



INSIDE TODAY: FCIAAC SPRING SPORTS WRAP-UP



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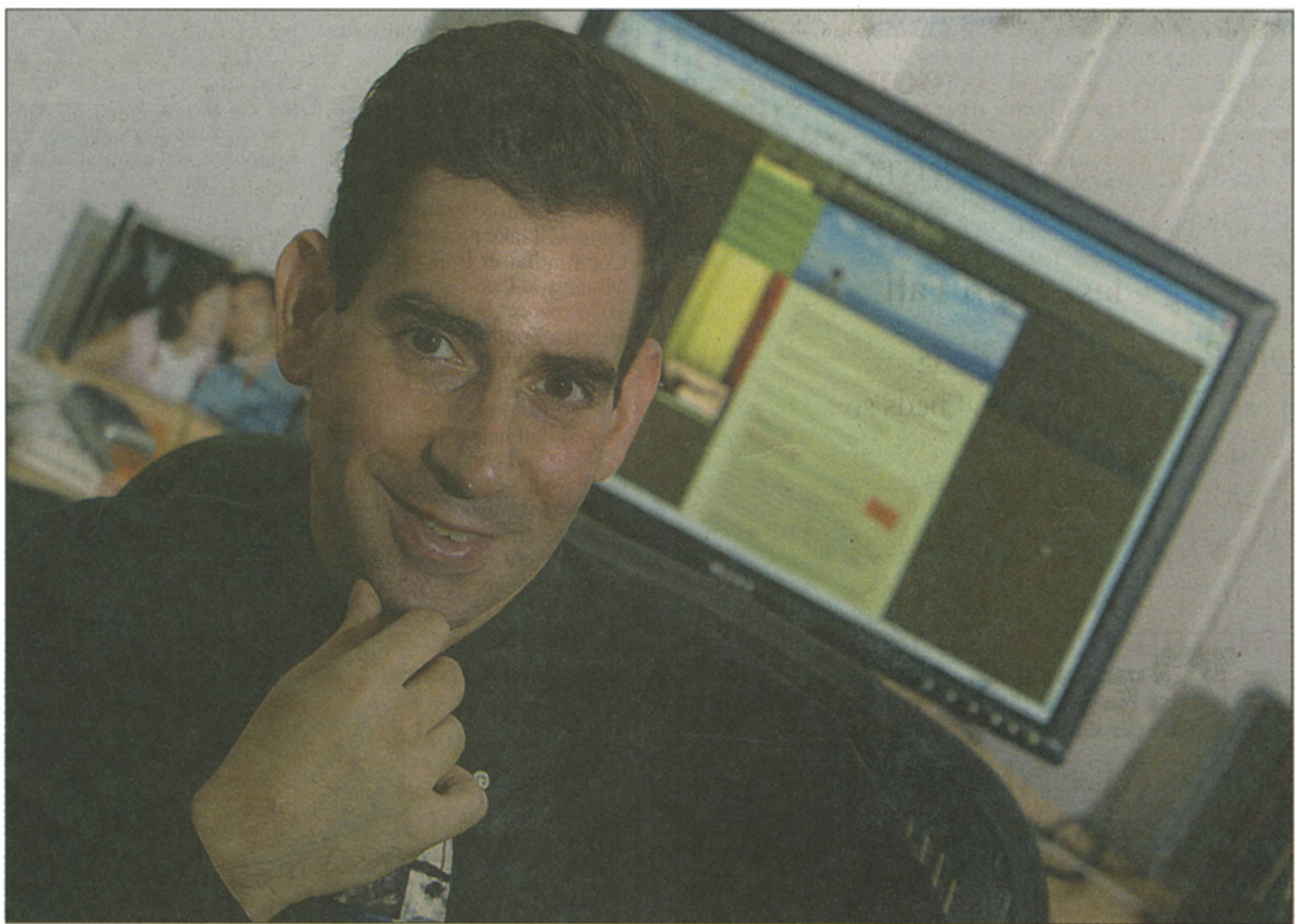
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Paul Desmarais/Staff photo

Andrew DiFiore, president and creative director of answerYES Consulting, in his Stamford office.

Web developer holds key for prisoner help site

By Richard Lee
Assistant Business Editor

When Katherine Vockins asked Stamford resident Andrew DiFiore to develop her organization's Web site, DiFiore knew he would have to dig into his decade of Internet experience to carefully craft a well-conceived message.

After all, how often does someone get the challenge of creating a Web site for a program that helps prepare prisoners to cope with life after their release.

Vockins chose DiFiore, president and creative director of answerYes Consulting, a Web site developer and online marketing firm, to create the site for Prison Communities International after he developed a Web site for her business, KV Marketing Inc., several years ago.

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"It had been done by volunteers, and it looked like it was done by volunteers," said Vockins, developer of a program called "Rehab Through the Arts." "He is extremely intelligent and a good listener. The initial look was his. The Web site is an affirmation of who we are and the quality of professionalism we bring."

Working with drama students and instructors at New York University, Vockins' program uses theater to improve the self-confidence, anger management, discipline and leadership skills of prisoners at Sing

Sing penitentiary in New York state. "We had to be careful in our presentation. We didn't want to be dark and negative," said DiFiore, who developed a tagline for the site, "Going Beyond the Walls."

He and Vockins also wanted to develop a site that delivers a message to potential funders and volunteers without confusing them with a cluttered presentation.

DiFiore has also worked with businesses such as Treasure Hunt Adventures, a Mount Carmel, N.Y., operation that promotes corporate team-building through orienteering and map-reading.

DiFiore created a Web site and viral marketing campaign to promote Treasure Hunt, which conducted its first corporate program in 1990 for Pepsico. The compa-

ny's client list includes ADT, GE Capital, Pfizer and Verizon.

The site that Treasure Hunt founder Chris Cassone developed to start his business just was not meeting his needs.

"I needed a his, captivate Web site. He's (DiFiore) been instrumental in helping my business grow," said Cassone, who has offices in Los Angeles and New York.

He met DiFiore through their association with the Sober Teens organization, where DiFiore volunteered his technical assistance.

Cassone said DiFiore was able to develop a Web site that led to a major increase in his business. A key ingredient in the online success of Treasure Hunt has been its marketing promotions.

"We did viral marketing for Treasure Hunt," DiFiore said. "We can see how many saw the viral, clicked on it and made a purchase."

About 20 percent of those who click also buy.

The focus of viral marketing is to build brand recognition for a product or service by providing Web site visitors with an opportunity to pass on information to others. Resembling commercials, the information often comes in the form of videos or interactive flash games.

"I'm not a big fan of in-your-face marketing," DiFiore said, commenting that he prefers creating an interactive format that gives participants a feeling of ownership in the process. "It treats customers like partners."

Viral marketing is a hot way to circulate buzz about a brand, said Kevin McEvoy, marketing professor at the Stamford branch of the University of Connecticut.

"It's something that a lot of clients see value in. It's growing, but it's kind of a fad," he said.

While it's likely to find a place as a standard method of marketing, McEvoy said consumers will eventually grow wary of the technique, and new online strategies will be developed.

"Marketing is applied psychology," McEvoy said. "The market changes every second."