

The Gazette

Need v

If you're loc
check out t
on hundred
in today's a
Inside toda

POTOMAC

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2005 · 25 CENTS · WWW.G

Today's Gazette

Regional A-16

Critics want grading
policy delayed

Business A-41

News, notes about
local businesses

Auto	A-81
Classifieds	A-57
Community Forum	A-14
Insurance Services	A-41
Legal & Financial	A-43
School News	B-19
Sports	A-45

The Gazette2



Entertainment

Fling into spring
with outdoor fairs
and festivals

B-1

Youth Press

Teens weigh in on
First Amendment

B-20



Homes C-1

Spotlight
on Planned



Susan Whitney-Wilkerson/The Gazette

Andreas Labropoulos (left), 10, of Bethesda, is tutored by Danny Jumblatt, 17, of Potomac, of Peer2Peer Tutors during a free tutoring session offered at the Potomac Community Center. The Potomac-based tutoring service is student run and owned. "My son Andreas feels comfortable with a teen [tutor] because they're so close in age," said his mother Poly Labropoulos, who uses the service on a regular basis.

Teen tutors take pain out of homework

In Peer2Peer, top
students recruited
to build some more

by Peggy Vaughn

Staff Writer

Years of studying hard are paying off in more than good grades for an enterprising group of teens.

Thirty of some of the brightest students from Winston Churchill, Wootton and Walt Whitman high schools are employed as tutors by Peer2Peer

Tutors, a company founded by a Potomac teen last year.

The students tutor elementary through high school students in a variety of subjects, and aside from earning a nice paycheck, are learning a few valuable lessons themselves about what it takes in time and effort to be a mentor and a tutor.

"I earn \$15 an hour, a lot more than a retail job would pay, plus I feel really useful," said Danny Jumblatt, 17, of Potomac, a Churchill senior who tutors six to seven hours a week.

Two of his clients are new to high school, so he soon found himself explaining more than just chemistry for-

mulas.

"I know the teachers, know what they want from their students, know how to navigate high school," Jumblatt said. "I can explain a lot more to my clients than just the subject [material]."

When it comes to tutoring his 10-year-old client, Jumblatt said he assumes a big brother role, albeit a big brother that focuses on math and spelling.

"I was a kid just 10 years ago, so I feel like I understand what my [client] is thinking and feeling," he said. "I

See **Peers**, page A-13

PEERS

Continued from A-1

help him with math, but I also assure him that he won't be stuffed into a locker at middle school."

That ability to empathize and communicate is key to the company's success, said founder and CEO Erik Kimel, 18, of Potomac.

"We don't look for just the academically talented, our tutors have to be able to convey the information," he said. "They need to relate to their clients."

Now a freshman at New York University's Stern School of Business, Kimel devotes several hours a day to running the company from his Manhattan dorm room.

Over the past 18 months, the company has organized some 800 hour-long sessions for 80 clients. In 2004, it earned more than \$20,000 in revenues, Kimel said.

He advertises the service in newspapers and PTA newsletters, as well as the free tutoring sessions like those recently offered earlier this month at the Potomac Community Center. Some 40 students and their parents turned up to try out the tutors, including Jasmine Jian of Rockville and her 7- and 8-year-old children.

"The tutors made the homework feel like fun," she said. "My kids got the work done without the usual pressure."

The idea of having peers tutor peers occurred to Kimel while he sat in a calculus class at Winston Churchill High School last school year, he said.

"I looked at the bright people around me and thought, some of these people would make great tutors and they could do it in a less intimidating way than usual," he said.

During the final semester of his senior year, he recruited 25 of the brightest students at his school and organized more than 400 hour-long tutoring sessions ranging from Algebra to Chinese.

The sessions cost \$35 an hour, but packages of multiple sessions can be purchased for less. The tutoring normally takes place in the client's home.

"The company was rolling so I decided to keep it going [from college]," Kimel said.

On frequent visits home he meets with Adam Jaffe, a Winston Churchill senior who acts as regional manager and oversees the recruitment and training of tutors at the three high schools involved in the program.

Jaffe, 17, of Potomac, carefully selected the 30 students hired this year from among the nearly 60 applicants vying for the job. Grades, personality and communication skills all play a role in getting hired, he said.

"I informally check people out as possible candidates, know a lot of the [applicants] personally, and ask teachers for recommendations," he said. "Our tutors need to be special because they become friends and mentors [to clients] and kids look up to them as role models."

Turnover is naturally a problem since many of the tutors leave the program at the end of their senior year or find that tutoring conflicts too much with their sports activities, Jaffe said.

Still, he hopes to bring the program to whatever college town he ends up at, a sentiment expressed by other teens involved in the service.

"I've been with the program since it started and it's been more than a paycheck," said Allyson Segal, 17, of Bethesda, a Winston Churchill senior. "It's taught me so much about time management and dealing with kids."

By next school year, Kimel wants to expand the business by hiring mothers on a part-time basis to coordinate the tutoring sessions and bring in new customers in three additional school clusters.

"Our clients are the moms, not the kids, because the mom is the one that seeks us out," he said.

And the tutors like nothing better than being told by a client that they are out of a job.

"We teach kids how to study and the skills needed to do the work on their own," said Sara Kimel, 16, a tutor and sister of the company founder. "At a certain point, the clients should be able to do it all on their own."