

Today: Showers, humid.  
High 74, Low 60.  
Thursday: Fog, rain,  
windy. High 70, Low 50.  
Details, Page B3.

122ND YEAR No. 298

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1999

FINAL

Inside: Food, Classified  
Today's Contents on Page A1

25c

How to get a refund on  
unwanted Washington Post paper



BY RICHARD A. CARBITT—FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Marcus Johnson Project entertains at a fund-raiser Sunday at the Country Club at Woodmore in Mitchellville for computer training centers. Marcus Johnson, at left, is teaming with an area executive to build the centers.

## Technology Training Starts Early

### Partners Plan Centers for Teaching Computer Skills to Children

By YUKI NOGUCHI  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Reginald G. Daniel grew up in the inner city of Milwaukee, where he says most kids had to choose between a life of drugs and a life of crime. The schools lacked money, and there weren't any classes about technology.

Daniel was 20 before he first saw a computer. That was in 1979 when he joined the military and was assigned to a classified project working with a \$20 million supercomputer at the Department of Defense.

"It was overwhelming, you're talking about an inner-city boy from Milwaukee," he recalled recently. "I always had an affinity for technology," he said, but he might never have realized it if he hadn't had the chance to tinker with the machine.

So Daniel, now 40 and president and chief executive of Scientific Engineering Solutions Inc. in Annapolis Junction, is teaming with Marcus Johnson—a promi-

nent area jazz musician and president and owner of Marimelj Entertainment Group Inc. in Silver Spring—to build technology training centers for children in Prince George's County, where Daniel lives. The program is aimed at children from low-income families. On Sunday, Daniel and Johnson held a \$100-a-person jazz brunch fund-raiser, "Conquering the Digital Divide," for about 70 people at the Country Club at Woodmore in Mitchellville. They raised more than \$10,000 to buy new computers for their first two technology training centers at Mount Ephraim Baptist Church in Largo—where Daniel used to coach basketball—and for Largo Community Church in Largo, where he is a member of the congregation.

Those facilities will have about 15 computers, and Daniel's company will train church employees in basic computer skills so they can, in turn, teach the children. It will be open to the general public, and children and parents will be able to call in and reserve computers, said Daniel, whose 3-year-old daughter, Regina,

has been working with a personal computer since she was 2. Johnson and Daniel want to place their next centers inside the Beltway and plan to do so as resources and computers are available, Johnson said.

Johnson's five-piece band, the Marcus Johnson Project, entertained the crowd of computer consultants, church members and community activists with smooth rhythm and blues improvisations. Marimelj, a shortened version of Johnson's full name, Marcus Roosevelt Imel Johnson, is known for his CDs—including "Inter Alia," "Chocolate City Groovin'" and "Comin' Back Around"—that get national play on smooth jazz stations across the country.

"It's my feeling that the church should be involved in family life and community life at every age," said Jack Morris, founder and pastor at the nondenominational Largo Community Church. "The church community is a public community," and

See COMPUTERS, Page 7

## PRINCE GEORGE'S BUSINESS

# Planning for an Early Start on Technology Training

COMPUTERS, From Page 5

the public computer center will help it fill that role, he said.

Joseph Gilmore Jr., the assistant pastor at Mount Ephraim Baptist Church, said the computer training center is expected to be up and running by the end of the year. It will bolster the church's existing Early Learning Center, a week-long, all-day educational program for babies and toddlers up to 4 years old. The center "is going to enhance our children's ability to learn," and their high-tech literacy will enable them to compete in the increasingly international marketplace, said Gilmore, whose 2-year-old daughter is in the program. The church hopes to form partnerships with neighboring schools and communities to bring children into the new classroom, he said.

Johnson, 28, grew up in Silver Spring and has a BA in music from Howard University and a JD and MBA from Georgetown University. He says computers revolutionized his career because he was able to produce his CDs on his three computers at a fraction of the cost it takes to produce them on a professional label. He sees his nonprofit group serving two purposes: keeping children off the streets and teaching them the technology that will launch them on the fast learning track. "If African Americans don't get into the computer game, we'll lose the game," because computer technology is "integrated into every aspect of life," he said.

Johnson and Daniel met at the Capital Jazz Fest in Washington in June, where Johnson performed. Their friendship was cemented later

at the Bowie Golf & Country Club, where the two played golf. "We just started talking and vibing, and one thing that we saw was that we're both interested in making a difference," said Johnson, who started a nonprofit in 1993 called the Afro-American Counseling Graduate School, which trains counselors on how to promote nonviolence in communities in the District and Silver Spring.

Their friendship led to a decision to begin an effort to focus on computer literacy, after a Department of Commerce study in July pointed to a racial gap in computer usage: Only 11.7 percent of black Americans have Internet access, compared with 32.4 percent of whites and 12.9 percent of Hispanics.

"I think we have a save-the-world mentality, and [because] this is probably the greatest concentration of educated African American people in this country—and because we have access to people in Washington—we have a tremendous opportunity to have a tremendous impact on serious issues facing our children," said Daniel, who lives in Mitchellville. Eventually, they want the project to go national and are enlisting partnerships and in-kind support from "mostly majority businesses that are interested in the assurance that there will be employees for them in the future," he said.

Daniel, who quit the military in 1983 and then received a BS in computer science at night school at the University of Maryland University College, said he soon was hooked. "I quickly became a geek," he said, even going so far as taping his eyes-glasses when they broke. After a six-year stint as a systems analyst at the

computer engineering firm Cray Research Inc. ("famous amongst geeks"), he worked on the business side of computer technology at Silicon Graphics Inc. and got an MBA from Loyola College in Baltimore in 1996.

In 1996, he and three others incorporated SES, a private company that does computer consulting and

graphics simulation for high-tech operations in the military, in medicine and with engineering firms. The company now employs 80, and revenue this year will reach \$12 million, Daniel said.

"I believe it will be very popular," Daniel said. He plans to start a nonprofit group to work full time on developing the computer training cen-

ters. "A lot of my people [at SES] are looking forward to giving back to the community," he said.

Johnson measures success in a variety of ways: "If I see a kid come in with a smile on his face, that's one level of success. When I see computer learning centers in 15 to 20 communities, that's another measure of success," he said.

### NOW IN SHADY GROVE

Full-service branch

The Grove Shopping Center  
Crabbs Branch Way  
at Shady Grove Road



## "Mortgage or Home Equity?" Call SECU

Great rates for

- Fixed
- Adjustable
- Refinancing
- FHA
- VA
- Jumbo

Use home equity to

- Buy a car
- Take a trip
- Pay tuition
- Remodel
- Pay off debts

1 Yr. Adjustable Mortgage

Home Equity Loan