

Local IT networking leaders (from left) Stuart Smith, Jim Evans, and Remington Phillips: "Web SIG Cleveland historically and today provides a monthly educational opportunity focused on web development skills," Smith says.



NETWORKING 2.0

TECHIES HARNESS THE POWER OF CONTINUAL EDUCATION

BY LAUREN CAGGIANO | PHOTO BY THOMAS SKERNIVITZ

The web may have transformed the way people do business, but it has not eliminated the need for traditional face-to-face networking. That's the crux of three Cleveland-area groups focused on technology-related careers.

Stuart Smith is the man behind the Web Development Special Interest Group (SIG) Cleveland, which started in the late 1990s. It is one of the oldest SIGs in Cleveland and has always been associated with the GCPCUG (Greater Cleveland PC Users Group), which was established in the early 1980s. After meeting in Solon for more than nine years, the group now meets at Notre Dame College in South Euclid at 11:30 a.m. on the third Saturday of each month.

Smith says a unique aspect of the group is that guests can expect to learn about topics affecting the industry, without the pressure to purchase products. It serves as a monthly gathering point for professional designers and web programmers, as well as others who build websites for their own use.

"Web SIG Cleveland historically and today provides a monthly educational opportunity focused on web development skills. Unlike

many other organizations in Cleveland related to website development, Web SIG Cleveland is vendor neutral," he says. This means it is free to show competing products and expose members to a variety of options.

Smith says between 15 and 25 people typically attend the monthly meetings. But the public should not be intimidated by the term "member," he adds.

"The leaders of Web SIG Cleveland have always taken pride in the fact that our meetings are open to all as a free educational resource for web development. It is a very friendly group, and members welcome newcomers. Everyone shares ideas with each other," he says.

Indeed the monthly programs are a means to exchange ideas. Smith outlines the schedule into 2013: Sept. 15 — Debugging tools in web browsers; Oct. 20 — Bootstrap, from Twitter; Nov. 17 — Current developments in CSS; Dec. 15 — Free graphic resources; and Jan. 19 — Rethinking SEO: Facts, figures, and data.

For more information: gcpcug.org/websig

CLEVELAND DIGITAL PUBLISHERS USER GROUP

As a partner with Web SIG Cleveland, the Cleveland Digital Publishers User Group (CDPUG), which was founded in 1988, shares a common goal of catering to the needs of the digital publishing community in Northeast Ohio. Organizer Remington Phillips says because technology

has changed so much in the past two decades, there is a need for “continuing education” of members.

Those members number just under 100 and vary in background. “We have a diverse range of members. Of course many of our members are industry professionals — writers, designers, printers — but we also attract business owners who want to learn how to better make use of technology to reach their customers,” Phillips says.

To that end, Phillips outlines the next few months of educational programs. In September John Ettorre will discuss the special relationship between writers and designers and how they can better collaborate. In October Photoshop expert Stan Kohn is slated to give a demonstration of the new version of Adobe Photoshop CS6. And in November they are planning a special topic on mobile devices.

According to Phillips, there are no prerequisites to join CDPUG. Yet unlike Web SIG Cleveland, which offers free programming, CDPUG membership costs \$40 per year. The fee allows members to access all meetings. Non-members who want to attend a meeting pay \$10 per meeting. Other benefits include access to job listings on the website; inclusion in the services directory; and receipt of members-only publications, such as the monthly e-newsletter.

For more information: cdpug.org

GREATER CLEVELAND PC USERS GROUP

A third local technology-related networking group, the Greater Cleveland PC Users Group (GCPCUG), serves as resource for those wanting to learn more about current and up and coming technology in the PC world.

The group, which is comprised of about 80 members, meets monthly at Cleveland State University’s Main Classroom Building on the second Saturday of each month (except August) from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Meetings are free and open to the public. But those who want to further support the group and receive notices pay a \$30 membership fee.

Vice President Jim Evans says the group’s strength lies in its diversity of interests. “While we are Windows based, our meetings cover a wide range of topics, including social media, security, digital

photography, cloud-based software, servers, and networking,” he says. He also notes that the group has garnered notoriety from Microsoft as one of the best user groups in the country.

What lies ahead for the future of GCPCUG? Evans outlines the next few months of programming: Sept. 8 — Hard drive data recovery; Oct. 13 — Digital photography: Are we losing this generation’s photos?; and Dec. 8 — Holiday tech gadgets (joint meeting with CDPUG). ■

For more information: gcpcug.org

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