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Altadena resident keeps computers, children safe

By Becky Oskin
STAFF WRITER

ALTADENA — Computer security whiz Mike Lattimore, 47, has an impressive list of volunteer activities, many of which center on computers and technology. A father of three, Lattimore lives with his wife and children in Altadena, where he worked from home Thursday battling a new computer virus.

Q. You seem pretty busy today. What are you working on?

A. I do computer security for a local utility company. I like this kind of drama, it makes me feel like I'm really doing something here. I don't publicize the company because if someone is looking to penetrate your system, they watch the security. Often hackers will wait until the security principals are on vacation (to attack).

Q. How did you get involved in computers?

A. Computers are like a third career for me. I started off



LATTIMORE

as a pressman and lithographer, then became an entertainment photographer. I did Michael Jackson concerts when he had an Afro. Then I worked for game shows, and from there I began to dabble and dabble with the Macintosh computer. I was promoted to marketing director for Speciality Merchandise Corp. and I got involved with converting their catalog operations to digital. The next thing you know I had a computer network in my living room.

Q. A lot of your volunteer work involves computers. What do you tell kids about computers?

A. I go out and do career days. I have a program I call Hackers and Helpers. I talk about how kids can take those (hacking) skills and use them for "The Force" instead of the "Dark Side."

I also set up and mentor a

community technology access center in Pasadena. Right now we're working on a broad band installation project. We've had a couple people hired at Earthlink already. It looks like we found a niche.

Conversations
WITH THE ORDINARY
AND EXTRAORDINARY



Q. You've also competed at the Toastmaster World Championships. What was that like?

A. The first year I was in Toastmasters my mentor encouraged me to get involved in the humor speech contest. I got in that contest, then the following year I got into the international contest, but I didn't go too far that year. In 1999, I went all the way to world championships in Chicago.

Each step of the way I couldn't believe that I had won. I never intended to go to the world championships. Even my Mom came to the regional competition in San Diego. She told

me "I'm not impressed 'cause you've always been running your mouth."

Q. How was your trip to Chicago?

A. Chicago was my hometown. It was a real homecoming.

The neat part was right after the contest we went to the 45th anniversary of the Chicago Children's Choir. I am one of the world's oldest living members of the choir.

The Rev. Christopher Moore, the choir director, reached out to me as a young person. He changed the direction of my life. I grew up in a neighborhood called Woodlawn, and many of my friends succumbed to (gangs). Christopher gave me a glimpse of something outside that environment, and what's more, he allowed me to believe in myself. That has become my mission today, and now my role is to pass this on to young people.

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