

Idaho teen kicking out own karate app for iPad

JOE ESTRELLA Associated Press

Cody Brown won't be pounding the pavement to find a job this summer like other Treasure Valley high school students.

Instead, the Kuna High sophomore honor student — a self-taught computer programmer who is already marketing an Apple iPhone application on the work of French astronomer Charles Messier — will be at his laptop writing code for a new iPad program. This time, it will be on martial arts.

This spring, Brown is waiting for sales of his "Messier" application to begin producing royalty payments from Apple.

To his surprise, the 99-cent program sold online at the iTunes App Store is posting daily sales in the United States and overseas.

"I didn't know if it was going to sell," Brown said. "When I saw that it was, I thought it was people my dad had told about it. Then I saw that it was selling in Europe and thought, well, we don't know anybody in those countries."

And if you haven't dabbled in mobile apps yet, this is big business.

Apps now number more than 185,000 for the iPhone but just 4,000 for the brand-new iPad, said a Baltimore Sun story recently that outlined the race among developers to cash in on the burgeoning market.

A big Silicon Valley venture capital firm doubled its funding for promising iPhone and iPad developers to \$200 million last month, the story said. Along with Apple, mobile brands like BlackBerry and Google's Android are also opening new doors for enterprising developers.

Brown's father, Dave, founder of CyberHighway Internet Services, said he deliberately kept his distance from his son's project, despite a background in routing engineering and network infrastructure design that would have allowed him to help write the code.

"There were times when Cody was tearing his hair out," said Dave Brown. "But he went and did the research and figured it out. You have to give kids a chance to fail, if they're ever going to learn how to succeed."

Astronomy and martial arts are not Brown's only passions.

He's also holds a Junior Master Scuba Diver certification from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors. At the age of 12 he wrote "Scuba for Kids," donating part of the proceeds to the Project AWARE Foundation that works to

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protect the underwater environment. For the past three years, he's written a monthly column for Northwest Dive News Magazine on topics ranging from the use of underwater propulsion vehicles, to protecting the world's oceans, to what he calls people's "paranoia about sharks."

But his computer program-writing skills are drawing the most attention.

His "Messier" application is a catalog of 112 "deep sky" objects identified by the 18th century astronomer, including images of star clusters, hydrogen gas clouds where stars are born, the constellations where they are located, when they can be viewed and their exact coordinates.

So far, reviews of the "Messier" app posted on iTunes are averaging three-and-half stars out of five. One reviewer described its images as "close to how you see objects through your telescope."

Art Martini, former president of the Boise Astronomical Society, introduced Brown to astronomy at the group's annual Star Party. Today he calls Brown "the next Stephen Hawking," a reference to the famed British physicist and mathematician whose research supports the big bang theory of the origin of the universe.

"I think it's amazing that a 16-year-old could write such a computer program," Martini said.

Brown's passion for the stars has impressed society members so much that he's allowed to keep the group's 18-inch-diameter Next Generation Telescope at his home in Kuna.

"He's shown that he's responsible enough to be entrusted with it," Martini said. "I would trust him with my own telescope."

Brown's iPad program will focus on Kenpo Karate. It will involve creating nine different applications that will use video to demonstrate the techniques required to earn everything from a beginner's yellow belt to three different black belt degrees.

Brown has been involved in the sport for 10 years and holds a junior black belt.

"It's going to be a lot more complex because I have never done this before," he said. "and so much of program writing involves having done something a million times before."

The application will sell for \$1.99 when completed.

For the video component, he has enlisted the help of his instructor, Mitch Tippett, a fifth-degree Kenpo Karate black belt who will be shown demonstrating leverage techniques, which can be employed by a smaller person, to more heavy impact moves for larger individuals.

"Cody is not just a geek," Tippett said. "He's got a sharp mind and athletic talent."

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That's rare in such a well-balanced young man."

Tippett predicts that with the worldwide interest in Kenpo Karate, and the popularity of Apple's devices, Brown's next application will out-perform his first computer program.

"This is definitely going to attract attention," he said.

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