open an email," Martin said. The man knows now, and his business is strong.

So is Martin's.

When he decided he wanted to go into business for himself, he went to the Community College of Rhode Island and took some business courses. He knows it takes about five years for a small business to really take off.

One year after starting 5 Star, Bernard Martin is right on schedule.

Oh, and for that other dream of his. He did earn a private pilot's license.

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