

# NEW AT THE ROCKVILLE INNOVATION CENTER

## Peer2Peer Tutors Growing Fast



**T**wenty-two-year-old entrepreneur Erik Kimel started Peer2Peer Tutors based on the belief that students learn best from other students. Kimel just graduated from New York University last May. He had started the business as a high school senior at Winston Churchill High School in Montgomery County. In 2002, Kimel placed a one-inch ad in "The Gazette" offering tutoring services from a high-achieving high school student – himself. When he couldn't handle any more clients, he started recruiting top classmates as tutors. Within the first six months, Peer2Peer had completed over 400 hours of tutoring.

Last spring, Kimel made the business his full-time occupation. Peer2Peer was accepted into the Rockville Innovation Center small business incubator on August 1 and is now thriving. "The Innovation Center saw that we create a lot of jobs," said Erik Kimel. "We've had over 350 top students work for us over the

last few years. Plus, we're a great client for virtual space. Our tutors work from home and go to you, and we only need a conference room occasionally."



The company has made some major strides over the past several months. First, recognizing that parents are the ones that write the checks for tutoring, Kimel introduced Management Operations Mentors (MOMs) to his business plan. "MOMs are scheduling liaisons between our clients and tutors," said Kimel. "When parents call, they speak to another parent, PTA person, or ex-teacher. These are our 'matchmakers,' and they're good for our business."

Another move is a completely revamped Web site ([www.peer2peertutors.com](http://www.peer2peertutors.com)). Kimel spent time studying systems like Domino's Pizza and UPS. Peer2Peer has now built its own proprietary software for location-based criteria, so that the company can quickly match student tutors with other students.

Most recently Peer2Peer Tutors began offering drop-in hours on Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Rockville Innovation Center, located at 155 Gibbs Street. For a fee, students can come in for up to 1.5 hours to help prepare for that upcoming quiz, test, or project. Contact Ann Connelly at [aconnelly@peer2peertutors.com](mailto:aconnelly@peer2peertutors.com) for additional information and upcoming dates.

Kimel is now talking about growth, as well, with new Peer2Peer services in Fairfax and Howard Counties, and MOMs in both areas. "We're building on our past experiences to better serve our clients, our tutors, and our community," he said.