

June 1, 2009

HOUSTON  CHRONICLE

FACES IN THE CROWD: Student finds success as business entrepreneur

By Kim Morgan

Austin Brinson is the consummate businessman who knows the value of networking, and never misses an opportunity to hand out his business card.

That's commendable for someone who is 18-years-old, but that's not all.

Brinson, who graduates this week from the Academy of Science and Technology at The Woodlands College Park High School, became a Microsoft-certified system administrator when he was 13, the summer before seventh grade.

"I don't like sitting around," Brinson said. "I took classes instead."

A couple of years later, when he was 15, Brinson launched his own computer repair services company, Texas Power Tech Inc.

In 2006, he expanded his services to include Web design.

Brinson has 10 independent contractors working for him, an active client list of approximately 20, and in 2008 he generated \$40,000 in sales.

Nishanth Nagavelli, also a recent graduate from the Academy of Science and Technology, has been working for Brinson for four years.

"We've worked together since the start," Nagavelli said. "I was his first employee. He's pretty direct with what he wants from us. He makes it clear. It's pretty cool."

Brinson recently received \$1,000 in the Texas Youth Entrepreneur of the Year Award scholarship program.

As an award winner, Brinson visited the Neeley Entrepreneurship Center at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, where he consulted and mingled with successful entrepreneurs.

"It was a great experience," Brinson said. "There were a lot of people you wouldn't otherwise get the chance to talk to. On a normal day, you don't get to talk with the marketing president of a bank."

Brinson said he will put the \$1,000 scholarship towards MIT, where he's been accepted to double major in mechanical engineering and business.

Brinson said he has additional scholarships lined up, including \$10,000 a year for four years from the McKelvey Foundation.

Brinson's ultimate goal is to start another business, most likely in the robotics industry.

Brinson has been participating in FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) and BEST (Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology) robotics events during his high school career, and is in his third year of judging EDC (Engineering Design Competition) at his school.

"Robotics is a hobby I would rather have as a job," Brinson said.

Brinson's mother Beverly doesn't doubt for even a moment Brinson will achieve whatever it is he sets out to do.

"He's always been interested in everything," said Beverly, who owns a franchise of Homewatch CareGivers, a provider of services to the elderly. "He's extremely energetic and needs little sleep. It was exhausting when he was a child, but he's channeled his energy since then. I'm very proud of him."

AUSTIN BRINSON

• **Age:** 18

• **Community connection:** a senior at the Academy of Science and Technology at The Woodlands College Park High School

• **Fast Fact:** Brinson has owned and operated his own computer repair business since he was 15.

• **Quick Quote:** "If you have a chance to give out your business card, do it."