

Some see the virtues of virtual office space

BY EMI ENDO
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Whether they're in Glen Cove or St. James, employees of Wade Johnson's architecture firm can have secure access to the same set of 25 drawings through an online computer network.

When a customer calls John Carbone of Garden City, who heads an information technology consultant company, a professional receptionist takes the call and routes it to wherever Carbone is.

These are examples of ways "virtual offices" can help small businesses and startups save on overhead costs and enable employees to work remotely from home or elsewhere.

Johnson's architecture firm uses Compugeeks, of Farmingdale, of

its information technology services. Compugeeks recently launched a bundle of services, offered month-to-month, said president John Scharfglass. The package includes Voice Over Internet Protocol phone systems, a secure instant messaging program and hosted services that allow employees to access a server and e-mail, contacts and calendar data.

After the economic downturn left major projects up in the air, Johnson decided to downsize his firm, now called R. Wade Design in St. James — once as large as 20 employees with a Melville office — to four independent contractors and one assistant. They use Johnson's home office in St. James as necessary.

"Rather than just letting everybody go," he said, this setup "allows them to develop their

[own] businesses and for me to be in a position to kind of draw them in when we have work."

For Carbone, president of Quantum Logic Corp., it made sense to use the phone service and physical office space of Intelligent Office, in Garden City.

"It gives someone all of the resources, support and image of a full-time office," said Roger Kahn, owner of Intelligent Office, but "you pay for only what you use."

Kahn added that his company allows a small business to use a recognizable commercial mailing address instead of a home office address or post office box.

"People's offices are now basically in their laptops," Kahn said. "They're constantly in the office — even though they may be sitting at Jones Beach."



NEWSDAY PHOTO / THOMAS A. FERRARA

Jake Spinowitz's foundation donates hearing aids to the needy.

Teen business pair honored

BY PATRICIA KITCHEN
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When he was studying Photoshop in seventh grade, Zach West, 18, of Great Neck had no idea his interest in digital design would lead to founding a business that would win him a \$40,000 college scholarship.

Likewise, when Jake Spinowitz, 18, of Woodbury came across some of his used hearing aids some years ago, little did he know he would create a nonprofit that collects used hearing aids to be refurbished — and that his endeavor would also win him a \$40,000 scholarship.

West and Spinowitz are among this year's 69 recipients of scholarships awarded by the McKelvey Foundation, a Manhattan nonprofit that fosters teen entrepreneurship. The winners "have a hobby they know they can take to the next level and earn some money for doing it," foundation president Christine McKelvey said. Yet, they're driven not by money but by developing a passion, she said.

Winners have ranged from an event planner to a landscaper to a specialty chocolate maker. To qualify, entrepreneurs must be graduating seniors who have owned and operated their ventures for at least a year.

Spinowitz, born with severe hearing loss that since has been corrected by implant surgery, was rifling through a drawer one holiday season looking for books and toys to be donated. He came across his old hearing aids and wondered how they might be donated to those in need. That led to his founding in 2005 of Lend An Ear Long Island, which collects new, unused or old hearing aids, and has them refurbished and distributed to the hearing impaired in need.

Spinowitz, who attends Syosset High School, said he was thrilled to get the news of the scholarship, which will help defray the cost of studies at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

West, who goes to Great Neck South High School, started Zach West Web Design & Technology in 2007, with clients now including a job site for college students and a nonprofit political action group.

He plans to attend Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., as a business major and said of the award, "I can't explain how appreciative and happy I am."



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