

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF PRESS RELEASE

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Austin Free-Net Partners with Texas School for the Deaf for Video Game Development Weekend for Teens

Discovery Retreat: What's Your Game? An Introduction to Video Game Development April 12-14, 2013

Austin, Texas – April 12, 2013 – This weekend, the Texas School for the Deaf's (TSD) outreach center hosts one of the premier programs for Texas' teens who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Discovery Retreat this year - *What's Your Game? An Introduction to Video Game Development* – is primarily a career exploration program where students team with professionals to develop video games during an intense and fun-filled weekend.

But, it's really an opportunity for students to explore who they are, build self-confidence, and help them discover what they want to be. And for many students – some who've never met another deaf or hard of hearing peer or role model – TSD knows it can be a life changing experience.

TSD's outreach center, the Educational Resource Center on Deafness (ERCOD) – is a place for all Texans who need information and resources about programs and services for deaf and hard of hearing children - and support for the families and professionals working with them - to come for help. TSD's ERCOD, from its home base here in Austin, focuses its efforts on the approximate 5,000 students who are deaf and hard of hearing in schools all across Texas.

Thanks to local TSD/ERCOD partner - Austin Free-Net (AFN) - students at the retreat will hammer out their own video game creations on ten HP desktop computer systems – on loan and outfitted by AFN – with the latest software from GameSalad® and GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program).

GameSalad® is a cross-platform, drag-and-drop video game development tool the students will use to create their own action packed games they can immediately share with their peers. Students will work in teams to design and program their video games, and then market their final products to a panel of judges – professionals who are deaf or hard of hearing, currently working in a variety of technology fields.

Students will mingle with several deaf and hard of hearing role models throughout the weekend, including two nationally known deaf computer scientists who will lead the retreat activities. Kurt Stoskopf - an assistant professor in the Arts & Imaging Studies Department at the Rochester Institute of Technology's National Institute for the Deaf (RIT/NTID), will help students in the design and marketing phases of their projects. Bill Huber - software test engineer with IBM-Austin and an alumnus of RIT, will guide the students in their programming tasks. Both Stoskopf and Huber bring a wealth of experience to share with the group of young adults.

“Since the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in the U.S., things have changed dramatically and many new doors have opened for people with disabilities, says Huber. This retreat for high school students is an excellent opportunity for them to explore new career opportunities in a variety of computer science and high-tech fields.”

With successful professionals like Stoskopf and Huber to inspire students, and the latest technology from Austin Free-Net, TSD's 2013 Discovery Retreat will not only introduce students to fields of work in areas they may not have known of or considered before – the ultimate goal of the weekend is for students to gain confidence and determination to

conquer any challenges they may face and achieve whatever they aspire to do in their futures, professionally, and in everyday life.

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ABOUT THE TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF (TSD)

The Texas School for the Deaf is the oldest continuously operating public school in Texas. Educating deaf and hard of hearing students of Texas since 1856, the campus also provides outreach and educational resources for students, their families and professionals in the field throughout the state of Texas. With educational excellence and a strong belief in a culture and community at TSD, students form a unique identity based on their individual strengths and talents. TSD is an environment where students learn, grow, and belong. For more information about the Texas School for the Deaf, visit <http://www.tsd.state.tx.us/>.

ABOUT THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DEAFNESS (ERCOD) AT TSD

The Educational Resource Center on Deafness (ERCOD) brings the resources of the Texas School for the Deaf to the state, as well as, works collaboratively with a variety of agencies, programs, and schools across Texas to create a network of information, services, and support designed to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, their families, and the professionals who serve them. For information and resources, please visit: www.texasdhhresources.org.

ABOUT AUSTIN FREE-NET (AFN)

With a strong focus on under served communities, Austin Free-Net (AFN) provides technology training and access to those in the community. Fostering skills that enable people to succeed in a digital age, AFN's computer labs and classes are open to all. The knowledge of AFN, and its trained staff, help people obtain jobs, improve their lives, and participate as active citizens. Austin Free-Net is a 501(c)3 Nonprofit Corporation operating in the State of Texas. To learn more, visit: www.austinfreenet.net.